

Questionnaire - Chinese American Parent Association, Montgomery County
Patricia B. O'Neill
Candidate for District 3, Montgomery County Board of Education

Vision for MCPS

1a. What do you think is the goal of education in general? What should be the priorities of MCPS? Why?

Education must prepare every child for college, career and life.

The top priority must be putting children first. We must invest in our staff and our curriculum to deliver top quality instruction that meets the needs of every student. MCPS must engage with families to support student success. Safety and security is now a top concern of mine, and of the school Board. I am committed to advocating and putting in place the resources that we need to protect our children from harm.

1b. where do you think MCPS needs to improve?

MCPS must spend our limited resources wisely by improving and enhancing what is working and eliminating what is not.

2. Meeting the Special Needs of Gifted and Talented (GT) Students

In the FY19 Operating Budget, the Office of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction (AEI) has been effectively eliminated. As a Board of Education member, what initiatives will you undertake to ensure that the needs of GT students are met, pursuant to COMAR 13A.04.07?

The Office of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction (AEI) has been restructured, not eliminated. There will continue to be an AEI Unit with a manager, instructional specialist, and data analyst. The instructional specialist responsible for AP and IB will work in the Secondary Curriculum Office (a more appropriate fit for the responsibilities). The other AEI instructional specialists will each be assigned to the Office of School Support and Improvement teams, to more directly support schools.

I will continue to monitor the needs of gifted and talented students, and it is my expectation that as a Board we will work with the superintendent to ensure the success of this restructured team.

2a. Transparency

Recently, there are increased voices to expand the GT/Magnet program. However, the future plan of the county and policy change at current center programs remained vague to many parents and students.

This year's middle school field test for the "center programs" experienced a sudden and massive change in admission criteria and policy at Down County. It caused widespread confusion and frustration for many students and parents.

How would you increase the transparency of MCPS decision making and admission practices in the future?
How would you ensure that stakeholder inputs are effectively incorporated before a massive policy change?

The vast majority of highly able learners are educated in their home schools. Given the constraints of limited resources and over-crowding in many schools it may not be possible to establish more center programs. This year there is a pilot to offer the same courses offered by the magnets where there is a cohort in the home schools.

This year there was some frustration due to poor communication. Many more students were screened and deemed eligible. MCPS will be piloting courses in home schools. All eligible students should be screened and services provided whether at magnets or in their home schools.

Admission to selective programs should be done on a name blind, school blind basis. In accordance with the law there cannot be quotas. A rubric and published data on admissions, should be done on a yearly basis. I believe the Superintendent should establish a gifted and talented advisory committee with a diverse group of stakeholders, not just the MCCPTA.

4. Diversity of MCPS Teacher and Administration Workforce – Asian American educators are severely underrepresented in MCPS’ professional workforce and very few administrators in Principal position or above director levels are Asian Americans. Would you be committed to increase the representation of Asian Americans in MCPS’ leadership and administration rank? What is your plan?

MCPS workforce should be representative of its student body. In that respect, we are not a diverse organization. There is a growing teacher shortage. We must work with organizations to help grow our own teachers and support aspiring administrators. The League of Educators for Asian American Progress (LEAAP) is one such organization. We should also work with the Maryland Department of Education for alternative paths to certification.

5. Capital Investment Planning: With increasing enrollment year after year, many MCPS schools are overcrowded and its buildings rapidly deteriorating. If elected, how would you set funding priorities to address the school infrastructure investment?

Overcrowded and aging schools are one of the biggest challenges facing any Board of Education member. We must fight in Annapolis to get our fair share of construction dollars. I am an experienced advocate in Annapolis. I have been endorsed by many members of our delegation. I believe that seat space to meet growth must be a top priority. Repairing old buildings is also a priority

6. Advocacy for MCPS in Annapolis: Families invest living in Montgomery County keep a keen eye on the strength of our school system. This year county residents are doing their part of keeping our schools great by paying 8.7% more on property tax. If elected, how will you advocate for more state funding and what creative ways do you have to find other revenue options?

There are two commissions in Annapolis looking at the operating and capital funding. I have been working with other elected leaders to protect Montgomery's interest as legislation is created. I am proud of my record in working with other elected leaders. We must get our fair share of state funding and spend our limited resources wisely. I am also in support of dedicated sources of funding for education. This vision requires experienced and knowledgeable leadership. I bring a 20-year record to the table and I look forward to doing more for our children and community.

7. Bullying, School Climate, and Student Social-Emotional Wellness

Bullying/Cyberbullying, mental health, and overall social-emotional wellness are pressing issues for many MCPS families. If elected, what initiatives would you take to mitigate the impacts of the aforementioned issues? What strategies will you direct MCPS to pursue to confront cyberbullying?

Bullying of any kind should not be tolerated. Since I have been on the board we have added cyberbullying to the policy. It must be made easier to report bullying. Way too many incidents are not reported or observed by adults in our buildings. We need to have more of a culture of respect. We must provide supports to the victim and counsel the bully.

8. Honoring Cultural Heritage The Asian American minority group has a distinct cultural heritage and history in this county. For our younger generation to grow up feeling self-confident and accepted, we believe that our culture and history need to be acknowledged, respected, and taught in school. We found that in, in MCPS Middle School social studies or high school history classes on Asian American history and culture, currently, there are very limited materials on Asian American Culture, and very limited time are spent on them, even though Asian American students count for 14%~15% of the MCPS student population. How can we integrated more Asian American history and culture content in our curriculum? How will you increase the cultural proficiency, particularly Asian American culture proficiency, among MCPS staff?

I have tried over my many years on the Board of Education to support Asian families and community. I championed establishing the Chinese Immersion program at College Gardens. I supported naming a school after an Asian American (despite community opposition), I was one of two board members to suggest establishing an Asian Pacific Student Achievement Group. There is more to be done. Our Equity Staff and our Curriculum Staff must strive to include Asian culture and studies in their work.

9. School Boundary

As new schools are built, many traditional school boundaries will be, or are being redrawn, what is your top 4 criteria in evaluating school boundary options? Why are these criteria important to you?

MCPS is currently revising the policy (FAA) that drives boundary decisions. Our schools are the centerpiece of our community. I believe that having a diverse student body should be a desired goal. Parents want proximity so they can stay engaged with the school. We need to work with the community for their input.