



2022 Local Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE: Tara Battaglia

OFFICE SOUGHT: Board of Education

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I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking local office and I understand that CCEA intends to share my responses with members and interested parties.

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Tara Battaglia _____
DATE SUBMITTED: 1/10/2022 _____

Candidates: To be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. Clarifications, explanations, and other information may be attached, but please be certain to clearly indicate the questions(s) to which you refer.

Please return your completed and signed questionnaire no later than _____ to Nathan Curtis at ncurtis@mseane.org or to our office at 60 Aileron Court, Suite 6, Westminster, MD 21157.

Education Funding

Background Points

- With a critical need in closing education gaps, expanding programs and services, community schools, and improving student achievement, in 2016, lawmakers formed the Kirwan Commission to meet the challenges of a changing global economy and prepare Maryland students to be successful citizens in the 21st century.
- The Kirwan Commission's recommendations evolved into The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which originally passed in 2020, was vetoed by Governor Hogan, and had its veto overridden in 2021. The Blueprint revises the state's school funding formula for the first time in nearly two decades. Over the next 13 years, the Blueprint calls for billions of dollars of new investment in Maryland schools--and \$218 million for Carroll County through FY 30-- that would expand career and technical education programs, community schools, and pre-k; provide more resources for students from backgrounds of poverty and students with special needs; increase educator pay; hire more educators and expand and diversify the educator pipeline; and create a new, more rigorous accountability system. These programs are designed to raise achievement and address Maryland's economic inequality with programs to target concentrated poverty.
- The Board of Education will have a significant impact on implementation of the Blueprint, including future funding and success of Carroll County schools. The Blueprint is landmark legislation, but there is a continued need for investment in Carroll County schools to see that the Blueprint is successfully implemented, and in ensuring that educator voices are heard and respected throughout implementation.

1. Please provide your general and specific thoughts on how the county can address the unmet needs facing our schools. Detail how you would prioritize aid for education in your budget deliberations.

The Board of Education needs to continue to receive 50% of the County budget even with Kirwan funding. The past few years, the BOE has received less than 50%, (47% this past year). Even a loss of one million dollars can mean a difference of the need for a few school psychologists, valuable resources for students that need additional resources, or an increase in staff pay. Half of the County budget means 50%, and I have and will continue to advocate for half of the County budget to go to Carroll County Public Schools. Most recently with the loss of learning due to COVID, the funds are greatly needed for getting the students the learning they need to get caught up, and help teachers and staff in the classroom that COVID federal/state grants will not cover.

2. There is considerable room for improvement in addressing educator recruitment and retention. Class sizes have increased because of cost-cutting measures and/or due to hiring freezes and retirements. Many support personnel positions have been eliminated. And Maryland is always challenged with filling educator jobs because we import nearly half of all certificated teachers from prep programs in other states. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these shortages. At the same time, the Blueprint calls for the hiring of 15,000 additional educators to provide more individualized attention to students. How will you address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention?

The issue for classroom sizes could be solved if we had three additional schools. We all know that is a very touchy subject for me. We do need to look at localizing redistricting, but carefully done so that communities are not disrupted. Additions can be built on to current schools if needed by making sure that enrollment projections are reviewed every year, and make sure that the County is communicating with the Board of Education regarding potential housing permits that may be applied for in the development of housing around the County.

Retaining our current teachers can and should be done to the best of ability. While you can not make someone stay at a current job, you can always ask, “what can we do to keep you”? There is no equitable pay in Maryland regarding our teachers' pay. While one County may pay a teacher twenty thousand more a year than a teacher in Carroll County, we also need to look at our environment around us. The students' behavior in the classroom may be different from one County to another. Parent involvement is different from one County to another. Carroll County is very unique geographically. It's location is convenient to the Baltimore/Washington landscape for high paying jobs, but the affordability of housing is much different than those areas. The unfortunate part is now many that have lived in Carroll County and work in Carroll County, can not afford a home in Carroll County, and are moving to Southern Pennsylvania to be able to find affordable housing on their income. That is a loss of tax revenue for Carroll County. There are many pieces to the domino effect to keep our families in Carroll County. If we do not have students, we don't have schools, and we do not have teachers. CCPS is one of the largest employers in Carroll County. We need to keep our residents in Carroll County with employment, education, and recreationally.

