

**NORTHERN VIRGINIA
SCHOOL BOARD**

VOTER'S



GUIDE

2023 GENERAL ELECTION





The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) and the Washington Jewish Week have produced this Northern Virginia Jewish Voter's Guide for the 2023 school board races to help you become an informed participant in the upcoming General Election. This publication will introduce you to candidates running for school board in Loudoun, Fairfax and Prince William counties and their positions on important issues facing our local school systems.

This is the first time JCRC has produced a school board voter's guide, in recognition of the centrality of our schools to some of the most critical issues confronting Northern Virginia's Jewish community. The JCRC continues to devote extensive resources to addressing rising school-based antisemitism and bias, and to ensuring that all students can access high quality education in a post-pandemic world.

For comprehensive information about the upcoming elections, including how and where to cast your ballot, use this [link](#) to the [Virginia Department of Elections](#). See who is on your ballot by viewing the [candidate lists](#). Register to vote or apply for an absentee ballot online using the [Citizen Portal](#).

IMPORTANT DATES TO KNOW INCLUDE:

Friday, September 22, 2023: The first day of in-person early voting at your [local registrar's office](#).

Monday, October 16, 2023: The deadline to [register to vote, or update an existing registration](#).
(Voters may register after this date, including on Election Day, and vote using a provisional ballot.)

Friday, October 27, 2023: The deadline to [request](#) an absentee ballot by mail.
(Your request must be received by your local voter registration office by 5:00 p.m.)

Saturday, October 28, 2023: Voter registration offices are open for early voting.

Saturday, November 4, 2023: The last day of in-person early voting at your [local voter registration office](#).
(Offices close at 5 p.m.)

Tuesday, November 7, 2023: Election Day (Polling places are open from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.)

This Voter's Guide was compiled by sending survey questions to each registered candidate for public school board in Loudoun, Fairfax and Prince William counties. We asked each candidate to include a photograph, a link to their website and answers of no more than 200 words to each question. We have copied the responses in full for each candidate who replied.

We hope this resource is a valuable tool to facilitate your participation in our democratic process. For additional information, contact Vicki Fishman at the JCRC at vfishman@jcouncil.org.

The Washington Jewish Week always provides the latest in politics, news, and local stories. Subscribe today and never miss out! www.washingtonjewishweek.com/bogo55

Resources to specific localities can be found below:

Alexandria City: (alexandriava.gov)

[Voter Registration & Elections | City of Alexandria, VA](#)
[Voting Resources Viewer | City of Alexandria, VA](#)
[Key Absentee Voting Dates & Deadlines | City of Alexandria, VA](#)
[Voter Services for Persons with Disabilities | City of Alexandria, VA](#)

Arlington County: (arlingtonva.gov)

[Home – Arlington County VA Voting and Elections](#)
[Polling Places – Arlington County VA Voting and Elections](#)
[Early Voting – Arlington County VA Voting and Elections](#)
[Vote by Mail – Arlington County VA Voting and Elections](#)
[Disability Services – Arlington County VA Voting and Elections](#)

Fairfax City: (fairfaxva.gov)

[City Polling Locations | City of Fairfax, VA](#)

Fairfax County: (fairfaxcounty.gov)

[Office of Elections | Elections](#)
[In-Person Early Voting | Elections](#)
[Vote by Mail | Elections](#)
[Disability Services and Elections | Elections](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions | Elections](#)

Falls Church City Resources: (fallschurchva.gov)

[Voter Registration & Elections Office | Falls Church, VA - Official Website](#)
[Polling Locations | Falls Church, VA - Official Website](#)
[Early Voting | Falls Church, VA - Official Website](#)

Loudoun County: (loudoun.gov)

[Elections & Voter Registration | Loudoun County, VA - Official Website](#)
[Find Your Polling Place | Loudoun County, VA - Official Website](#)
[Vote on Election Day Information | Loudoun County, VA - Official Website](#)
[Early Voting Information | Loudoun County, VA - Official Website](#)
[Vote at Home Information | Loudoun County, VA - Official Website](#)
[My Elected Representatives, Loudoun County, VA](#)

Manassas City Resources: (manassasva.gov)

[Elections Manassas, Virginia](#)
[Polling Places](#)
[Vote by Mail](#)
[Early Voting](#)
[Ballot Drop Box Manassas, Virginia](#)

Prince William County Resources: (pwcva.gov)

[Office of Elections](#)

We hope this resource is a valuable tool to facilitate your participation in our democratic process.

For additional information, contact Vicki Fishman at the JCRC at vfishman@jcouncil.org.

NoVA School Board Voter's Guide

Fairfax County

AT-LARGE

Cassandra Aucoin

cassandraucoin.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

The most important issues that I see as facing our County schools are:

Declining student achievement performance and lowered academic standards. The 200+ schools in FCPS have vastly different reading and math proficiency levels, and

the already present achievement gaps between Black and Hispanic children and other racial/ethnic groups are widening. SAT scores have declined. We need to raise academic standards back to where an "A" really is an "A."

Parental involvement in their children's education and fractured parent-school/teacher relationships. To rebuild the partnership between parents, teachers, administration, and the school board, we must give parents and guardians the freedom to participate in all facets of their children's education.

School safety. Elementary schools do not have security personnel and progress has been slow on installing external cameras. There are hundreds of trailers on school campuses without any viable means of physical protection.

In addition, the increase in student behavior and drug related (fentanyl) issues since the return to in-school learning have caused added stress in the classroom, to other students, and for the teachers. Safety needs to be a priority.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes. However, I think the number of school closures for religious observances is at the maximum on the school calendar. Parents and teachers that I spoke with have said that having less than 5-day school weeks creates stress for working parents, disrupts teaching, and slows the learning progress of students who fell behind as a result of the virtual learning that took place during COVID.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Bullying or intimidating any student regarding their race, gender or religion should not be tolerated. "Awareness" of the prejudice Jews has experienced over the centuries, and genocide, must be instilled by our students. Teachers should receive training on what to look for in instances of this nature so that they can alert the administration as soon as they become aware of a problem. The school administration must notify the parents of both parties and hold the responsible students accountable with serious consequences. It is crucial to bring in the parents to ensure discipline is enforced. Antisemitism is not an issue to be swept under the rug.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

There has been, unfortunately, a decline in Holocaust education in this nation and it's a real problem. A 2020 survey by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany found that nearly one-third of all Americans (31 percent) and more than 4-in-10 Millennials (41 percent) believe that substantially less than 6 million Jews were killed (two million or fewer) during the Holocaust. While there were over 40,000 concentration camps and ghettos in Europe during the Holocaust, almost half of Americans (45 percent) cannot name one – and this percentage is even higher among Millennials. The Fairfax County School Board can ensure the report's recommendations are implemented and that this curriculum is thorough and followed correctly. The Board can also collaborate with the Administration to develop ideas for Jewish American Heritage Month programming and to approve funds for greater educator access to anti-antisemitism resources and tools.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

In the broadest sense, the curriculum can be used as tool for fostering cultural competency by incorporating the histories, experiences, customs and cultures of the students in the classroom, and meeting the diverse students' learning needs. With awareness and knowledge of cultural differences comes understanding, appreciation, and empathy.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LBGTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

In K–12 education, the emphasis should be on teaching students the fundamentals of reading, writing, and math and developing their all-around knowledge of the sciences, arts, history, and literature. Books about historical occurrences like the Holocaust and court cases pertaining to racial equality should be taught in our classrooms at the grade level to which they are relevant. Sensitive subjects that lack historical context, a pertinent event, or are unrelated to the student's education should not be covered and in some cases, are possibly better left to be the responsibility of the parents. Last, in my opinion, equating LBGTQ narratives with the actual historical occurrence of the Holocaust diminishes the significance of the Holocaust.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets

for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

The Board should work with the Superintendent to identify the students who are falling behind and establish a plan with the student's teachers, parents, and guardians, and further track the student's progress. It should direct an audit of the \$3.5 billion dollar budget and recommend redistributing money from initiatives that are found to be either overfunded, underutilized, or have no direct effect on the students' education, safety, or wellbeing. There has been no outside audit of the Fairfax County schools in almost a decade. This audit also should examine the programs that directly affect the students and determine whether they are implemented well. If not, we should consider alternative approaches. Finally, the Board and administration must address with parents the need and value of keeping their children in school.

In my professional experience managing large scale programs and budgets, increasing funding for a program that is not yielding good results will not lead to better outcomes. This is evidenced by the fact that pre-pandemic FCPS SOL pass rates for math and reading were declining while the FCPS budget was increasing. In the past five years, hundreds of millions of dollars have been added (not including COVID aid) to reach the \$3.5 billion dollars in Fiscal Year 2024 despite reduced student enrollment and still poor achievement.

Saundra Davis

davisforeducation.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

The biggest issue that I try to drive home to Fairfax County voters is that all 12 of the current school board members are from the same political persuasion. It is a well-known fact that groups of decision-makers do not function properly without diversity of thought. I look forward to providing some

moderation to the conversations when I am elected. FCPS is also in dire need of an independent audit. Voters are concerned about the annual increases in property taxes that are used to pay for our public schools while test scores and learning standards continue to plummet. FCPS has a historical reputation for high academic rigor. That is why many voters bought homes in this area. Our school board needs to return to a focus on academics. It does not matter your race, gender, religion, or politics if a student cannot read or isn't prepared for the next stage in their life.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I am glad to see FCPS pay attention to the needs of minority faiths. It sends a message to the community that we acknowledge and include everyone in our community and provides an opportunity for others to be aware of and learn about the faiths of people in our community. The school board should manage the inclusion of these holidays while also maintaining as many five day weeks to optimize student learning and protect much needed summer vacation time for families and teachers. Float days could also be considered in future calendar planning. Here is the link to an interview I did with WJLA on the topic. <https://www.davisforeducation.com/post/saundra-davis-interview-on-wjla>

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

I am deeply concerned by the rise of antisemitism, specifically in our schools. I have read the Title VI complaint filed by the ZOA. I have been meeting with Jewish parents to learn more about what Jewish children experience in FCPS and their frustration with the FCPS leadership for not adequately responding to their concerns. Given the Title VI complaint, the school board needs to provide accountability and oversight to correct this problem.

I hear from Jewish parents that they feel school administrators do not understand antisemitism. Virginia just passed the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and we as a school district should use it as an educational tool to help us understand antisemitism.

FCPS has spent a lot of time and resources on expanding equity initiatives and yet this programming does not seem to be addressing antisemitism. We need to explore all ideological origins of antisemitism and reach out to a variety of organizations and antisemitism experts that have demonstrated success in combating this form of hatred.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The report had many useful recommendations that I hope our school board will consider directing the social studies curriculum department to address. The study of Judaism and ancient Israel in their historical context are part of building a well-rounded world history curriculum. Holocaust education must be centered on the teaching of antisemitism using proper pedagogy.

