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## **2022 Local Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire**

### **Education Funding**

#### **1. Unmet Needs Facing our Schools / Prioritize Aid for Education in Budget**

The Blueprint is a huge step towards addressing the unmet needs within Carroll County Public Schools. As a school board member, I would prioritize the need for community schools to address the achievement gap in impoverished communities, school-based resources for mental health for students and teachers, and college and career readiness programming to support post-secondary independence. By prioritizing aid for these three components within my budget deliberations, I would place an emphasis on creating a culture of inclusivity. Community school creation and enhancement would give us a place to drive resources for marginalized students and bridge the divide between technology, academic achievement, and positive social supports. A system-wide culture that values the mental well-being of our people would help to attract teachers to our schools and would overall, promote more positivity and community. A focus on college and career readiness programming would increase opportunity for students, drive community partnerships, and increase the overall economic value of our community because more CCPS would be developing more young people to be prepared to enter into adulthood with the skills, knowledge, and training to succeed.

#### **2. Address Concerns with Educator Recruitment and Retention**

In order to address educator recruitment and retention, we must address the culture within our school system. Over the last 2 years I have seen our teachers become increasingly undervalued and underappreciated. Driven by school leadership, our teacher's professionalism and expertise has been in question, creating a culture of distrust. On top of general culture, class sizes have increased while staff positions have been cut. Educators are strained now more than ever, but continue to be under more scrutiny for not doing enough. This has to change. We need to step back and take a look at our current staffing model, ensure that schools are equipped to handle the demands

of their student population, and drive emphasis at increasing educator support. I believe this starts with creating a culture that reminds our teachers every day of the value they bring. We need our teachers to love what they do so that our students love to come to school and learn. This must take precedent for our Board of Education.

### **Public Funding for Private Schools**

#### 4. Support or Oppose Allocating Public Funding to Home and Private Schools

I would oppose the use of public education dollars for home and private schools. I believe the Carroll County Board of Education should be focused on leveraging funds to enhance our public school system to create a more equitable environment to attract current private and home school students to come back to our public schools.

### **Evaluations and Less Testing, More Learning**

#### 5. Support or Oppose Local Autonomy to Develop Evaluation System

I support local autonomy to develop evaluation systems in compliance with statute and regulation. I feel strongly that our local educators are the most fit to develop standards that are reflective of the needs of our school system. While complying with state regulations, evaluation systems should be evidence-based for effectiveness and bear in mind the needs our students and teachers. A system that is focused on teaching and learning, holds students and teachers accountable, and provides valid evaluation to drive our programs forward, brings value to our community.

#### 6. Support or Oppose Overturn of Mutually Agreed Upon Evaluation Models

I am in opposition of a one-size-fits-all model developed by federal and state agencies for evaluation. While I believe there needs to be some level of consistency across the state, I believe local education agencies are the most fit to determine evaluation models that are effective and reliable for their student and teacher base.

#### 7. Support of Oppose Efforts to Provide Educators with Professional Development

I support efforts to provide educators with sufficient professional development so they may deliver high-quality instruction. The needs to prepare our students for college or the workforce is ever changing. Educators need to be up to date on the most recent evidence-based standards to ensure they are delivering content that will most prepare our student base for post-graduate opportunities.

### **Collective Bargaining**

#### 8. Support or Oppose Right to Bargain

I support public education employees' rights to bargain collectively. I find value in creating a collective voice that represents the needs of school employees and that voice should be acknowledged through contract negotiations to benefit the most individuals.

#### 9. Familiarity with CCEA & CASE contract

I have not been overly familiar with the CCEA and CASE contracts but I am eager to learn more. I will spend time diligently reviewing these documents to determine ways that I can enhance these relationships and honor the decisions already agreed upon.

#### 10. Changes to Contract and Honoring Contract in Tight Fiscal Times

At this time, with not being familiar with the ins and outs of these contracts, I have no suggested changes to make. I believe an agreement is of value and that those making decisions to finalize an agreement have done so with integrity, input, and knowledge. I see it as my duty to uphold these contracts to the best of my ability at all times. Prioritizing these relationships during and maintaining transparency and open communication will ensure that the organizations and the school system can deliberate on tough decisions collectively, even during tight fiscal years.

### **Continuing Impact of the Pandemic**

#### 11. Address Increased Needs for Mental Health Supports for Students and Educators

In the wake of the pandemic, and always, the mental health of our students and staff should be a priority for our Board of Education. Students cannot learn when they are hyper-focused with anxiety and depression. Teachers cannot teach when they are forced to ignore workplace trauma.

