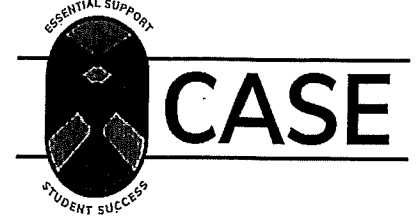


2026
Carroll County
Board of Education
Candidate Questionnaire



NAME of CANDIDATE: Shannon Hinkhaus

OFFICE SOUGHT: Carroll County Public Schools- 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 and CASE intend to share my responses with members and interested parties through our public website.

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Shannon Hinkhaus DATE SUBMITTED: 3/3/2026

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

Please return your completed and signed questionnaire no later than February 24, 2026 to Nathan Curtis at ncurtis@mseanea.org or to our office at 60 Aileron Court, Suite 6, Westminster, MD 21157.

Getting to Know You

1. Please share a brief bio for us to know you better. Be sure to include how long you've lived in Carroll County, whether you have/had kids in Carroll County Public Schools (CCPS), and other ways in which you are involved in our community.

My husband Hayward and I are both lifelong residents of Carroll County and Westminster High School graduates. I am also a proud graduate of Western Maryland College, now McDaniel College, here in Carroll County. I am a devoted wife and mother of three awesome young adults, all recent graduates of CCPS. My many years of experience with Carroll County schools have motivated and energized me to run for the school board, where I believe I can make a positive difference for Carroll County students, teachers, and residents.

I am a hard worker who prizes persistence and determination, and who recognizes that institutional success is never accidental, but rather the result of relentless pursuit. I will honor Carroll's traditional values in every decision I make and ensure we can all continue to be proud of our investment in our children and their future.

Student Supports

2. What strategies would you propose to meet the growing mental health needs of students and staff?

The mental health of students and staff is important, and schools should ensure that appropriate supports are available for those who need them. At the same time, the primary mission of our schools must remain education. Carroll County already has systems in place to support students who need counseling or additional assistance, including access during the school day when appropriate. I support continuing these services with full parental knowledge and involvement. Teachers are supportive, trusted adults in students' lives, but their primary role is instruction. By keeping academic learning at the center, offering targeted mental health supports when needed, and working in partnership with families, we can support student well-being without overburdening educators or straying from the core mission of education.

3. How will you support and promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion for ALL students throughout the county? What specific policies or initiatives do you support that provide equitable access, opportunities, resources, and support for every student? Understand that "equity" is ensuring that every student gets what they need to be successful, such as reteaching or remediation. "Equality" would be saying to a student, "Since the rest of the class understood the lesson, we are moving on to the next lesson. You will have to figure it out."

I believe the responsibility of the school system is to educate every child and help each student reach their individual potential. That requires commitment and partnership between the school, the student, and the family.

Students come to school with different strengths, challenges, and learning needs. Supporting all students means recognizing those differences and providing appropriate academic assistance

when needed. In CCPS this includes Title I services, targeted intervention programs, special education supports, English learner services, and gifted and talented programs that offer additional help or enrichment.

I support policies that focus on access to resources, individualized support, and high expectations for all students. Our goal should be to help every student make progress, grow academically, and be prepared for future success, while maintaining fairness, balance, and academic rigor across the system.

Staff Supports

Educators nationwide face increasing pressure to address a wide range of societal challenges while also navigating concerns about overstepping parental rights. For example, some elementary educators are being asked to take on responsibilities like assisting with basic life skills (children not potty trained), many educators experience higher levels of physical, verbal, or emotional challenges from students (who have difficulty interacting with peers and adults, as well as self-regulation), and some educators feel constrained in addressing sensitive or controversial topics due to potential disciplinary consequences.

4. What steps (short term and long term) would you take to help support educators as their jobs become increasingly difficult to navigate?

Supporting educators begins with listening. In the short term, I would engage directly with teachers and support staff to understand what is making their jobs more difficult and what support would be most effective.

