

1. Vision for MCPS

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

www.suggformoco.com gives more depth, but in brief:

Education ought to ignite a lifelong passion for learning. And for pushing our intellectual limits. Too often, our current education system is one of “meet the standard and move on”. I’m a national voice for a broad, well-rounded education. Even in an era where math and science (i.e. STEM) related focus is increasingly noted as “critical”, I believe that STEM is stronger when coupled arts, physical education, and civics. A growing body of research backs up my claim.

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

As a father of three young children and with decades of experience building strong communities and effective schools, I know that Montgomery County can do better in preparing our students for today's opportunities and tomorrow's economy. In doing so, we will address the achievement gap; more importantly, we'll see students who are well-rounded, resilient, and engaged in civil society. But right now, we are too often doubling down on the 9-5 factory-like model of mid-20th century education.

I've dedicated much of my career to studying schools in Maryland, nationally, and internationally that get it right. Too often here in Montgomery County, we are missing opportunities to make instruction in early grades align with best practices. We are equating time in seats with "learning" and gauging student achievement with narrow metrics. From kindergarten to the teen years, our kids are doing worksheets, while their peers elsewhere are deep in hands-on learning. Our teachers need more license to innovate. And as other schools in Maryland and nationally embrace outdoor time, recess, school gardens, the importance of play, and serving healthy foods, our schools cling to

the status quo. For example, Montgomery County ranks near last statewide for time devoted to physical education at the elementary level—despite overwhelming evidence of a childhood obesity crisis and that physical activity makes kids learning-ready. We must do better.

But I'm optimistic: We have many first-rate educators, bright and diverse hardworking students, and a community that values our schools. I'll bring a new perspective to the Board of Education. A perspective aimed at tomorrow's opportunities—not yesterday's way of doing business.

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?

I am familiar with COMAR 13A.04.07; I chose to have much of my graduate coursework (Ed.D.—William & Mary) focus on Maryland's education financing, standards, etc. Meeting the needs of our GT students isn't just a matter of compliance; it crucial to our economic success and to the well-being of our kids. A few items I would focus on:

- Listening to GT stakeholders. I'm familiar with GT education and I've spoken with multiple GT stakeholders locally and nationally. I'm familiar with the academic literature around GT. But there is more to know, and I promise an open door and open mind when addressing GT needs in MCPS. Be assured that several GT focused books are on my bookshelf—and well-worn.
- With current budget challenges (operating and school construction), programs such as GT are always facing threats. Meeting such needs requires electing Board members with 1) experience in public finance (e.g. budgets, tax policy, etc.) and 2) electing Board members and other elected officials who will fight harder and smarter

in Annapolis and locally for sustained school funding. This also means efficient allocation of current resources.

- Realize that GT students are unique and not homogenous. I hear many misconceptions about GT students. Leaders must address such. And realize the inherent sensitivity of many GT students—which well-intentioned educators sometimes overlook.
- Encourage a curriculum and implementation of such that allows teachers (whether in a GT-focused context or not) to “telescope” and take other measures that allow GT and other faster learners to accelerate and not just adhere to the basic standard. MCPS can improve in this regard. I have seen schools outside of MCPS do this quite well.

2a. **Transparency**

Recently, there are increased voice 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?

As a parent, I too have experienced such frustration. On several occasions, I have emailed and/or called members of the Board of Education and gotten no response. And I’ve spoken with many parents who have been told by MCPS administrators to go “thru the PTA” to have a concern addressed. Certainly, coalitions, interest groups (e.g. PTA, civic organizations, etc.) should always be at the table. But after decades of working at the

intersection of community development and education, I've found that effective leaders are proactive in reaching out to the community—and not just the loudest voices or past partners. Several steps I would take:

- Proactively reach out to stakeholders on their turf; interaction shouldn't occur only at formal forums (e.g. Board of Education meetings, etc.). In doing so, so of the most thoughtful—but often overlooked—voices are elevated.
- While MCPS is unique, I would advocate that administrators look more to examples from other schools (in Maryland and nationally) that have done a better job of navigating complex and potentially divisive issues such as GT admission criteria (as one example). This also applies to school boundary debates.

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?

Yes. Such measures are common-sense and aligned with a growing body of research. I don't claim to have an immediate solution, but a few angles that I would consider:

- Make sure that MCPS invests in recruiting educators from colleges and regions of the country that graduate higher percentages of minority educators. This might mean going beyond the Mid-Atlantic region.
- Ask the community for best practices and ideas—especially current educators of Asian American descent. And I say such cognizant of the Asian American community's diversity.
- Align such efforts with a broader educator recruitment strategy. National trends point to shortages of highly-qualified teachers. And considering the cost of living in Montgomery County, it is especially important that we proactively address this issue.