The report also recommended the General Assembly pass legislation prohibiting partisan political and ideological indoctrination in classrooms and curricula. At the district level, this means we need to uphold the FCPS Controversial Issues Policy and policies regarding teacher objectivity and impartiality so that all students can be educated in a classroom free from ideology. The Commission report also recommended adherence to the principles of free and open academic inquiry and noted that free speech protects all citizens, including Jews. Our schools should reflect these principles.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

According to the Nation's Report Card (NAEP), U.S. history and civics test scores have plummeted in this country while schools were closed during the pandemic. NAEP is designed to measure the knowledge and skills that are necessary for the responsibilities of citizenship in our democracy, so we should all be concerned that students are not literate in American history and government. FCPS needs to focus on academic excellence and improving social studies instruction that emphasizes critical thinking and developing a nuanced understanding of history. Learning about other cultures and their contributions and struggles in world and American history is an important part of the social studies curriculum that prepares students for their lives beyond graduation and enhances their ability to participate in our democratic government.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

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Schools should be guided by the following questions in selecting books: what learning objectives does this book fulfill? Is the book developmentally appropriate for the student audience with which it will be used? What is appropriate for a high school may not be appropriate for an elementary school or middle school. Each school in FCPS has book selection committees that include staff members and parents which is important when evaluating materials for school usage. Schools should continue to make sure they follow these approval procedures so that both staff and parents have input on these important decisions.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

School closures and mask mandates proved to be disastrous for all of our students who suffered not only significant learning loss, but also mental health challenges which is why I started speaking up at school board meetings during the pandemic and am running for the School Board now.

The Nation's Report Card test results have shown that reading, math, and U.S. History and civics scores plummeted as a result of school closures, with drops even worse for marginalized communities. This isn't a funding problem, it's a priority problem. While our children were home isolated and not learning, FCPS focused on everything but opening schools and academic excellence. Even now, FCPS has expanded the Equity Office and hired five more staff members. Students need reading, math, and special education specialists, not equity specialists. The priority of the School Board should be directing funding not to the central office bureaucracy, but to learning specialists so students can finally receive the help they need and deserve.

Ahmed Mahdi Hussein

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

I came to America as an immigrant and through education I bettered myself and became the successful person that I am today. I see education as the most powerful tool for upwards mobility and success for our children so that they may compete in the global market.

Fairfax County schools have many challenges which can be summed up into three categories:

Inconsistent delivery of a quality rigorous education for all children in the County, especially for those who need special educational programs and support to overcome the learning gap created by the COVID pandemic response.

Mismanaged capital investments and budgeting which has resulted in children learning in trailers across the County.

The increasing role of politics in our school board discourse and educational systems which have marginalized communities and parents. This extends to the increase in incidents of hate speech and actions in the school system.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

As a person of faith, I fully support the inclusion of minority faith observance days into the school year calendar. The opportunities for children to have the right to practice in accordance to their communities and/or faith is powerful and critical to their success.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Hate speech and incidents have no role in our community and in our schools. Every child and family of Fairfax County has a right to feel safe and free to practice their faith in our community and our schools. Antisemitism is on the rise not only in our schools and communities but is also on the rise across the United States. Having said that, we have to address antisemitism in our schools directly and intentionally. I support the following actions:

A policy statement from the FCPS Board unequivocally condemning antisemitism and all forms of hate speech with the school system. This would mean adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of Antisemitism.

A zero tolerance policy for antisemitism and hate speech in the school system.

Raising awareness in the Fairfax County schools through a deliberative educational program on the history of antisemitism in an age appropriate manner for students in conjunction with educational programs for the teachers and administrators.

Collaboration with the Jewish community to create a partnership to address this important issue.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The School Board should adopt these recommendations fully. These are all reasonable and actionable recommendations which are within the Boards ability to perform.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

In 1992 the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) stated that the "...primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world." The purpose of a good well rounded social studies curriculum is to teach students about the cultures that make up our communities so that they become better informed citizens of our County. Incorporating the recommendations of the Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism Report would strengthen the Fairfax County social studies curriculum and the education of our students.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

Banning books from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculums is counterproductive to ensuring our children are exposed to the diversity of our communities. I trust our teachers and administrators to lead discussions based on difficult books in a sensitive and informed way. Having said that I am sensitive to the fact that some parents based on their religious or cultural beliefs have objections to their children being exposed to certain topics at an early age. For this reason, I also support the right for parents to have an opt-in option when certain controversial books are being used in the classrooms



and for school libraries to allow parents request notification or their consent for their child to check out certain content. I intend to work towards a middle ground where books are not banned and parents are given a voice in what books their children are exposed to, especially at an early age.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

This is a topic of great importance for the students who experienced learning loss during COVID. A strategic focused investment in educational resources for these students and additional support to teachers is the only way to recover that loss. Spending more money on consultants and studies will be wasteful. The Board needs to take action now before the learning loss permanently affects the students' future. I am in support of extended educational time whether it is through the availability of before, after, and summer school programs. I also support increase in availability of quality virtual or in-person tutoring to all students.

Kyle McDaniel

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Academics: Academic achievement is a core tenet of any educational environment. High standards, focused curriculum, and passionate teachers all play a vital role in helping students achieve academic success. Academic excellence is one of the foundational

underpinnings that make our public schools the best in the country. We must strive to help every child reach their full potential, and that starts with high expectations.

Mental Health: The emerging mental health challenges prior to COVID were exacerbated, and schools now face a bigger crisis. The need for consistent mental health management does not stop when the dismissal bell rings. Addressing this challenge will require pulling together county, state, and federal resources and most critically: working together.

Safety: Parents, teachers, and students face a world where safety and security are under constant threat. We can settle for active shooter drills, bullies, and illegal substances as a way of life. Or we can fight for a world where our kids' biggest fear is bedtime. Bullying of any kind will not be tolerated, and victims will be protected and supported. Schools must be proactive to ensure safety, and swift to react to deter negative behavior.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes. In Fairfax County, our diversity is a source of strength. A diverse community like ours needs to recognize the various observations of faith. One way to do that is through the school calendar. The current School Board made good progress, and I would

continue to work with parents, teachers, and representatives of the various faith communities to improve upon this progress. It is also important to work with teachers to help them plan around these holidays, and recognize that, in some instances, scheduling major assignments or work prior to, or immediately after, the observed day is not appropriate.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

This trend is unfortunate, and a negative reflection on us as a country. To address this, we need to 1) set clear behavioral standards through the SR&R Manual and enforce them fairly with an eye towards restorative justice; 2) train teachers and staff to recognize these incidents for what they are, an act of hate; 3) build into curriculum an awareness of antisemitism, and the history surrounding it, and educate kids on why this is unacceptable; and 4) make it clear through communication that antisemitic acts of any kind will not be tolerated. These are just four "low hanging fruit" ideas, and I would work with the Jewish community on an ongoing basis to ensure that we take appropriate measures to reverse this frightening trend.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

From an implementation perspective, the School Board would serve to direct the Superintendent to implement these recommendations throughout FCPS as a whole. Whether in curriculum, policy, or operations, it would be her responsibility to act on the Board's direction with the report's guidance. That said, there are two key components that the Board should follow through on: funding and accountability. Implementing the recommendations will inevitably require funding, and the Board would need to allocate that; an allocation that I would support. The Board would also need to hold the Superintendent and her staff accountable for adopting the recommendations which I would also support.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

It is vitally important to ensure that what we teach is accurate, fair, contextual, and complete. Recent efforts to water down, or whitewash, history are unacceptable and I am proud of this current School Board for resisting those efforts. As a parent, I want my kids to understand our history, fully, and to understand that many people had very different experiences throughout history. As uncomfortable as some may find this, it's our history and it needs to be taught. That said, inclusive curriculums also help establish connectivity between students, improve our overall community well-being, and help foster improved relationships between peers.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I do not support recent efforts to remove books from libraries that reflect the real lived experiences of people in our own communities. Our professional librarians are just that, trained professionals, and I trust them to leverage their experience and knowledge to curate appropriate collections. Parents, of course, have a right to choose what books their own kids cannot have access to, but that does not translate into a right to block books from other kids. One of the few books I remember reading in grade school, 7th grade to be exact, was *The Hiding Place*, the true story of a Dutch family helping many Jewish people escape during WW2. That I would not have had the opportunity to read it because someone may have found it objectionable for any reason, is unacceptable.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

First and foremost, correcting problems fundamentally starts with identifying and prioritizing them. In this context, we need evidence-based decisions buttressed and guided with data. We also need to incorporate a wrap-around model for communities with critical achievement gaps that promote family and parental involvement at every stage. Additionally, we have to understand that there is a critical teacher shortage that grows by the day. This has to be aggressively addressed by the next School Board in a sustainable manner. Finally, tutoring services and mental health management are both key components to addressing these gaps in the long run. All these items require funding, and working closely with the Board of Supervisors to fully fund these needs is important.

Ryan McElveen

mcelveenforschoolboard.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Provide high-quality mental health resources that meet the needs of our students and staff.

Competitively compensate and retain a high-quality workforce that knows our students by name and by need.

Build and maintain educational environments and facilities that are safe, inclusive, healthy, sustainable, and inspire learning.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes. I support a school calendar that is inclusive of minority faith and cultural observance days.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

The horrific cases of antisemitism locally and nationally have exposed the underlying hatred in American society that has been festering beneath the surface unabated. From the streets of Charlottesville to the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh to the Jewish Community Center in Fairfax, antisemitic sentiment has been on full display. The School Board needs to be a bulwark of support for the Jewish community. Following the efforts of the last School Board to recognize Jewish holidays, the Board should continue to partner with the Jewish community to ensure that Jewish students and families feel safe, respected, and welcomed in FCPS. When incidents occur, school leaders should be upfront and transparent to ensure their communities understand what has occurred and what will be done to address the situation.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

It has been a long road to ensure that the FCPS curriculum is inclusive. In 2013, I led the Board's effort to internationalize the FCPS curriculum by creating the Internationalization Working Group, which developed recommendations for improving international studies within the social studies curriculum, language offerings, and embassy engagement and study abroad opportunities. After all, we know that students feel more welcomed when their cultural heritage is reflected within the curriculum.

Further, I support expanding the scope of that group's recommendations to include partnering with community organizations like JCRC, which can provide additional resources to align with Jewish American Heritage Month and advance learning about the Holocaust and antisemitism more broadly.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

As a trained anthropologist, I want to ensure that our students are taught cultural competency from an early age by embedding that teaching within the system's curriculum and pacing guides. I commit to ensuring that FCPS teaches a social studies curriculum that is factually accurate, inclusive, and age appropriate. School curricula – and K-12 education, more broadly – have come under attack by the Youngkin administration.