3. Do you support or oppose Maryland's updated maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund the local share of all wealth-equalized formulas, instead of only the foundation formula?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

I am in support of the State making sure local Counties are paying their fair share. The local Counties should fund at least 50% of the County budgets. Carroll County Public Schools does a great job showing where the funds go in our schools. I am opposed to a minimum because that is all local government is required to do. There is no benefit in that.

Public Funding for Private Schools

Background Points

- CCEA believes any education dollars spent outside of improving public schools makes it harder to make the progress necessary to provide a world-class education for every student.
- Non-public school funding for programs in the budget such as textbooks, technology, school construction, and vouchers reduce the state's General Fund while subsidizing the cost of private education. Data from the first few years of the BOOST program indicated that more than 70% of voucher recipients already attended and paid for private school before receiving the voucher.
- The Maryland State Department of Education requires a certificate of approval or registration for private schools; it does not accredit or license them. Private schools do not have to report or administer teacher qualifications, class sizes, adherence to College and Career Readiness Standards, student retention rates, graduation rates, demographics, or discipline or suspension policies. Without these measures, it is impossible to effectively evaluate the programs funneling public tax dollars to private schools.

4. As a Board member, are you in favor of allocating public funding to home and privately schooled students?

_____ Support

_X___ Oppose

Additional Comments:

While this has been a topic of discussion for a long time, I do not feel tax money should go to private or homeschools.

Evaluations and Less Testing, More Learning

Background Points

- CCEA believes that educator evaluation systems must be educator-informed, research-based, and collaboratively developed. Evaluation systems should be fair, transparent, timely, rigorous, valid, and designed to improve instruction by focusing on teaching and learning.
- Maryland law mandates that student growth is a “significant component” and “one of the multiple measures” in a teacher’s evaluation. No evaluation criterion can account for more than 35%. The law also mandates that evaluation systems must be mutually agreed upon at the local level.
- A key provision of evaluation systems is the requirement for local agreement between school boards, superintendents, and local associations. Such local development allows for the evaluation system to meet the unique needs of each district.
- CCEA believes the continued push for high-stakes student assessments undermines educator’s creativity and their ability to respond to the needs of students. Instead of high-stakes assessments, which CCEA & CASE support high-quality assessments that support student learning from a rich curriculum and with room for educator’s voices in the development of curriculum and assessment.
- Additionally, CCEA supports rigorous and relevant professional development through the continued alignment of evaluation systems.

5. Do you support or oppose local autonomy to develop evaluation systems in compliance with statute and regulation?

Support Oppose

Additional Comments:

Each County is different. Each classroom is different. Every child is different, and every child learns differently. A teacher should not be receiving a poor assessment because of one student that does not meet their education goals. Local school boards should be working with local associations as to what works and what does not work.

6. Do you support or oppose efforts to overturn school districts mutually agreed upon, statutorily compliant evaluation models in pursuit of one-size-fits-all models developed by federal and state agencies, rather than local education agencies?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

Local authority should be just that...local authority. While federal and state agencies have recommendations as to what regulations and policies to follow, local boards should do what they need to do for the communities they represent. There is no one size fits all approach. The school system in Baltimore City has much different needs as the school system in Carroll County.

7. Do you support or oppose efforts to provide educators with sufficient professional development to ensure that they can deliver high-quality instruction aligned with College and Career Readiness?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

We need to make sure our children are ready for the real world. Information changes all the time, and it is important to pass that information to our staff. Professional development is so important to stay up to date on the always changing world we live in.

Collective Bargaining

Background Points

- CCEA supports efforts to protect and enhance the state's collective bargaining laws.
- Collective bargaining is the negotiation of a contract – including wages, salary scale, benefits, and working conditions – between employers and employees. The items agreed to in a ratified collective bargaining agreement apply to all employees in a bargaining unit, providing a benefit to employees and employers in not having to negotiate thousands of individual contracts.
- MSEA opposes right-to-work laws. Such laws restrict freedom of association and weaken organized labor in Maryland. The strength of organized labor is critical to protecting workers, ensuring quality, and maintaining fairness, safety, and competitive wages in the workplace.