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?

Such conversations must be part of broader conversations about school boundaries, securing MCPS's fair share of state funding, and even county zoning issues. After that, priorities should go to greatest need, with an eye on long-term planning. Too often, elected officials make decisions based on short term politics rather than what is best for the kids, community, and taxpayers long-term. For example, I would support construction practices that while more expensive at first, save money in upkeep or energy costs in the long run.

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?

My experience as a higher education lobbyist (4 years at the state level in Missouri), as an educator and as a national voice on Capitol Hill for affordable housing and social justice, would bring a new perspective to such conversations. In such, I would prioritize:

- Putting pressure on lawmakers (and the Governor) in Annapolis to prioritize MCPS receiving its fair share of state funds—operating and capital/construction. My academic research aligns with other analyses that MCPS receives less than its fair share of funding because of how the state measures poverty & cost of living and because MOCO's growth isn't accounted for in funding allocations. We must pressure our delegation not to waiver in getting more support at the state level for MOCO.

- Form alliances with advocates for social services and related interests, as our kids' well-being is as dependent on education along with affordable housing, health care access, and other tenets of the social contract. Education does not exist in a vacuum. I'm thinking a "grow the pie" coalition; though doing so will require education advocates to truly stand up and spend capital on other funding priorities that matter to kids' well-being. This is done some now, but not enough.
- Secure more philanthropic support for our schools. Montgomery County is wealthy (per capita) and our schools are not tapping that wealth to benefit our kids. Innovative partnerships with philanthropic entities ought to be a high priority for our schools. Right now, we are only touching the surface of such potential.

6. 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?

MCPS has taken some concrete steps around social-emotional wellness, school climate, etc. But if completely serious about social-emotional wellness, MCPS would do more to value early-childhood practices that lead to lifelong social-emotional benefits. This means more time to play and move for our young kids. This means more time to develop relationships and explore in non-teacher driven activity. And it even means serving healthier food in our school lunches; there is a growing recognition of the link between social-emotional wellness and nutrition. [Real Food for Kids Montgomery](#) is an organization with excellent ideas; MCPS would be wise to listen to them, and act on their suggestions.

In regard to bullying and cyber-bullying, I advocate a systemic approach. Too often, we encourage niche programs (e.g. "Day of Awareness") which aren't inherently bad. But addressing such issues requires trained staff, and policies that are both clear and enforced. Bullying is also another issue in which I would value the student perspective when

looking for solutions. I have found many of our youth particularly wise and sensitive when discussing such issues; let them be heard. This is especially true for cyberbullying.

7. 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 MSCP 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 concur on the importance of this issue. And I earned a social justice teaching fellowship when I found innovative ways to address such issues in my college classroom.

A few steps that I would encourage:

- Work with the Asian American community to expose MCPS students, educators, and the community to Asian American history and culture. Often, I've found that "seeing, touching, observing" of cultures by students works far better than textbook instruction. I believe such efforts would spark a sustained interest in not only bringing more diversity to the curriculum, but it would encourage students and teachers toward a longer-held interest in diversity.
- Consistent with my platform of empowering educators, I would seek out their ideas for integrating Asian American history and culture and cultural proficiency. Often, I've found that mandates to include "include more" in curriculum don't result in classroom-level results. Thus, I advocate a holistic and hand-on approach to achieving the worthy goals noted above.

8. 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?

- Listening. Consistent with my above answers, MCPS Board of Education members and administrators must do better in reaching the entire community—not just the established voices. This is especially important as school boundary decisions impacts go far beyond direct K-12 stakeholders.
- Look to external best practices. I grow frustrated when arguments around MCPS boundaries (as one example) so often re-state past battles. With my broad network of contacts across the country in both education and community development, I often come across approaches to school boundary (and similar) issues that are worth exploring in Montgomery County.
- Value community and walkability. In thinking to the future, community ties and easy access to schools are increasingly important. For example, being able to walk my kids to school is invaluable. Thus, community cohesion (e.g. neighborhoods matter) and walkability/sustainability are both important.
- Taxpayer value. The status quo of some schools far over capacity while others are below capacity is not conducive to making the case to the state and local taxpayers for more school funding. Though complex and contentious, we should be open to boundary changes that reduce pressure on crowded schools.