Earlier this year as part of VDOE's listening tour on the newly proposed history standards, I joined several former FCPS School Board members in sending a letter expressing concerns that the new standards are rife with historical errors, fail to tell history in an inclusive way, and de-emphasize conceptual understanding and critical thinking skills in favor of rote memorization and low-level thinking. We also expressed our deep concerns about the lack of racial, gender and religious diversity, as well as an underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples. The complete removal from the standards of the term "fascism" was also deeply concerning and should be cause for alarm for everyone -- especially the Jewish American community. Our School Board must publicly advocate against and reject these changes.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LBGTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I will work to ensure that literature in schools is representative and respects our diverse community by ensuring that the choices of librarians are respected, books are not banned, and parents have the option to opt-out students from specific literary works. I served on the School Board's challenged materials committee when a parent sought to ban Toni Morrisons' *Beloved* in 2012, and at that time and ever since I have always rejected efforts to ban books.

I will continue to advocate against materials and topics perceived to be sensitive through our Board's legislative program. I oversaw the Board's legislative program as state legislative liaison for eight years and worked to develop strong advocacy language on curricular issues – I will continue that advocacy work if elected again.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

The pandemic reinforced long-standing disparities and Fairfax County's tale of two systems.

In terms of helping students who have fallen behind academically, we need to continue investing in remediation, tutoring, and mentorship opportunities for students. Just as important, we need to continue to improve the mental health of students. I helped institute the annual Mental Health and Wellness Conferences, school-based stress less weeks, a suicide phone and text line, and hiring a significant number of new psychologists and social workers. The overarching problem in the current system is that, although resources like teletherapy are now provided to students who request them, they are not automatically provided to everyone. Every student and staff member deserves the opportunity to meet with a qualified professional at least once.

In terms of learning from the mistakes of the past, I propose convening a commission on pandemic response and preparedness to assess how FCPS handled education during the pandemic – including virtual learning, social-emotional support for students and staff, and logistical response – and provide lessons learned for the future.

Iryong Moon

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

The first issue is the negative impact the pandemic has had on academic achievement and the mental health of students and staff. The achievement gap has widened along racial and socioeconomic lines. Many parents, however, lack sufficient information, resources, and time to help their children at home. The school system needs to be more proactive in reaching out to them. We also need to work more closely with our communities and tap into their resources. Parents and communities are our partners in educating our students.

The second issue is recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers. Our compensation package needs drastic improvement. We are unable to compete against the private sector in recruiting top talent with the current salaries and benefits. We also need to improve their working conditions. They need more planning time as well as better support and training in classroom management and engagement with parents and administrators.

The third is regaining trust from our communities, which have

become more divided than ever before. Of course, policy debates are necessary, and we cannot expect everyone to agree on every issue. However, the school system needs to do a better job of engaging them and ensuring our diverse communities feel heard.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes, I will. As FCPS takes pride in embracing and celebrating the diversity of the community and the student body, we need to make sure that the religious observances of minority faiths are protected and respected. This is not just to accommodate the needs of those practicing minority faiths but also to provide all students with opportunities to learn about different faiths practiced in our schools and communities. The inclusive calendar will remind all of our students that the world is stronger because of its diversity.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

We must increase our efforts to remind students and staff about the need and value of respecting people from different backgrounds – racial, ethnic, linguistic, or otherwise. All of our students must understand that physical violence or threats and bullying in any fashion, including online, will not be tolerated and that decisive actions must be taken in the case of transgression. These efforts require more than just a brief mention in our SR&R (Student Rights and Responsibilities) instruction at the beginning of the year. We must continue teaching our students about the tragic history of antisemitism, its continuing existence in our society, and the toxic impact on individuals subjected to antisemitism and on the relations among various nations.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The School Board can direct the Superintendent to provide a report detailing how the school system's current curriculum differs from the Commission's recommendations; what work would be needed to implement the recommendations; and, what actions the Board could take. The Board should set a deadline for the Superintendent's report and also direct the Superintendent to include in the report any funding and policy decisions that need to be made by the School Board and the timeline for the implementation of the recommendations.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

There is nothing more important than including in the curriculum itself what needs to be taught if we want to foster cultural competency and ensure comprehensive social studies instruction. Curriculum sets the direction for all instruction to follow. Teachers are fully expected to follow the curriculum, and any assessment, whether internal or state- mandated, of what and how well students have learned will be based upon what is specified in the curriculum. Community members and organizations of diverse backgrounds should also be given opportunities to provide their input in developing and adjusting curricula. Their input should be welcome.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LBGTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive,

have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

During my over 20-year tenure on the Fairfax County School Board, I have always opposed book banning. Of course, we need to make sure that the content of the books, instruction, or curriculum is age appropriate and contains instructional value. However, we should not shy away from presenting materials and instruction simply because they are deemed sensitive by some individuals or even groups of people. FCPS has professional staff to review the books, curriculum, and instructional materials. Our teachers are also professionals, and their judgment should be respected as much as possible. FCPS also has an established process through which community members and parents can raise objections regarding books and materials. This process has worked well and must be honored.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

As I have previously stated, this is one of the most critical issues with which we are faced. Sufficient funding needs to be set aside even after all federal funding ends. Furthermore, our outreach to these families and students needs to be more intentional and proactive. We as the school system cannot just sit and wait for them to come to us. Instead, we must go to them. The additional support we provide must be targeted and include measurable goals. Such support should not be just limited to school days or in-school time. FCPS should also provide additional learning opportunities in the evenings and during weekends and school breaks. Progress on goals should be assessed on a regular basis and shared with the public with true transparency. The school system can and should also partner with community organizations and members, including faith organizations, to tap into their resources and provide services needed by these families and students.

BRADDOCK DISTRICT

Rachna Sizemore Heizer

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

I think the three most important issues are student and staff mental health issues, crisis in teacher shortage, and the need to address COVID related learning needs to include closing achievement gaps. These are long standing issues that were exacerbated by COVID. Vital to addressing student mental health needs is ensuring an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere, which necessitates addressing bullying and incidents of hate and promoting understanding. In addition, we need high quality teachers if we are to close achievement gaps and provide every student with an excellent education. We need to compensate teachers well and address teacher burnout, as well as work to increase the teacher pipeline. And finally we need to strategically utilize resources to address learning needs and ensure students are not left behind. Schools cannot do this alone. We need our community to come together to end the hate and we need adequate funding to support pay raises for teachers. In my three years on the board, we raised pay and provided bonuses for all teachers and staff and worked to address teacher burnout. We provided free tutoring for students, with targeted interventions for students who most needed it. There is more work to be done.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain

minority faith observance days?

Yes, absolutely. I am a current FCPS at-large school board member (running to return to the school board but this time in the Braddock District since the current Braddock District member is retiring) and I was one of the original five board members who fought for an inclusive calendar. As School Board Vice Chair, I helped lead the effort to pass an inclusive calendar. Research shows that students have better academic outcomes and a greater sense of connection and belonging if they see themselves reflected in their school community. An inclusive calendar where students do not have to choose between their observance and school is vital to student success, student well being, and school operations. As a person who was raised in a minority faith, I remember too well how I felt like I was an outsider and didn't belong in my community. Research shows that students who feel connected to their community and a sense of belonging are more likely to thrive and succeed. I have heard from so many students about how the inclusive calendar has helped their classmates understand them better and made it easier for them to celebrate their faith and do well in school.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

FCPS has robust non discrimination policies that must be followed consistently throughout the county. Incidents of antisemitism and hate must not be tolerated. It is vital to address any incidents immediately, calling them out as incidents of hate, ensuring families are immediately notified. It must be made clear to all parties that antisemitism has no place in FCPS. We must ensure our teachers and administrators have training to recognize incidents of antisemitism and are held accountable for immediately addressing any incidents. The Students' Rights and Responsibilities document that governs appropriate behavior also has sanctions for incidents of hate and bias and this must be consistently implemented. The school board led the advocacy to implement a bias reporting system to help ensure incidents are reported and addressed immediately. In addition, we must teach the accurate history of Jewish people, including how throughout history in times of instability, Jewish people often became the target of blame and oppression. This includes teaching about the Holocaust but must go beyond that. Education leads to understanding and acceptance. Finally, we must use a trauma informed approach to addressing the harm that has been done.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The School Board is a governance and oversight board, with direct oversight of the Superintendent. The Superintendent is responsible for day to day operations and for the development and implementation of curriculum, including state standards, and programming and educator professional development. The School Board plays an important role in holding the Superintendent and her staff accountable in ensuring our curriculum is inclusive of expanded holocaust education, and the inclusion of the study of ancient Israel and Jewish and Jewish American experience and history as well as increasing educator professional development and access to resources to combating antisemitism. The School Board can also ensure we make a strong statement in support of recognizing and celebrating Jewish American Heritage Month. The School Board can also ensure we have robust non discrimination policies and hold the Superintendent accountable for enforcing those policies. Finally, the School Board can ensure that adequate funding is allocated to these efforts.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for

fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

In my term on the school board, I have experienced firsthand the advocacy by certain groups to remove teaching of inclusive history and fighting efforts to foster cultural competency. This board has stood strong against these efforts. As Chair of the School Board, I spoke on behalf of the board against the revised SOL curriculum that was replete with inaccurate history. This has been astonishing to me, especially considering that our community is increasingly diverse and multicultural. A comprehensive social studies curriculum plays a vital and important role in ensuring we understand each other and our history. It can foster cultural competency helping us understand each other across cultures and communities. Studying our past helps us to not repeat the mistakes of our past. In addition, teaching a full and inclusive social studies curriculum helps our students to better understand each other and our experiences, giving them skills and knowledge to be able to collaborate and communicate effectively in a diverse world. Inclusive, accurate, and robust curriculum can build bridges of understanding and ensure we interact in a culturally competent manner. I fully support teaching accurate and robust social studies.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

We should not be removing books from our libraries that depict the experiences of our students, staff, and community, reflecting our full history. Students are more successful in school when they see themselves reflected in their materials and school leaders. It is vital we all have exposure to diverse books and curriculum. In addition, our librarians are experts in curating diverse, age appropriate, and excellent books and resources for our students. We should respect our librarians and their expertise in doing their job. Parents have the right to choose what is appropriate for their child, but that does not mean parents have the right to stop other parents from ensuring their children have exposure to diverse books. Personally, I can share that I loved to read as a child and learned so much from the varied books in my school and community library. I learned about the Holocaust from library books. And I know how much it would have helped me to see books about the Indian American experience. This Board has stood up to efforts to ban books our expert librarians had curated for our schools and I will continue to do so.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Closing achievement gaps has been a priority for this board, with a focus on needs based resourcing, meaning that we ensure the students and schools that have the greatest gaps receive the resources they need. We must also foster strong family engagement as research shows strong family involvement leads to better student outcomes. This board prioritized funding family liaisons at Title I schools. We have also revamped literacy instruction to focus on the science of reading and equitable access to literacy. Numeracy is a priority, with a strategic plan that helps students to be ready to take algebra by 8th grade, a statistic that shows increased college access. The school board can ensure we use evidence based instructional practices, with strong educators in schools with the highest gaps, and meet student mental health needs. This Board has increased access to counseling and provided free telemental health services to high school students. We can ensure inclusive learning, which leads to better outcomes for students with disabilities. This board has also been focused on expanding access to quality preschool, making access to preschool a priority in our new strategic plan. Studies show students who enter kindergarten with preschool experience have better outcomes.