A major concern is discipline. Clear, consistent discipline policies are essential to protecting instructional time and maintaining a productive learning environment. Teachers need the authority and support to manage classrooms so they can focus on teaching. Long term, we must restore clarity to the role of educators. Teachers should be allowed to teach—not be expected to serve as stand-in parents, counselors, or social workers. By refocusing on academic fundamentals and setting realistic expectations, we can reduce burnout, improve outcomes, and better support the professionals in our classrooms.

5. Educators have increasing concerns about safety in our public schools. As a member of the Board of Education, what suggestions or ideas would you bring to address those concerns?

School safety must always be a top priority, and educator concerns deserve to be taken seriously. As a Board member, I would actively seek input from teachers and staff to better understand the specific safety challenges they face in their buildings.

In CCPS, we have a strong School Resource Officer program at the middle and high school levels and a dedicated security team that works closely with the Sheriff's Office. However, we should continue evaluating response times, coverage, and procedures—particularly at the elementary level—to ensure emergencies are addressed as quickly as possible.

Safety also includes protecting the physical well-being of teachers and support staff. Clear, consistently enforced discipline policies and appropriate support for managing challenging behaviors are essential components of a safe learning and working environment. Addressing safety requires both strong security measures and effective discipline, and I would support efforts to strengthen both.

6. What strategies or policies do you have to address the unsustainable workload for educators where expectations/responsibilities continue to increase without additional compensation? How would you support educators and ensure workloads remain manageable?

I would start by listening to educators to understand where workloads are becoming unmanageable. It's important to set realistic expectations and prioritize what really matters so teachers can focus on teaching. Supporting educators means respecting their time, valuing their work, and making sure added responsibilities don't come without the resources and flexibility to handle them.

7. Our Education Support Professionals (CASE bargaining unit members) are underpaid and underappreciated. What would you do to ensure that our Education Support Professionals (ESPs) receive adequate and appropriate benefits, training, safe working conditions, and a living wage?

Education Support Professionals are essential to the daily functioning of our schools, and students cannot succeed without them. I support fair compensation, safe working conditions, access to appropriate training, and respect for the important work ESPs perform.

As a Board member, I would advocate for responsible budgeting that prioritizes competitive wages for ESPs while remaining mindful of taxpayer impact. I believe retention and stability among support staff directly benefit students and educators alike.

Will you support the ESP Bill of Rights (**attached to email**)?

I support aspects of the ESP Bill of Rights, including the right to a safe and healthy work environment, reasonable workloads, and access to health insurance. At the same time, I believe it's important to recognize that ESP positions are diverse, and one-size-fits-all policies may not be appropriate. Any decisions affecting support staff should focus on fairness and merit while responsibly managing priorities and budgets.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future

In the spring of 2025, CCEA collaborated with CCPS, the County Commissioners, and with the Carroll County Delegation to advocate for a waiver from the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB). This is a concrete example of bipartisan effort to focus on supporting the best interests of is best for Carroll County students and staff.

8. The Blueprint, at its heart, is about elevating the profession of educators and changing the top to bottom approach to public education in Maryland. Describe what ideas you might bring to the Board of Education about providing our educators with more autonomy and being more involved in decision making in CCPS.

Educators are closest to students and classrooms, and their input is valued. I support opportunities for teachers to provide feedback on curriculum implementation, instructional pacing, and classroom management policies.

As a board member, I will welcome and encourage teachers to reach out to me. I aim not only to serve as a liaison between the school system and the community but also to support teachers by truly listening to their concerns and challenges—they are the ones on the front lines every day.

9. Apart from funding, what are the biggest concerns you have regarding the implementation of The Blueprint for Maryland's Future in CCPS?

Honestly, it's hard to separate funding from the discussion—Blueprint simply can't work as intended without it. Beyond that, I am also concerned about the public/private partnership for pre-K and the sheer challenge of hiring enough teachers to meet the teacher planning time requirements.

My biggest concern is the loss of local control that this implementation brings. Carroll County has a strong track record in education and deserves the flexibility to make its own decisions to best support student success.

Privatization and Use of Public Monies

10. What is your position on providing public funding for students who are homeschooled or attend private schools and why?