8. Do you support or oppose public education employees' rights to bargain collectively?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

I support bargaining units advocating for its members, but I do not support some of the ways it's done. I have sat at a table, seen proposals or agreements, and then heard comments that do not support proposals in public. My concern has always been that the message is being sent to all members of what was proposed or agreed on.

9. How familiar are you with the CCEA & CASE contract?

Familiar

Unfamiliar

Additional Comments:

I am not permitted to comment due to current negotiations.

10. What changes, if any, would you like to see? And how would you honor the negotiated agreement, especially in tight fiscal times?

I would like to see and know that all members and non-members are told what was proposed or agreed on. There have been a few times that something was proposed or agreed on, and then comments in public or emails say otherwise. This does create a disconnect of communication to the public and members or non-members.

If there were tight fiscal times, I would not close schools as a way to give raises. There is no benefit to anyone when schools are closed.

Continuing Impact of the Pandemic

Background Points

The pandemic has exacerbated a pre-existing, multifaceted housing crisis. Housing costs continue to rise, keeping some families out of the market entirely, while those whose incomes were slashed during the pandemic have fallen so far behind that the Census Bureau estimates 7 million households as of late June 2021 face eviction when the temporary moratorium on eviction enacted during the pandemic is lifted.

The pandemic has also increased stresses, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), food insecurity, and digital divide issues for our students.

The pandemic has exacerbated a pre-existing, multifaceted

11. How will you address increased needs for mental health supports for students and educators in the wake of the pandemic?

This is not just a Carroll County issue, this is a National issue. There is a great need for mental health professionals all across the Country.

12. The pandemic further illuminated the immediate need for reliable, affordable access to technology for all students and educators in our state. How would you propose to eliminate the digital divide?

While COVID federal/state funds are helping to close the gap in technology needs for students by distributing laptops, there is a great need for reliable and affordable internet service in Carroll County. This has been an issue in Carroll County for several years. The County Commissioners need to get internet service to homes that can not get access from the one internet provider Carroll County has. Competition needs to be allowed. It should not cost a family ten thousand dollars to run a cable line from a box up a half mile driveway. We are at the point in society that internet access is just as important as electricity. It's no longer a luxury, it is a necessity.

Racial and Social Justice

Background Points

CCEA unequivocally believes that our diversity makes us stronger. We fundamentally believe that schools should be safe, welcoming, and nurturing learning environments for students of all backgrounds and beliefs, and places where all our students see themselves in the lessons they learn and experiences they enjoy. While students of color made up approximately 64% of the student population across the state in school year 2019-2020, our state had only 29% teachers of color, 38% principals of color, and 45% assistant principals of color. MSEA was represented on the Kirwan Commission and a vocal advocate of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in part because of our support for training and developing high-quality teachers and education leaders, particularly those from diverse and historically underrepresented backgrounds.

Every child, regardless of their background or zip code, deserves education justice and equitable access to opportunities, resources, and supports. We believe that the lives of our Black and Brown students matter and that all our students have a fundamental right to be educated in safe, healthy, and supportive learning communities and all our educators deserve safe, healthy, and supportive working environments.

Maryland and U.S. history are far more diverse than is generally reflected in the content and courses currently taught in our public schools. Far too many Marylanders can progress through their formal primary and secondary education and rarely, if ever, see themselves reflected in the content they are learning or hear about themselves in the stories they read and are told. This lack of inclusivity negatively impacts not only our students' ownership of and agency in their learning, but it also adversely impacts their overall engagement in their learning and portrays a one-sided view of our history for all students. This disconnect is further exacerbated by the dearth of a more diverse field of educators in our schools and by the disproportionate (and sometime inaccurate) representations seen in society and in our culture that

13. CCEA supports honesty in education across all subject areas and in all areas of the approved curriculum. To encourage critical thinking, we believe educators should have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools, and districts.

Do you support honesty in education? Do you believe educators have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools & districts?