DRANESVILLE DISTRICT

Paul Bartkowski

paulforfcsb.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Prioritizing academic excellence; eliminating political indoctrination; respecting parents' choices/preferences.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I believe there are too many days during the school year in which children are out of school. Whether eliminating that problem is possible without eliminating closures on all or some minority faith observance days is an issue I have not yet studied in detail.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Reversing this trend starts with eliminating curriculum that incorrectly blames Israel and its citizens for problems in the Middle East. All students should be protected and all attacks should be punished, with attacks motivated by racial, ethnic, or religious differences treated similarly (i.e., with heightened consequences).

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

School Boards should work with other appropriate agencies to implement the recommendations.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

The study of history and cultures that contribute thereto provides students with a deeper understanding of those cultures and people that descend therefrom. Students cannot understand or be prepared to contribute to solutions to the problems of today without understanding the past.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

Books that have age-inappropriate material should not be available to our students in libraries. Books depicting and describing the Holocaust have clear educational value, although some pictures in some books may be inappropriate at the elementary school level. I am aware of books that graphically depict sex acts (with pictures) and present other age-inappropriate material, which have little (if any) educational value and therefore should not be in our elementary school libraries, to the extent they are provided at all.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

The School Board's success or failure is not dependent on Federal funding. The Board has plenty of money to ensure that educational gaps are filled and that students make up for lost education, whether due to the pandemic or otherwise. The School Board should prioritize ensuring that all students achieve their full academic potential, including making up for lost education due to the pandemic and Board policies implemented in response thereto.

Robyn Lady

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Literacy and Numeracy: We must continue supporting educators to address learning gaps through directed interventions and invest in early education to ensure all students are reading by 3rd grade.

Academic Rigor: We need high standards in all classrooms. We need to work with educators, evaluate grading practices, and study the correlation between them and the diminished motivation of our students.

Safe Schools: We must continue to do everything possible to create safe and inclusive learning environments for all students and staff. We need to evaluate the continuum of discipline in the SR&R to better mitigate student behavior.

Social Emotional Well-Being: Investigate the relationship between student achievement (grading policies) and student mental/emotional health. We need to prioritize the mental health of our teachers, counselors, and administrators by listening to them, supporting them in their daily work, and finding ways to take things off their plate.

Financial Stewardship: We need to invest in energy conservation and other sustainable initiatives to save school division money that can be reinvested in student success.

Teacher shortage and pay: We must continue to increase salaries and ensure that our benefits are solid and not costing employees more

out of pocket like we see with Cigna.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I am absolutely committed to maintaining the recently adopted calendars for 2023-2024 and for 2024-2025 and continuing to provide school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days moving forward.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

These incidents are indeed harmful and must stop. Students who commit these offenses must be held accountable, given consequences, and encouraged to participate in Restorative Justice. Administrators must investigate every incident and work with teachers and counselors to support and help victims feel safe attending school. For healing to happen, people must be heard and seen.

As the Director of Student Services at Chantilly High School for 15 years, it was my responsibility to ensure that students felt safe and were able to access learning every day. From learning issues to food insecurity and homelessness, equity, and access, feeling safe and secure, to addressing social and emotional well-being, I partnered with families, school counselors, faculty, and staff to address individual students by name and by need. This requires listening and understanding student issues, having knowledge of the continuum of services in Fairfax County Public Schools, thinking out of the box, developing alternative schedules, being culturally responsive and more.

I am excited about the current board's amendments to the Students Rights & Responsibilities document for 2023-2024 to include bystander expectations for students witnessing harmful or unsafe behaviors and it enhances school safety and creates an equitable, supportive school environment.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative role is to make sure it happens in every World History classroom in every school. We must collaborate with the Superintendent to ensure:

The department of instructional services updates the Program of Studies for World History to include this information.

The Social Studies specialists create a timeline for implementation. Teachers get the professional development needed to effectively teach the new material.

School Administrators work with their Social Studies Department





Chair and teachers to ensure that every teacher is teaching the new objectives at the same time and with fidelity.

Instructional services should survey students taking World History to confirm that this new material was covered in class.

The School Board should be updated on this ongoing work throughout the implementation year and annually each year moving forward.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Curriculum is the most crucial tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies curriculum. When my kids were attending George C. Marshall High School, their own learning was enhanced by the diversity of the student body. When taking History of the Americas and 20th Century Topics of World History, they delighted in hearing their peers discuss their religion, culture, food, traditions, etc. especially from students with different backgrounds from theirs. As a parent, I loved hearing these conversations continue outside of the classroom environment.

History is an essential part of our curriculum, and we must ensure that students have an equal understanding of the U.S. and VA's factual history. I will always advocate for and support culturally responsive classrooms and libraries. Age-appropriate diverse books can serve both as mirrors and windows of different human emotions and experiences. They offer a powerful opportunity to build community, provide validation and affirmation, tell students their stories matter, and show students possibilities of who and what they can be. They also help reduce stigmatization and foster social integration and cultural inclusiveness.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I am against banning books. While schools throughout our country are banning books, I am extremely proud of our School Board for not banning any. FCPS has and should continue to trust educators and librarians to select age appropriate, diverse, and inclusive literature for students. If someone objects to reading material, FCPS has a clear process for considering those complaints.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

The School Board must collaborate with the Superintendent to ensure:

We have high expectations for all learners.

We continue to evaluate benchmark data, provide remediation, and reteach essential information, especially literacy and numeracy skills.

Partner with parents to create learning plans for their child.

We make sure students and parents are aware of Tutor.com and how to access an on-demand tutor 24/7.

We continue to implement the Science of Reading program.

For those not reading, we must utilize reading specialist to get them on grade level.

Educate parents on the benefits of our remedial reading courses and interventions and ensure the right students access them.

We must support staffing ratios that account for the different proficiency levels of English Language Learners.

Provide before and after school help to those in need of additional support.

Refer students to the Local Screening Committee if there is a chance the student has a learning disability.

FRANCONIA DISTRICT

Marcia St. John-Cunning

marcia4schools.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Staff retention and recruitment. This year was difficult because many schools were not fully staffed. Every other priority and issue cannot be addressed if we do not have qualified adults in the building to teach, administer, interpret, and transport our students. I will strategically support investment to retain and recruit qualified personnel to assure we can

achieve equity and excellence in every school.

Addressing the academic and emotional learning losses due to Covid by targeting interventions to address challenges unique to groups that were more adversely impacted. Providing necessary support to ESOL students, special education students, military families, students identified as twice exceptional, and socio-economically disadvantaged students to assure that every student in every zip code receives an excellent education every day.

Mental Health support for students and staff. Increase the provider to student ratio in our schools for student emotional learning and mental health needs and provide resources for school staff to access emotional and mental health support. Ensure every school provides a safe and welcoming inclusive environment where all our students and staff feel safe, accepted and welcomed. This includes freedom from fear or retaliation, acceptance of diverse cultures, languages and protecting our LGBTQIA community.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes. It took a lot of advocacy work and some time for FCPS to revise the school calendar to include school closures that coincide with certain minority faith observance days. My intent is to maintain the change.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Fairfax County Public Schools has a very clearly defined Student Rights and Responsibilities manual that outlines it will not tolerate any harm against students and staff due to religion or ethnicity. Having said that, schools must consistently work toward preventing

anti-Semitism from even occurring. One way to do that is to teach Jewish history before and beyond the Holocaust. Students need to learn about the many times Jews have been the victims of hate and scapegoating throughout the world, particularly during times of insecurity. Equally, schools need to highlight and celebrate the many contributions made to our country and the world by the Jewish artists, scientists, doctors, engineers, attorneys, social justice leaders, educators and on and on. Currently, we can point to the two big summer blockbuster movies that specifically do this. One celebrates the iconic Barbie doll that was introduced by Ruth Handler the Jewish co-founder of Mattel, and the other tells the story of J. Robert Oppenheimer, a Jewish American theoretical physicist and director of the Manhattan Project. Finally, adult staff in the building should always call out any phrases that promote unjustified troupes about the Jewish community.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

I see the School Board's role as critical in supporting the corrective and restorative work outlined in the report. The inclusion of Jewish religious holidays in the school calendar is a huge step in the right direction. In doing so, the Board not only supports our Jewish students and families but also sends out the message to the larger community that our Jewish community is valued and appreciated. I support the recommendations for expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel history in the high school World History curriculum and providing resources to staff and students about combating anti-Semitism such as those provided by the JCRC and other such organizations. Truth in teaching and education are the most important tools we have in ensuring antisemitism, and for that matter all hate crimes, are eradicated from our schools and communities.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

My answers to previous questions touch on this. Lived experience is also valuable and I can't help but think of the brief time I lived in Simi Valley, California and worked at the Brandeis-Bardin Institute. At the time the Director was Deborah E. Lipstadt, author of the book, Beyond Belief. The institute is a haven for research and study about Judaism and runs comprehensive summer camps for children of all ages to learn about and to appreciate their Jewish cultural heritage. As the registration assistant for the summer camp I was able to join the students in some of their programming and I learned so much...from the Kosher kitchen to the children's songs and games to learning Yiddish phrases. The Institute also offered a House of the Book lecture series in which world renowned Jewish scholars and leaders would come and speak about their area of expertise. I was fortunate to personally meet some of the speakers and expand my own knowledge about the Jewish culture. I can see where a similar age appropriate model could be instituted in FCPS to foster cultural competency in our community about the many diverse cultures in our school building including Judaism.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I am opposed to the banning and removal of age appropriate books from any libraries. The purpose of a robust public school system is to provide a comprehensive education to every student. When we eliminate books designed to inform and educate our students with accurate historical content we do a great disservice to them. In essence we handicap our students academically from being able to compete with students from the rest of the country and the world. We also lose out on the opportunity to prepare students to become global citizens with the capacity for empathy and understanding of the struggles faced by others due to religion, racial, socio-economic status, and gender identification. If FCPS is to continue providing the world class education it is known for we must remain strong in our commitment to not remove age appropriate books from our libraries.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

It is critical that we recruit and retain qualified teachers so we can get to the business of teaching. We must be true to the One Fairfax promise and work collaboratively with the Board of Supervisors to acknowledge systemic barriers that exist within Fairfax and address them accordingly. Inequality across the division is not limited to socio-economic status and race but also to the geographical location of our schools. To that extent we must be willing to look at that disparity and fund schools in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods appropriately to restore equity for all of our students and teachers. Where possible we must leverage partnerships with community organizations that can enhance our work.