I have worked with CCPS students for nearly 5 years through community-based programming, centered around developing their social and emotional well-being. Serving students with diverse backgrounds, significant mental health challenges, and ongoing exposure to trauma, has demonstrated to me a need for our school system to pay attention to more than simply the academic success of our young people. Students enter the school each day with a backpack filled with more than just paper and pencils. Often, our students are forced to leave their mental health challenges at the door, and enter prepared to learn. This concept is simply irrational. While it has always been true, the COVID-19 pandemic gave insight into the homes of our students. Exposing students with limited access to technology, unsupportive parents, abusive or neglectful homes, food insecurity, housing instability, and more, the pandemic shed light on what else fills the bags of our children. Addressing this as an issue on its own, is the first step to creating solutions.

Our educators are one of our most valuable assets. Throughout the pandemic, teachers have been made to feel belittled, uneducated, unprofessional, and irresponsible.

Throughout the most difficult times we've faced as a school system, due to a health crisis, our Board of Education has spent time talking about teacher tracking forms, questioning the content choice of our curriculum and instruction professionals, and adding unnecessary requirements to the already strained educator's workday. In the midst of a health crisis, our school system leadership should have spent time creating access and opportunity for teachers to have additional voice and support. The Board of Education should have spent less time debating the removal of mask mandates and more time pronouncing their appreciation for teachers and advocating for them at the local and state level.

I have witnessed our current Board of Education use the mental health of our students to suit the needs of an alternative agenda. While I have been grateful to hear mental well-being as a topic of discussion, it has been disheartening to find that it is for all the wrong reasons. I will prioritize the mental health of our students and staff as a tool for recovery from the pandemic, but I won't stop there. I will visit with individual schools, speaking with students, Instructional Assistants, Teachers, School Counselors, Nurses and Administrators to hear first hand about the independent challenges of each stakeholder. Additionally, I would create opportunities to guide conversation through Restorative Circles to create a platform to discuss challenges and strive for solutions. I am running as a candidate for the Board of Education to bring trauma-informed culture and trauma-responsive solutions to our schools. The mental health of our students and staff is a top priority of mine and will be an ongoing discussion.

## 12. Eliminate the Digital Divide

Providing computers for each student and staff during the pandemic was a step in the right direction towards breaking down the digital divide. With that being said, internet access and cost to reliable sources, knowledge to utilize technological resources, and limited support at home for students, left many still falling behind. Moving forward, I would use my knowledge in the nonprofit sector to apply for grant funding to support increased technical assistance and resources for our students and staff. Working with the County, I would continue to advocate for access to high-speed fiber internet in some of our most rural parts of the county. Additionally, I would increase our partnership with the Carroll County Public Libraries and other community centers throughout the county to create a network of support for our students and their families. By increasing community engagement from our partners and making students and families aware of the local resources available to them, we can enhance the overall success of our students.

As the Director of a local nonprofit community center, I can say that we were never asked to provide resources for students and staff during the pandemic. I had to beg the Board of Education to allow our organization to work with students, providing a stable space to login to their virtual learning platform and receive enhanced, in-person

tutoring services. Ultimately, we worked together to serve 72 students from 28 different Carroll County Public Schools, however, this reach could have gone far wider had the Board of Education collaborated with other community-based resources. I will prioritize enhancing partnerships to make better use of the resources that are already evident within our community. Just as the Blueprint focuses on creating more access to pre-k programming, I will devote time and energy to building partnerships that ensures more of our students are connected through technology and served in the evening hours, following a school day.

## **Racial and Social Justice**

### 13. Honesty in Education

I support honesty in education. I believe educators should have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools and districts. It is important that students learn all history, as it relates to approved curriculum. As a Board of Education, I believe in supporting our educators as the professionals they are. Teaching content that is real, and even controversial, promotes discussion that can elevate a student's ability to think critically and consider the opinions of others. When teaching the facts, as they were written, teachers have an opportunity to create an unbiased platform for students to learn from others. I believe we create more empowered and civically engaged learners when we push students to learn out of their comfort zones.

### 14. Support DEI for All Students

I value diversity, equity and inclusion in our schools. I feel that without diverse people and educational content, our students are limited in their ability to grow and develop as well-rounded citizens. Equitable solutions within our schools give all students a level playing field. Inclusion eliminates barriers for various groups and gives all voices a mic at the podium.