For example, if a Carroll County high school history teacher, keeping with the approved CCPS curriculum, taught the true local story of Townsend Cook, who was lynched in Westminster in 1885, and as a result some parents became upset because they saw the lesson's material as divisive and controversial, then would you as a BOE member, defend that teacher's right to teach students this true story as part of the curriculum?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I support our teachers being able to teach the truth as what is in the material. I support teachers having discussions in their classroom with their students about the material that is presented. I do not support a teacher teaching their opinion about what is in the material or having discussions on a topic that has nothing to do with the curriculum. I do think it would be helpful if teachers gave a syllabus in the beginning of the course with links to the resources that will be used, so parents can review the material. If a parent has questions, this way they can reach out to the teacher with questions. Communication with our community is important to prevent any unnecessary accusations of a teacher trying to teach something that can be controversial.

14. How will you support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students throughout the county? What specific policies do you support whose goals are focused on providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

Yes. I do support diversity. Absolutely. As a current BOE member, I am trying to get a course approved called Global Community Citizenship to help our students be more understanding of others. This course can be made to fit our community needs. Students need to understand how to have conversations face to face, and need to have respect for others. They don't have to be friends to respect one another's views.

I do support equity. Everyone has different needs, and those needs should be met for each individual, but we should not discount others that have needs too. Every student is different, and has different needs. There is no one size fits all.

I do support inclusion, and everyone should feel included and welcome in their environment.

Community Schools

<p>Background Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Poverty dramatically and negatively affects the wellbeing of children, particularly in the areas of physical health, mental health, safe housing, access to technology, parental support, family planning services, nutrition, youth employment, and education. Each of these areas play a large role in whether students can learn and do well in school—making it imperative that these opportunity gaps be closed if we want to provide an equitable education in our communities. According to data collected by MSDE, 48% of Maryland public school students were enrolled for free and reduced-price meals this school year (meaning their family income level is at or below 185% of federal income poverty guidelines).● CCEA supports the establishment of community schools, where applicable, which are designed to close these opportunity gaps by making the school a hub for essential services that students in disadvantaged communities lack.● Community schools generally have the following four components: (1) they serve a high concentration of students in poverty; (2) they employ a full-time coordinator to lead community school-related services; (3) they conduct a needs assessment to identify key obstacles to learning and the services needed to close the opportunity gaps; and (4) they work with community partners to bring those
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needed services into the school building or nearby locations to make them accessible to students and community members.

- The Blueprint phases in community schools beginning in FY20, starting with 219 schools with 80% or more of their students enrolled for free and reduced-price meals. Community schools will be added, phased in according to highest levels of poverty first, until FY27, when a predicted 557—nearly one-third of all schools in the state—are projected to become community schools. That makes this one of the largest scale expansions of community schools in the nation.
- The American Rescue Plan provided additional funding to assist with the expansion of small group instruction delineated in the Blueprint. Of these funds, at least 20% must be used to address pandemic-associated learning gaps through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs.
- CCEA supports equitable and adequate resources to provide every student with an opportunity to learn in a safe and non-disruptive environment. Establishing and funding community schools is a research-based strategy for closing opportunity gaps and building strong communities.

15. Do you support or oppose local efforts to create and support community schools in areas of concentrated poverty?

Support Oppose

Additional Comments:

I do support those efforts. Unfortunately, federal and state funds only go so far. I do feel that we should be evaluating schools that qualify for Title 1 to be sure we are getting all the resources possible to students in need, and attempting to reach out to the community to offer resources to help improve families quality of life.

Parental Involvement and Public Support

Background Points

- It is calculated that school age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school.
- Research shows that the most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parental involvement in schools and parental expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school.
- Additionally, research indicates there are three major factors that influence parental involvement in schools:
 - Parents' belief that they can impact what is important and necessary on behalf of their children school.
 - The extent to which parents believe that they can have a positive influence on their children's education; and
 - Parents' perceptions that their children and school want them to be involved.

16. As a Board member, what would you do to increase parental involvement and public support for our public schools and educators?

There is a good deal of parental/family involvement in our community schools (some more than others). Our PTA/PTO do offer fundraisers at local restaurants as a way to create family time, which is very important. When I was elected, I worked with the Superintendent and our Communications to have all rec council activities sent to all families, not just their community school. This helps families see what is available all around the County. I am still working on having the same thing done for PTA/PTO's. Communities supporting communities.