As a former parent liaison, and current community school coordinator, it is critical we invest in increasing these positions so the needs of all our marginalized students are met. We also need to be mindful of the social and mental health needs faced by all our marginalized students and actively pursue robust services to meet their needs. As school board members we need to explore successful strategies and models, such as community schools, which work to break down academic and non-academic barriers to promote student success.

HUNTER MILL DISTRICT

Harry Jackson

friendsofharryjackson.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

The top three issues in Fairfax County public schools can indeed be categorized as safety in schools, academic excellence, and parental rights. Ensuring the safety of students is of utmost importance, and schools should prioritize implementing measures such as security protocols, mental health support, and prevention programs to create a conducive learning environment.

Academic excellence is another significant concern, as it directly influences students' prospects. Schools should strive to provide high-quality education, adopting innovative teaching methods, personalized learning approaches, and rigorous curriculum standards. It is crucial to continuously evaluate academic performance and seek ways to enhance educational outcomes.

Respecting parental rights is also vital in Fairfax County public schools. Parents play a crucial role in their children's education, and their input and involvement should be valued. Schools should foster open communication, incorporate parent feedback, and involve parents in decision-making processes to create a collaborative and supportive educational environment.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach involving cooperation among school administrators, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders. By prioritizing safety, focusing on academic excellence, and respecting parental rights, Fairfax County public schools can strive towards providing the best possible education for all students.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

The recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days is a step in the right direction towards fostering diversity and respect for all students' religious beliefs. By acknowledging and accommodating these observance days, Fairfax County public schools are demonstrating inclusivity and promoting cultural understanding.

However, it is important to ensure that this approach does not unfairly burden families who do not observe these minority faiths. To address this potential issue, it would be beneficial to explore alternative options for families, such as providing virtual learning opportunities during these closure days or scheduling makeup days that align with federal holidays. This would help minimize disruptions for families who may have to find alternative childcare arrangements or take time off work.

Additionally, ongoing dialogue and collaboration with the community and relevant stakeholders will be crucial in assessing the effectiveness and impact of the inclusive school calendar. Regular feedback from families and educators can help make necessary adjustments and improvements to ensure that all students' needs are met while maintaining a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Addressing and reversing antisemitism in Fairfax County public schools requires a multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the community. Addressing antisemitism requires ongoing efforts, collaboration, and a commitment to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. It's important to involve relevant stakeholders and seek advice from experts in education, diversity, and anti-discrimination to tailor strategies to the specific needs of Fairfax County public schools.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

Holocaust education is necessary for several reasons. First and foremost, it is crucial to remember and honor the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. By educating people about this dark chapter in history, we can ensure that their stories are never forgotten and that we strive to prevent such atrocities from happening again.

Furthermore, Holocaust education helps to promote tolerance,

empathy, and respect for all people. By understanding the consequences of hatred and discrimination, individuals are more likely to reject prejudice and embrace diversity in their own lives. This is particularly important in today's interconnected world, where people from different backgrounds and cultures interact on a daily basis.

Additionally, studying the Holocaust provides valuable lessons about the dangers of propaganda, misinformation, and the erosion of human rights. It highlights the importance of critical thinking, media literacy, and active citizenship in combating hate speech and preventing the spread of harmful ideologies.

Finally, Holocaust education serves as a reminder of the fragility of democracy and the need to protect fundamental rights and freedoms. It underscores the responsibility we have as individuals and society to stand up against injustice and defend human dignity.

In summary, Holocaust education is necessary to honor the victims, promote tolerance, prevent future genocides, foster empathy, and uphold democratic values.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Curriculum can be a powerful tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring comprehensive social studies instruction by incorporating diverse perspectives, historical contexts, and global perspectives into the curriculum.

Firstly, a curriculum that includes diverse perspectives helps students develop cultural competency by exposing them to different cultures, experiences, and viewpoints. This can be done by incorporating literature, art, music, and other forms of cultural expression from diverse communities. By studying and appreciating different cultures, students gain a better understanding of their own culture and become more open-minded and empathetic towards others.

Secondly, historical contexts are essential for comprehensive social studies instruction. A curriculum that teaches history from a global perspective allows students to understand how different cultures have evolved over time and how they have interacted with one another. This helps students develop a more comprehensive understanding of history and its impact on society today.

In addition, a curriculum that focuses on global perspectives can help students develop a broader worldview and a sense of global citizenship. By studying different countries, regions, and cultures, students become aware of global issues, such as poverty, environmental sustainability, and human rights. They learn to think critically about these issues and consider their own roles and responsibilities in addressing them.

Furthermore, incorporating authentic and real-world learning experiences into the curriculum can enhance cultural competency and social studies instruction. This can include field trips to museums, cultural events, or community organizations, as well as guest speakers or workshops with individuals from diverse backgrounds. These experiences provide students with opportunities to engage directly with different cultures and perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for diversity.

Lastly, it is important for curriculum developers and educators to regularly review and update the curriculum to ensure that it remains relevant and inclusive. This can involve incorporating new research, addressing current events, and reflecting on feedback from students and the community.

By continuously improving the curriculum, educators can provide the most comprehensive and culturally sensitive social studies instruction.

In conclusion, curriculum plays a crucial role in fostering cultural competency and ensuring comprehensive social studies instruction. By incorporating diverse perspectives, historical contexts, global perspectives, and authentic learning experiences, curriculum can help students develop an understanding and appreciation for different cultures, become informed global citizens, and build a more inclusive and tolerant society.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?



The removal of books and topics perceived as sensitive from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum has been a subject of debate. Some argue that these efforts limit students' access to diverse perspectives and important historical events, hindering their ability to develop critical thinking skills and empathy.

On the other hand, some individuals and groups believe that certain topics may be inappropriate for certain age groups or go against their cultural or religious beliefs. They argue that the removal of such materials ensures that students are not exposed to content that could be potentially distressing or conflicting with their values.

It is important to strike a balance between providing students with a comprehensive education that includes diverse perspectives and addressing concerns regarding age-appropriateness and cultural sensitivity. Schools and educators can consider using ratings, annotations, or parental involvement to guide students' access to sensitive materials, while still ensuring their overall exposure to a wide range of perspectives and historical events. Open and respectful discussions between educators, parents, and the community can help inform decisions on what should be included in the curriculum. I am against material that depicts child pornography and pedophilia.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Market-based solutions can be an effective approach to address pandemic learning loss in Fairfax County public schools. As the education system worldwide has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial to explore innovative strategies to mitigate the educational setbacks faced by students.

One market-based solution is the implementation of tutoring programs. Private tutoring companies, individuals, and even fellow students can offer their services to help students catch up on missed content and reinforce their understanding of key concepts. By creating a marketplace where tutors can connect with students in need, Fairfax County public schools can ensure that every student has access to personalized and targeted academic support. Additionally, this approach can provide economic opportunities for tutors, especially college students or educators who have been affected by the pandemic.

Another market-based solution is the development of online learning platforms. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of remote learning, and leveraging technology can bridge the gap caused by school closures. Fairfax County can collaborate with ed-tech companies to create a virtual marketplace where students can access high-quality educational resources, interactive lessons, and assessments at affordable prices. This marketplace can also facilitate collaboration among educators, allowing them to share best practices and resources to enhance the learning experience.

Furthermore, incentivizing participation in summer programs through subsidies or scholarships can be an effective market-based solution. By partnering with community organizations or private enterprises, Fairfax County can offer reduced or free enrollment in summer learning programs that address the specific needs of students who have fallen behind. These programs can focus on remedial education, social-emotional support, and extracurricular activities to create a holistic approach to pandemic learning recovery.

In conclusion, market-based solutions such as tutoring programs, online learning platforms, and subsidized summer programs can play a pivotal role in addressing pandemic learning loss in Fairfax County public schools. By harnessing the power of the market, these

solutions can ensure equitable access to educational support, leverage technology for remote learning, and incentivize participation in targeted programs. It is essential for the county to embrace innovative approaches and collaborate with various stakeholders to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on students' education.

Melanie Meren*

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Class Sizes. Classes and school populations are very large, and this inhibits authentic relationships among students and staff. Students need to feel seen, heard, and affirmed in order to open their hearts and minds to full learning. Teachers need to not be overwhelmed with their class sizes.

Security & Safety. The failure of federal and state gun control policy has placed children and school staff in constant stress and fear, and has forced the school division to use previous public dollars for safety when the investments should be for instruction. Yet, safety remains a top priority, and what I most often hear from constituents as a concern.

Community Support. Strong schools make a strong community - and the reverse is also true, and needed more than ever. When our communities are strong, adults care about the success of all children and all adults. The public must promote the birthright of public education for all.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes. I championed the inclusive calendar proposed in 2022, though my vote was in the minority. However, in 2023 I cast my vote for the successful three-year calendar that met many criteria to best benefit student achievement, including inclusion of certain observance days.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

FCPS must continue its commitment to teach truth in education. This includes providing education and training to faculty and staff, using reliable resources for student instruction, and engaging in conversations that some may feel are uncomfortable to forge the path of learning. It also means supporting teachers when the political fray in Virginia seeks to limit what teachers might otherwise teach about social justice, intolerance, genocide, and hate crimes. Education is what we do, and it is the solution here, as always.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish

American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The Board sets the policy for the school division, and these policies reflect the values of the community. Our community stands against antisemitism. I joined the majority Board vote in June 2023 to pass the new equity in education policy. However, the curriculum development policy needs to be updated, and I am eager for the Board to address this as soon as possible. This policy governance is what will translate into how learning happens in our school division. I am committed to governance work so that policy clearly states that robust, truthful curriculum - plus training for educators to instruct students effectively - is what the community expects from our public schools.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Curriculum is essential for fostering comprehensive social studies instruction. I have advocated for more accurate and historically representative social studies curriculum since prior to my election to the School Board in 2019 - including submitting extensive comments to FCPS in 2018 about proposed 4th grade social studies textbooks.