I have concerns about providing public funding directly to homeschooling or private school programs, mainly because it could open the door to unwanted government intervention. I do support charter schools, which are public schools, as well as other ways—like tax credits—to help families pursuing alternative education options.

11. As a potential Board Member, what is your position in the contracting out of services rather than having those services provided by Board of Education employees (i.e. Speech and Language Pathologists, custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance work, to name a few)?

I support retaining in-house staff when it provides better continuity, accountability, and working conditions. However, contracting may be appropriate in limited circumstances when it clearly saves money or fills staffing gaps without compromising service quality or safety.

Honesty in Education

An example of approved Carroll County curriculum is the true story of Townsend Cook, who was lynched in Westminster in 1885. Some parents have expressed concern over the lesson, viewing the material as divisive and controversial.

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

Honesty in education means teaching factual, age-appropriate, and standards-aligned content while presenting material objectively and without political bias. Difficult historical topics should be taught with care, context, and respect for differing perspectives.

I support transparency with parents, clear communication about curriculum content, and adherence to approved instructional materials. Honesty also requires listening to community concerns and ensuring instruction does not cross into advocacy.

13. How would you support our educators and show you trust their professional judgement in implementing the approved county curriculum, even when it may be contentious?

I will start by trusting that teachers present the approved curriculum fairly and in good faith, giving students an accurate understanding of each topic. Clear expectations, open communication, and transparency with parents help navigate more contentious subjects. At the same time, schools should stay focused on education without overstepping the role of parents when it comes to values-based lessons.

Rebuilding Trust and Faith in Public Education

14. What is the role of the Board of Education in rebuilding the public's trust in public education and, more specifically, CCPS (there are still people in this community who believe there are litter boxes in the bathrooms at schools for those who identify as animals)? If elected, what steps would you take to address misinformation and strengthen confidence in our schools?

Rebuilding trust starts with keeping schools focused on what matters most: academics and student learning. When misinformation spreads, it's important to set the record straight. Right now, too much emphasis on social emotional learning and political agendas has pulled attention

away from teaching and learning. I want to keep our schools focused, transparent, and accountable so parents can trust their children are getting a real education.

15. CCEA has raised concerns about how some Board of Education members have used their official position in ways perceived as divisive (example: using social media to malign those who may have a different worldview, sometimes including groups of employees). What precautions would you take to avoid potential conflicts of interest and what assurances would you make about how you would communicate with various stakeholders? Who manages your campaign social media account and who would manage your BoE social media account if elected?

I manage my own social media and will always do so. It is not my nature to malign anyone publicly on social media. I have little tolerance for that. I prefer to contact anyone directly with whom I have a disagreement, not for the world to see. That being said, I don't know exactly how I will use social media in the future. It can be a good tool to inform people who are not paying attention to meetings and agendas, as long as it is done professionally.

16. What is one thing that you would like our members to know about your candidacy that wasn't addressed in a previous question and answer?

The Board of Education makes decisions about budgets, planning, and policy — things that often happen far from the classroom. But those decisions always find their way to you — into your day, your lesson plans, and your workload. I want you to know I understand that connection, and I'll never take it lightly.

The reality is — I don't come from a classroom background. My experience comes from volunteering, substituting, and being a parent who has seen the classroom from the other side of the door. But what I do have is deep respect for what you do and who you are.

When I think of teachers, I think of the ones who shaped my own life — the ninth-grade teacher who challenged me to think, my college professor who inspired me, my daughter's third-grade teacher who brought her out of her shell, and my son's ELA teacher who made reading fun again. I also think of those of you who are moms and dads, cheering for your children beside me on the sidelines.

That's who I'll have in mind when I vote. Because while my focus is always on the 26,000 students in our schools, I know our students can only thrive when their teachers are supported. I can't promise limitless funding, but I can promise fairness, respect, and a voice that values you as professionals. You deserve steady pay, safe classrooms, and the satisfaction of loving where you work. We share the same mission — to prepare our kids for an amazing future. And I'll do everything I can to make sure you have what you need to make that possible.

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