The Community Advisory Council is a great asset to have for CCPS. It is my hope that school representatives are taking information back to their schools.

17. CCEA has had ongoing concerns about how some Board of Education members have used social media in ways we have considered divisive. What assurances would you make about how you would communicate with various stakeholders?

As a BOE member that uses social media personally and has a page for BOE, it is important to have open communications with the public. It is important to have your own personal views, but those views do need to be kept separate from your professional role. My BOE social media page is used to give information about meetings, weather delays, and relay a message to stop rumors. My personal page is just that, personal. However, I will not tolerate bullying or name calling on either of my pages.

Privatization

Background Points

- CCEA opposes any effort to outsource or privatize education jobs that are part of a bargaining unit. We maintain that any attempt to outsource or privatize jobs of public educators violates collective bargaining agreements because such an effort is in essence terminating or firing bargaining unit positions.
- Outsourcing and privatization efforts have threatened teacher and education support professional (ESP) jobs for years. In the last few years, Anne Arundel County has attempted to outsource teaching services for deaf and blind students, Talbot County has discussed privatizing transportation services, and Kent County has attempted to privatize custodial services. There have been multi-county efforts on the Eastern Shore to outsource the hiring of occupational therapists and physical therapists to work in the schools.
- When jobs are outsourced, quality control is diminished, and safety is compromised. Public employees are subject to background checks that private employers often do not require. After privatizing, local school boards lose control over the individuals working in schools and have little ability to provide input on job performance.
- Privatizers often use an argument of cost-savings as a means of winning contracts. The amount is often misleading because they intentionally underestimate first year operating costs. Ultimately, they reduce hours, health care coverage, or just cut jobs. All these steps lead to increase in local unemployment and less money in the community overall.

18. As a Board member, are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

_____ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

This is a difficult one to answer, because in situations like we are having now, contracting out would be needed. Now, in not so difficult times, we would not need to contract out help. I am for employing local residents, which in turn will put revenue back into our community.

Virtual Learning

Background Points

Statewide closures due to the pandemic forced educators and schools to implement virtual learning as an alternative to traditional in-person learning. The haste with which our schools, educators, and students were required to pivot was unprecedented and without advance planning. There is no doubt that the initial roll-out of virtual learning, coupled with the uncertainty of its duration, created significant challenges for all involved.

While we don't believe that virtual learning should ever replace in-person learning, CCEA believes that well-planned, goal-specific virtual learning options should be considered to meet the individual learning or course requirement needs of some of our students.

While there are some things about teaching that remain the same regardless of the mode of instruction, virtual learning does require

19. Do you support CCEA's position on virtual schools?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I absolutely agree our teachers need the training and the tools to do virtual (if schools must go virtual). Everyone learned to quickly adjust in a time that was very unexpected, but training does need to be done better. Virtual teaching may be easy for one teacher, but not for another. The same can be said for a student...may be easy for one student to learn virtually, but not for another student. As a current college student that all classes are online, I had to train myself how to learn remotely with no instruction. Not everyone can do this. As technology and education moves forward, I am worried that virtual will be used more and more, which could result in less teachers. For example, some of my college classes have fifty students in them. If there is a question, you send the instructor an email. There is no other communication. I do not want to see this happen in our schools. While some high school students could benefit from online classes especially if there is a class at one high school that is not offered at another high school, it's not for everyone.

20. Do you support or oppose the creation of virtual schools that are independent of local school boards?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

There would have to be funding for a program like this. To me, the State should create a State online platform for those that can not be in an actual classroom (home and hospital type format) and have State run, not local run.

21. What allowances or guardrails would you like to see implemented related to virtual learning options?

The only thing I advocate for is having a virtual class offered for high school students to take if a class they are interested in is not available in their home high school. This creates an equal learning opportunity. As of right now, Carroll County does not have an equal learning opportunity. For example, you can take Sign Language at Westminster High, but you can not take Sign Language at Manchester Valley. That is the only virtual learning I am for.

One thing virtual has given us, is the possibility to have virtual if school is closed for weather. The one obstacle is making sure students and teachers would need to take their computers home everyday in the event classes go virtual for the day.

Thank you for taking the time to address the questions above.