More recently, in March 2023, I approved the letter from the Fairfax School Board and Superintendent to the President of the Virginia Board of Education and the Virginia Secretary of Education, stating the many concerning and even incorrect updates proposed for the state social studies standards. Constant vigilance and advocacy is needed to ensure accurate information is presented to students for their learning and consideration. We cannot censor difficult parts of U.S. or world history - we must help students learn so they don't repeat the mistakes of the past. That letter is viewable here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/14nTEiV6cEYpLbpW3sNe5XzfkS4BK9tUw/view?usp=sharing>

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

We had decided as a society decades ago not to entertain the notion of book banning. It is astonishing that in 2023, some individuals seek to impose their opinions on entire school divisions about what all students should or should not have access to. Their thinking is arcane, and in opposition to preparing students for a complex world filled with diverse people. We don't prepare children for their adult future if we ban books.

Our public schools must offer a breadth of exposure to content that reflects the people, ideas, and lifestyles in our modern world. I am greatly interested in providing a diversity of quality materials to students in our school and public libraries.

I have no tolerance for politicians who seek to rewrite history, and seek to position themselves as experts in education. Policies and regulations guide school division staff, and clearly state how challenges to materials can be brought to the Superintendent and School Board for consideration in a civil way. I trust teachers and librarians to be experts in their profession.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already

existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Funding of public education in America is a complex issue - one I learned first-hand, during the first job of my career at the U.S. Department of Education, beginning in 2002. The system is designed to get the outcomes we see - standardization, underfunding, and selective access to opportunities. I believe the work I am doing on the School Board, and that FCPS is doing, is peeling back the layers of barriers that students face. In particular, ensuring access to the highest quality of literacy instruction, driven by the science of reading, is something I've championed in the county and state. This is now in place in FCPS, and has already transformed the ability of students to become strong readers and writers. It is life changing work. As a Board Member, I am charged with holding the Superintendent accountable for delivering such instruction, and showing how students are achieving their potential as a result. I will continue doing so if elected to a second term.

MASON DISTRICT

Kristin Ball, Ph.D.

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

(1) Learning loss - FCPS SAT scores have dropped 27 points while Virginia SAT scores have risen. We need to focus on getting ALL students to grade-level learning. (2) Funding - FCPS has \$3.4 BILLION budget. Funding should be used for student learning and teachers, not additional administrators. (3) School Safety - With a rise in drug use and violence, we need to ensure that our students, faculty, and staff are safe on school property.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I would want to examine the impact of the inclusive school calendar. FCPS students are experiencing devastating learning loss, and having so many days off during the school year can be disruptive to learning. There are some months in which students have only one five-day school week. Families with two working parents, who are already burdened with high taxes, have to scramble to find daycare/camps for their children to attend when there is no school (if they do not celebrate the holiday). Therefore, I am not committed to keeping the schedule, but I would not hastily get rid of it without studying the impact of the calendar on students and families.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What

should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

The IHRA definition of antisemitism was adopted by the United States on May 26, 2016. The state of Virginia adopted this definition on January 26, 2022. Yet FCPS does not use this definition in the Student Rights and Responsibilities document (or any document). The definition explicitly states examples of antisemitism and needs to be adopted by FCPS. Punishment for antisemitism should be similar to any other religious or cultural attack on an individual. It should never be ignored.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

Understanding the origins of tragic historical events, like the Holocaust, is one way of preventing them from happening again. A full understanding of the atrocities of the Holocaust (at age-appropriate levels) should be used as an example of how all human lives should be protected. The School Board should be responsible for ensuring that all students, faculty, and staff are respected and that students are learning what they need to become successful and responsible adults. As a SB member, I would advocate for a stronger curriculum related to the Holocaust and Jewish history in order to combat antisemitism.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Learning about different cultures is one step toward becoming culturally competent. As a professor of communication, I often taught about the importance of understanding various cultures so that you can be a more effective communicator. When you have a deeper understanding of why and how cultures are different, you are better able to appreciate the differences.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LBGTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

Books about historically and culturally relevant issues (the Holocaust and African American history) should be available in school libraries. It is important that students have an accurate depiction of history and that such materials are readily accessible (but they should also be age appropriate). Books that contain graphic images of a sexual nature should not be available in school libraries. If students want to have access to those materials, they should look for them at public libraries.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Parents are having to pay for tutors outside of schools. Taxes have continued to climb, yet FCPS has hired five new equity officers. That money should be spent on helping students from less affluent families get the tutoring and help they need. Attracting teachers to FCPS with higher salaries, classroom stipends, and less paperwork should be a start to approaching learning loss. With a \$3.4 Billion budget, students should not be left behind.

MOUNT VERNON DISTRICT

Mateo Dunne

mateodunne.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

(1.) Provide a world-class education to every child, to include (a) reducing achievement gaps; (b) addressing learning loss from the pandemic; and (c) ensuring equal access to school programming. (2.) Increasing access to mental health services, to include drug abuse prevention and treatment. (3.) Providing competitive pay and benefits to recruit and retain talented educators and staff.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I do not have a position on the recently adopted school calendar. My first and foremost priority is to provide a world-class education to every child. That is the core mission of FCPS. I believe FCPS should consider a longer school year, or year-round schooling, for a limited number of Title I schools on a pilot basis in order to reduce the achievement gap and to remedy the learning loss from the pandemic. For example, Fairfield Court Elementary and Cardinal Elementary School in South Richmond recently added 20 days to their academic calendars in an effort to remedy the learning loss from the pandemic. The school calendar should honor and respect the diversity of our community, but my yardstick for evaluating the school calendar will be whether it comports with my priority of providing a world-class education for every child.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?





We are living in dangerous times. The Anti-Defamation League has reported a dramatic increase in antisemitism across the country, with the CEO stating (1) “antisemitism has been normalized and almost weaponized in the political conversation and public debates” and (2) “extremists feel emboldened” because of the political rhetoric of President Trump and his allies. I will work tirelessly to combat antisemitism and ensure that Fairfax County Public Schools provides a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all children. First, FCPS should expand education and training of children, families, educators, administrators, and staff about antisemitism. Second, FCPS and the School Board should speak out not only in response to incidents, but proactively to prevent any such incidents from occurring. Third, FCPS and the School Board should expand their efforts to honor and recognize the historic achievements and contributions of Jewish Americans during Jewish American Heritage Month. Fourth, FCPS should consider a requirement for all students to take a course exploring different faith traditions in order to increase mutual acceptance and understanding.

The Governor’s Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board’s role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The role of the School Board is to evaluate different policies and proposals and direct their implementation by the Superintendent. I have reviewed the report, and I support the recommendations to expand Holocaust education, adopt programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increase educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism. The School Board should direct the Superintendent to implement these recommendations.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

The FCPS curriculum should reflect the diversity of our community, combat implicit bias, and foster mutual acceptance and understanding. I testified in opposition to Governor Youngkin’s revisionist History and Social Science Standards of Learning, which minimized the historical achievements and contributions of women, African Americans, Asian Americans, Indigenous Americans, and labor unions.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I strongly oppose book bans and book burning. The function of public schools and libraries is to inculcate and disseminate knowledge. No government or individual has the legal or moral authority to determine for the community what should be read and not read.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing need of students who have fallen behind?

My first and foremost priority is to provide a world-class education to every child. That is the core mission of FCPS. (1.) FCPS should expand access to early childhood education, with an objective of universal pre-kindergarten. (2.) FCPS should consider a longer school year, or year-round schooling, for a limited number of Title I schools on a pilot basis in order to reduce the achievement gap and to remedy the learning loss from the pandemic. For example, Fairfield Court Elementary and Cardinal Elementary School in South Richmond recently added 20 days to their academic calendars in an effort to remedy the learning loss from the pandemic. (3.) In the absence of a longer school year, or year-round schooling, FCPS should establish summer accelerator programs for students at risk of falling behind in reading and math. (4.) FCPS should ensure equal and consistent access to school-level programming, so every child, regardless of where they live, can benefit from advanced academics and other programs. (5.) FCPS should strengthen special education through full implementation of the recommendations of the 2022 AIR Special Education Comprehensive Program Review. (6.) FCPS should expand experiential learning and workforce development programs in partnership with industry and nonprofits.

PROVIDENCE DISTRICT

Karl Frisch*

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County’s schools today?

The three most important issues facing our Fairfax County Public Schools are addressing pandemic-related learning loss, ensuring every student has a safe and inclusive learning environment, and retaining and recruiting world-class teachers and staff.

We must continue prioritizing efforts to address pandemic-related learning loss with targeted interventions. Just as Fairfax County has closed these gaps faster than Virginia as a whole, Providence District schools have closed them faster than Fairfax County as a whole.

Every student deserves a safe and inclusive school. That means, in part, reimagining our response to bullying and hate, supporting student mental health needs, further enhancing school security, and building on our gun violence prevention work.

I have supported initiatives to enhance school security technology, construct security vestibules at all schools, and remove learning trailers from our campuses. Today, Providence District schools have 31% fewer trailers than the day I join the School Board.

Finally, to meet the needs of our students, we must invest in better pay for our world-class educators and staff – this is critical to addressing teacher burnout and staffing shortages. I have proudly supported pay raises for educators and staff for the past three years in a row.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently

adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Absolutely. I supported the effort when it initially failed in 2021. Then I worked hard with colleagues and stakeholders, including members of our Jewish community, over the following year to win the votes needed to pass the more inclusive calendar, which now includes school closures for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, among other holidays. This change better supports the needs of our families and with nearly 1 in 3 of our staff members living in counties where school systems close for these holidays, it is essential for sound school operations.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

We must directly address incidents of antisemitic bullying and hate speech by enforcing the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SR&R) policy with fidelity at every school. That means offering a restorative justice model that educates students about the history and dangers of antisemitism. We must also track incidents of antisemitism and hate more broadly, making summary information about them available to the public regularly within the confines of state and federal law. We cannot allow this problem to be swept under the rug.

The school system can also support administrators and educators by providing them with resources for combating antisemitism. This can include partnering with stakeholders like JCRC to conduct trainings and workshops, not only to address antisemitism but to develop culturally competent school communities where antisemitism is less likely to occur.

Fighting antisemitism is among the keys to our equity work as a school division because it promotes a safe and inclusive environment where students can learn without fear of violence. Schools must foster a culture that values diversity, cultivates empathy, and prepares students to participate actively in a diverse and equitable society.

The Governor’s Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board’s role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

This issue is beyond partisanship. Antisemitism is a community problem, and it requires a community solution. The School Board currently recognizes Jewish American Heritage Month and Holocaust Remembrance Day each year. Still, it can support enhanced programming around these recognitions, expand Holocaust education, and increase access to resources for combatting antisemitism by directing the Superintendent to incorporate action on these goals as part of her annual work objectives. The Superintendent would then be required to report back to the Board on progress made, and the Board would use this information as part of its annual evaluation of the Superintendent’s job performance.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Curriculum is critical in fostering cultural competency and ensuring comprehensive social studies instruction. That is one of the reasons I opposed Governor Youngkin's misguided attacks on Virginia's history and social science standards of learning that would deny students from receiving instruction on these subjects that prioritize critical thinking, historical accuracy, diverse perspectives, and developmental appropriateness.