Utilizing Culturally Responsive Teaching to ensure that students feel connected to their education is important. When students and teachers come to school they should feel as though their voice has power, that their culture is embraced, and that their unique challenges are being addressed. I will support and enhance the work of our Diversity and Equity team to bring multicultural experiences and opportunity to all students. I would promote professional development opportunities for staff around racial equity. As a school board member, I would encourage open communication about diversity, equity and inclusion from all members of our school system and community through open forums to discuss current issues and practices.

## **Community Schools**

### 15. Support or Oppose Community Schools

I support local efforts to create and support community schools in areas of concentrated poverty. Community schools present an opportunity for students from varying backgrounds to have equitable access to resources and support. Through community partnerships, community schools take full advantage of utilizing local resources to close the achievement gap for students. In doing so, not only do we enhance a sense of community-inclusive culture, but we bridge the divide between a system of education and families. Integrating school and community is a sustainable solution to many of our most pressing problems as a school system.

## **Parental Involvement and Public Support**

### **16. Increase Parental Involvement and Public Support**

Students with parents that are involved in their education tend to do better in school and at home. I would like to see more opportunities for parents to volunteer in their child's school, assisting with daily tasks and bringing their personal expertise to enhance school resources. With over 20,000 students, our school system has access to an incredible number of parents that each bring something unique to the table. By empowering parents to have a voice and a role within our school system, we can exponentially increase our network to raise funds, staff classrooms, and support the work of students and teachers.

During a Fellowship in a Baltimore City Charter School, I witnessed first hand the disconnect between parents and schools. Many parents in this community felt they didn't have a role within their child's school and therefore, felt disconnected to their child's education. Children struggled to achieve success with limited support at home and parents were frustrated and disengaged. The school recognized this as an issue and worked to understand the barriers to parent involvement. After recognizing that the parents felt threatened by being in a school setting, given their limited educational achievement themselves, the school worked diligently to create opportunities that encouraged the parents to bring their unique perspectives and talents inside the building. Reflecting from this experience, I would work to create a platform for parents to leverage their voice and give them opportunities to volunteer for needed support roles within the schools that fit varying schedules and levels of expertise.

Beyond the role of parents, I would stress community partnerships. By educating the community on the importance of public schools and inviting local businesses and organizations to become more engaged, our schools would have significantly greater access to resources. Community partnerships benefit students and teachers by creating a pathway to alternative support, such as materials for teaching, internships or employment opportunities for young workers, and access to civic and social engagement.

### **17. Communicating with Stakeholders**

As an elected official, I see my role as a community servant. Through servant leadership, I would place our stakeholders at the top. While the role may be to make final decisions for policies and procedures within the Carroll County Public School system, every effort will be made before that decision is made to ensure that my vote reflects the voice of Carroll County students, families, and educators. Social media is a platform to connect with stakeholders, share ideas, and learn diverse opinions. I would use social media as a tool to gather input and express my support and admiration for local stakeholders.

## **Privatization**

### **18. Contracting Custodial, Cafeteria, and Maintenance Services**

I oppose outsourcing to fill roles for custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services. Creating opportunities for employment within our school system should be a goal of the Board of Education and one for our county as a whole. Maintaining control of the hiring for these positions allows us to ensure that we are filling the roles with the most qualified and suitable employees.

## **Virtual Learning**

### **19. CCEA's Position on Virtual Schools**

I am in support of creating an enhanced virtual school model within Carroll County Public Schools. I witnessed first hand the many benefits that a virtual education model had on some of our toughest students. While virtual education is not for everyone, there is value in having a platform to allow a continuum of education for students to access, as they become unable to participate in in-person instruction.

### **20. Support or Oppose Virtual Schools Independent of Local School Boards**

Virtual schools that are independent of local school boards already exist. As a CCPS school board member, I would drive more focus on creating an enhancing a virtual school model of our own to keep local students engaged within the public school system. I would oppose Carroll County Public School's involvement in supporting the efforts of independent virtual schools.

### **21. Allowances and Guardrails for Virtual Learning Options**

A virtual instruction model that suits students with mental, emotional and physical health challenges that make surviving a full in-person school day impossible is important. Having a platform that can be easily adapted and accessible by students under various circumstances will create greater continuity in learning. I believe this platform of education should be utilized as a secondary form of instruction only, after in-person learning has been ruled out as a viable and effective model, given the student's circumstances.