I will continue championing staff efforts to ensure literature taught and available in school libraries is age-appropriate and representative of our diverse community and that history and social studies taught are also age-appropriate, factually accurate, and inclusive. I was proud to co-sponsor the successful establishment of a joint historical markers contest with the Board of Supervisors to help students discover and elevate local history with a culturally competent lens.

By incorporating diverse perspectives, histories, and experiences into curriculum, educators can help students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for different cultures and societies. We must present students with different perspectives and histories, including those traditionally marginalized or underrepresented. Doing so, can challenge potential student biases and stereotypes, helping them develop critical FCPS Portrait of a Graduate skills like empathy and understanding for others.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

According to some media estimates, more than 1,600 books have been banned in public schools nationwide over the past two years. In Fairfax County Public Schools, we have banned zero, refusing to join the wave of often bigoted attacks on educators and librarians.

We should handle the availability of reading materials precisely as we currently do: by relying on seasoned professional librarians and educators to select age-appropriate, diverse, and inclusive reading materials for students.

When someone formally objects to student reading materials, we have a clear process for considering such complaints, which relies on the thoughtful consideration of experienced school administrators, librarians, and educators in partnership with parents and caregivers.

Our school system actively encourages the involvement of all parents and caregivers. Rather than catering to the loudest voices, we should work to hear the perspectives of a statistically significant cross-section of our families.

For my part, I will continue appointing diverse parent and caregiver voices to Citizen Advisory Committees to help shape the School Board's work and bring valuable insight to our deliberations on important matters.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

According to standardized testing data from Governor Youngkin's Virginia Department of Education, many of Fairfax County's schools are already seeing reading and math scores on par with pre-pandemic levels. Our targeted interventions are moving the needle and must remain our top priority.

While numbers are improving, some populations have demonstrated slower progress – most notably, English language learners, students receiving special education services, students who are Black or Hispanic, and students who are economically disadvantaged.

These are the types of achievement and opportunity gaps we saw long before the pandemic. Even if our testing data showed a

complete recovery to pre-pandemic levels at every school and within every subpopulation, it would not be appropriate to stop targeted interventions.

Now that the school division has a track record of helping students address pandemic learning loss, we must use these tools to continue making progress, especially on longstanding achievement and opportunity gaps that have plagued public education for decades.

To support these efforts, the School Board has prioritized literacy and numeracy. I was among those encouraging our school system to transition to literacy instruction grounded in the science of reading, and ensuring all students are ready for algebra by eight grade.

SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT

Sandy Anderson

anderson4schools.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

We are at a pivotal moment to protect public education in not just our county, but our country. Our schools are losing staff at an unsustainable rate, there are ongoing concerns related to safety in our buildings, and adequate funding is at risk. Many factors have led to this vulnerable moment, such as the ongoing attack on our teachers and the learning losses because of the pandemic. Public education is the core of our democracy, and I believe it is worth fighting for.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I am absolutely in support of maintaining the inclusive calendar. Children and families from all faiths deserve the opportunity to share their religious holidays together without having to make the hard decision of whether or not to miss school. I also realize that our current calendar doesn't truly accommodate all religious holidays, as many holidays in different faiths begin the night before the holiday itself. Future calendars should look to accommodate those impacts as well to the extent possible.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

The recent resurgence of hatred against so many groups in our country is unacceptable, including the antisemitism experienced by those of the Jewish faith. However, this is not just a fight for the Jewish community. We all have a part to play, and I believe education is light that sanitizes ignorance. While organizations like yours are not responsible to educate those who may be ignorant of the harm they do, I would encourage us to figure out together what resources would be helpful for those who need learn what antisemitism looks like. This is education that is needed for students, families, and staff so we can all become allies with our Jewish community members. The more people within our communities that can recognize antisemitism means that we can stand against it together.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the

JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The School Board's function in Fairfax County is to set policies and ensure our superintendent directs the division to uphold those policies. I would fully support any work the school board could do that would combat antisemitism in our county through a robust curriculum related to Jewish history and experiences.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Thoughtfully constructed curriculum can offer students way to examine inequities in our world. Education provides the natural moments where students learn more about the horrors of the past and make decisions about how they want to move forward in their own lives. This obviously happens in the history classroom, but as a former college English instructor, time and time again I saw it happen in my classrooms when we examined research and literature on a wide variety of topics. Opportunities for cultural competency and enrichment can be fostered throughout our curriculum to best prepare our students for our diverse world.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I am never in favor of reducing our children's opportunities to access information that is appropriate for them. I do not support book bans in any way.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

The strides students have made with the targeted instruction meant to "catch them up" after the pandemic illustrates what we could have been doing all along for students that have fallen behind. Funding is certainly going to be a concern as we move forward, but reconfiguring budgets to allow for some of this targeted learning is essential to ensure everyone has equitable access to education.

I can't help but wonder if the most important thing we learned is that students achieve the most when they don't feel alone. Much of the additional instruction related to learning loss was fostered with an "everyone is in it together" mentality. That is something we can continue to work toward in our county. Education is never a one-size fits all solution, and students shouldn't be made to feel like they are outside the norm just because they need extra help in one subject area.

Debra Tisler

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Fairfax County Public Schools continues to grapple with addressing the achievement/honesty gap, evidenced in students' low performance in core academic areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Fairfax County Public Schools must prioritize the student over the system. Parents



and the community must become partners instead of outsiders to the system.

Staffing shortages at the school base level and the overgrowth of administration at the central office level are barriers to meeting student needs.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

An inclusive school calendar, which considers religious and cultural observance days of various faiths, should strike a balance between respect for diverse religious practices and the practicalities of maintaining an effective learning environment. While efforts are made to include all religious observance days, some faiths or belief systems may be excluded. Additionally, adjusting the school calendar to incorporate various religious observance days disrupts the flow of the curriculum, leading to potential challenges in meeting educational goals and standards for all children. One solution is to allow flexible excused absences for religious observances. They should be used as close as possible to the official observance. Notice of an excused religious holiday should be given as soon as possible to the teacher and school staff to ensure the child receives the completed instruction. In addition to implementing flexible excused absences, the calendar should consider planned county-wide teacher workdays with the option of flexible work schedules and leave for religious observance.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Addressing the rise of reported incidents of antisemitism in schools is crucial to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. Schools, communities, and policymakers must work together to combat antisemitism and discrimination. Promoting understanding and empathy can create an environment where all students feel safe, respected, and valued. An important step is ensuring the policy and organizational culture align with HB 1606, which formally adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism. The definition is an essential tool as well as a guide in aiding in the identification of antisemitism and how to respond to antisemitism as a prevention of such hate crimes in our schools and community.

The Governor’s Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board’s role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The School Board’s role is pivotal in setting the tone and direction for creating a school and organization environment that actively combats antisemitism, fosters understanding, and embraces the diverse backgrounds of students and staff. As a participant in the NoVa Roundtable to Combat Antisemitism with Attorney General Miyares, I was fortunate to learn about and engage in the efforts of his Office and the Governor to stop antisemitic hate crimes. The Fairfax County School Board should have policies and procedures for supportive implementation of the Governor’s Commission on Antisemitism report. Furthermore, the FCSB should ensure a collaborative partnership exists between Fairfax County Public Schools and the Governor’s Commission on Antisemitism. A positive partnership between FCPS and the Governor’s Commission on Antisemitism is instrumental in fostering a more inclusive and positive learning environment for all.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

A comprehensive curriculum can be a powerful tool for fostering understanding, acceptance, and respect for all cultures. Incorporating literature, art, primary sources, and music can make the curriculum relatable to students from various backgrounds. This enhances student engagement and allows learners to see themselves and their communities reflected in the learning process. Through a comprehensive social studies/history curriculum, students can develop empathy, critical thinking, and a deeper appreciation for the richness of human cultures and histories.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LBGTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

Decisions regarding including or removing books from educational settings should consider various factors, including age and developmental appropriateness, educational objectives, community values, and parental/guardian rights. School boards, educators, and communities must engage in thoughtful and inclusive discussions when making such decisions. These efforts should be committed to promoting respect and an excellent education.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

By implementing a comprehensive and targeted approach, the School Board can work towards narrowing the achievement gap and ensuring that all students have the support and opportunities they need to succeed academically and beyond. Part of that targeted approach is strengthening literacy instruction in the general education classroom that is direct, explicit, and evidenced to work for all students. Another

big step is involving parents, families, and the broader community in efforts to support students. Engaging parents as partners in their children’s education can lead to more holistic and successful support. Collaboration can also leverage additional resources and expertise from community organizations, nonprofits, and businesses to meet student needs and remain within budget. Additionally, partnering with the Virginia Department of Education and neighboring school divisions on shared initiatives can alleviate cost factors surrounding teacher/staff training and administrative resources.

SULLY DISTRICT

Seema Dixit

seemadixit.com/about



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County’s schools today?

The mental health and well-being of students and staff have become increasingly important issues, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. We need additional resources and support systems within the school community to address stress, anxiety, and

other mental health challenges.

We still see a huge achievement gaps between different students, equal access to quality education, promoting an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students is a big challenge.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on our schools. We need to address challenges related to remote learning, ensuring students’ academic progress, addressing learning loss, and bridge the gap in their learning.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I’m fully supportive of maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar, by allowing students and staff from diverse backgrounds to observe their religious holidays without hindrance, FCPS aims to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all. Fairfax County School Board has made this long awaited decision to advance equity for minority-faith students.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

This needs to stop, we must implement comprehensive education programs that promote awareness and understanding of antisemitism, its roots, and the impact it has on individuals and communities. Teaching about the Holocaust and its lessons on the consequences of hate can foster empathy and a commitment to combating discrimination. We must ensure that school curricula and materials are inclusive, diverse, and culturally sensitive. This includes incorporating Jewish history, culture, and contributions into the educational content to help dispel stereotypes and foster a sense of

belonging for Jewish students. Also, when incidents of antisemitism occur, we need to respond promptly and decisively, implement appropriate consequences for those responsible for perpetrating such acts while providing support to affected students and their families.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The School Board needs to review and revise existing policies or create new policies that reflect the commission's recommendations. This might include policies related to Holocaust education, the inclusion of Judaism and ancient Israel in the curriculum, and observance of Jewish American Heritage Month. The School Board should work closely with curriculum specialists, educators, and relevant stakeholders to align the curriculum with the commission's recommendations. We should establish mechanisms to monitor the progress of implementing the recommendations and evaluate their effectiveness.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

A culturally competent curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency, it should go beyond the dominant narratives and include contributions and experiences of various ethnicities, races, religions, genders, and social backgrounds. This will provide understanding and appreciation of different cultures, reduces stereotypes, and promotes empathy and respect. It should present multiple perspectives on historical events, contemporary issues, and societal structures, a comprehensive social studies curriculum can integrate elements from various disciplines, such as history, geography, economics, sociology, and political science. This interdisciplinary approach provides a more holistic understanding of societies and cultures. Experiential learning methods, such as field trips, guest speakers, and simulations, allows students to get involved in different cultures and historical periods. The Virtual reality tools can be used in a good way to conduct virtual field trips when the in-person visit is not possible.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I do not agree with banning books from school libraries if they are age appropriate. Banning books or limiting access to certain narratives is an act of censorship, which restricts students' access to information and diverse viewpoints. Removing books about sensitive topics, such as the Holocaust or struggles for equality can suppress historical facts and important experiences that shape our understanding of the world, also removing books that represent the experiences of marginalized communities, such as LGBTQ narratives or stories of racial struggles can alienate students from those communities. Inclusive education should strive to recognize and validate the experiences of all students.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during

the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

School Board should design and fund targeted remedial programs tailored to the specific needs of marginalized students. These programs could include tutoring, small group interventions, and personalized learning plans to address individual learning gaps. We must ensure equitable access to technology and high-speed internet for all students, especially those from low-income backgrounds. Providing laptops or tablets and internet connectivity support can help bridge the digital divide and enable remote or blended learning opportunities. We should collaborate with community organizations and local businesses to provide additional resources, mentorship programs, and enrichment opportunities for disadvantaged students. With more equity based plans, fostering excellence and more community support, we can bridge this achievement in coming years.

Cynthia Walsh

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

The three things are: Academic Excellence, Inclusion of Parents, and that success can be achieved no matter your race or religion. Believe in your child and set high expectations. If you let a child pass who did not earn it, he will stop trying.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I am conflicted with this question, because I have been to school board meetings where parents of different faiths will say the kids get too many days off and can't learn without a five day work week. Too many days without instruction can lead to students forgetting material. We will need a compromise to ask how many days off there are during the year compared to religious holidays where everyone gets the best education. The parents should be included in this conversation and they argue for both minority observation days and for more days in a row of instruction. The solution is a maximum of days off during the year and a compromise to not lessen education and still give students most of the religious holidays.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Children need an understanding of World War II and the Holocaust. Why did it happen and why did the Germans let it happen? Fear was used to motivate Germans to do nothing to protect the Jewish people. Fear of what your neighbors and friends might say if you don't follow orders. We will repeat history if we don't learn from it to prevent it from happening again. The Jewish students and families can feel that fear now when they are excluded and intimidated. It is a reassurance to love one another for who you are and be proud of your culture not in fear of it.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting

antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

A meaningful interfaith conversation can be achieved without assuming groups hate one another or to assume school fights are always about religious differences. Antisemitism that teaches hateful slurs will encourage fights from kids who may not even know what these words are if they were not taught about them in class. It would encourage violence and hate. Kids would use these harmful phrases in fights that may not be about religion but can turn into one quite easily. It is not inclusive to teach ethnic slurs. Celebrate Jewish American History and what it has in common with other cultures. The taskforce for the attorney general to identify and monitor antisemitism is a great idea but to stop it in its tracks, students can learn the history of Israel in History class and celebrate Judaism with facts and data and without learning hateful dialogue in school. These crimes are in fact real and can cause fear and anxiety for students and adults.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Curriculum should include fact based education as in learning religious holidays, important dates and cultural significance. Kindergarten through twelve grade is not a dissertation of all cultures and history of every country but an overview. Classes can be chosen to study it more if there is an interest, and instructor and a curriculum. Students can learn more comprehensive social studies by group projects based on what the student chooses to learn. If it is a student's choice, the student will find the class more interesting. Students will also be surrounded by other students who enjoy the same in depth conversations as they do. Students do not have to study the same culture that they are but learn about a new one. American or European History can also be included in those choices.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

The misunderstanding is the way this question was asked. All these topics are grouped together as if this is about banning books about race religion or gender. The question needs to be separated because there are other reasons besides the ones you listed for a librarian not to allow these books for children.

Books just like movies, TV, or video games need warning labels. Some of these books depict anal sex, graphic nudity, pornography, or sex with a boy and a grown man. Some books depict menstruation with pools of blood as if it's a crime scene.

Go to booklooks.com to see how and why parents do not want these books in school libraries. It is the librarians job to select books about puberty in a calm factual way. The librarians who select these books are responsible for the content and the responsibility of not displaying nudity and pornography to children who are not mature enough to see it.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Fairfax County has stopped using phonics to teach kids how to sound out words, rules of the English language and to diagram sentences. These will help every marginalized community. Kids need vision or hearing tests to see if kids need glasses or a hearing aid. The health aides in schools can help identify these kids. Kids cannot concentrate if the words are blurry or they cannot hear the teacher.

Anne Donohue

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

The three most pressing issues facing Loudoun County schools are 1) safety and inclusion; 2) adequate funding with equitable distribution of assets and resources; and 3) staff support and retention. While LCPS has made improvements, there are still many students who do not feel safe or welcome in our schools, often because they come from a background different from some other students. Whether the background differs with regard to religion, race, ethnicity, sex/gender, national origin, or physical and neuro ability level, all students need to feel welcomed and included; in order for that to happen, students need to see representations of themselves in the peers and staff around them and also need to learn about the valuable contributions to our nation and society from all types of people. In addition to ensuring that our schools are fully funded, it is critical to equitably distribute funds and other resources across the county; certain older schools are filled with mold and falling apart, which no students should be subject to, while other, newer schools contain state-of-the-art facilities. Finally, we face staff shortages in many areas and attracting and retaining competent, professional, dedicated staff across the spectrum is a top priority.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Absolutely. As the population of the students in our schools changes and diversifies, this is important for multiple reasons. Students should not ever have the impression that an observance or holiday that is important in other faiths is of less significance or importance than Christian holidays. Further, students should not be penalized for missing classes on important religious holidays where those holidays do not coincide with other school break dates. Finally, as the population of students and staff within the district who observe additional holidays increases, it may not be practical to hold classes on those dates.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Reversing the recent rise in antisemitism to protect Jewish students and staff will require a multi-prong approach. Greater education and emphasis needs to be provided as on ongoing topic to students and staff regarding the longstanding trend of discrimination against Jewish people throughout centuries and around the world, including the brutal reality of the Holocaust. Schools should also make a concerted effort to educate students about the rich cultural history of Judaism and the invaluable contributions that people of Jewish faith have made to human civilization; Jewish culture should be recognized and celebrated in the same way that schools acknowledge special months for Pride, women's history, Black history, Latino heritage, and AAPI heritage. School leaders at every level need to be very clear that bias-motivated, discriminatory language or actions directed against Jewish students or staff will not be tolerated, and when incident occur, need to follow through with thorough investigations and consequences. Educating students and staff on warning signs to be aware of that someone may be sliding into an antisemitic mindset, when and how might be appropriate to intervene, and how to talk to their peers or a trusted adult. Schools also need to make mental health counseling and resources available to students and staff.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The School Board can take several actions to combat antisemitism. First, the School Board needs to make clear and unequivocal public statements that antisemitism is a form of bigotry and will not be tolerated in LCPS. The School Board should also promulgate a definition of antisemitism, develop methods for tracking incidents of antisemitism, acknowledge Jewish American Heritage Month, continue to recognize Jewish high holy days as holidays on the school calendar, and require LCPS to expand its curriculum to include more instruction regarding the Holocaust and other historical discrimination and mistreatment against Jews, the creation of Israel, and the public bias that continues to be directed against Jewish Americans. The School Board also needs to request and allot funding for staff to have access to resources for combatting antisemitism, as well and youth mitigation efforts to help stop the process of students becoming radicalized.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

A fully developed school curriculum, that is well-rounded and does not edit out or disregard contextual facts, teaches students about the diversity of human thought and experience that has existed for thousands of years. When presented with such a curriculum, it should be obvious and normal for students to acknowledge the rise and fall of different cultures and viewpoints over time and to better understand our current place in human history. Understanding that humans have long divided into groups with differing priorities and opinions will emphasize the importance of tolerance, understanding, and the need for government to treat its citizens fairly and without bias.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LBGTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I am opposed to censorship and believe there are very few instances where it may be appropriate to remove books and reading materials from libraries and curricula entirely. It is critical for school libraries and instructional materials to educate students about humanity's history and the reality of the world around them without carving out exceptions for segments of history that some people find troubling, embarrassing, or offensive.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

The School Board should try multiple approaches to try and bridge this funding gap. The Board should lobby the Board of Supervisors and local representatives in the General Assembly for more funding to support these needs, but should also review the LCPS budget to determine if there are allotted funds that could be repurposed, or

projects that could be streamlined to free up funds to redirect for this purpose. The only solution to helping students catch up is to devote more resources to them, and more resources requires more funding.

Michael A. Rivera

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

My overall focus is on student safety, teacher quality of life, and fiscal accountability. Within those three areas are encompassed a host of other issues that need to be addressed.

Student Safety: discipline policies, dress codes, unlawful student actions (e.g. vaping), school resource officers, teacher respect.

Teacher Quality of Life: salary/benefits, overburdensome administrative tasks, respect from students, pay for work outside of reasonable working hours, teacher evaluation metrics.

Fiscal Accountability: transparency, access to all financials by the public, spending tied directly to academic excellence, trend analysis, budgeting proportional to enrollment, success metrics.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I believe that families should celebrate whichever religious holiday pertains to their faith without penalties to students.

There are many ways to learn and with technology even children that are not in school can either do work in advance, work some during the holiday, or make up the work afterwards. I think that as parents take their children out of school for religious holidays they should also hold their children accountable to do their required assignments.

There are many religions and many associated holidays and it is not reasonable to expect the calendar to accommodate all of them.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

The Jewish history is very old and very rich. I think students should learn about all cultures and be taught to respect one another objectively. History should be taught objectively and not in a manner to insult any other culture as a result of past and current geopolitical disagreements.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

I agree with making sure that all students study the Holocaust and know the atrocities that were inflicted on the Jewish people and many other faiths. I've been to the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC and would recommend that as a class trip for high school students. As a matter of being a world religion, Judaism should be included as should Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and other significant religions.

I would not advocate to Jewish Heritage month as I feel proclamations have been so overused and watered down that they mean nothing today. I would not want a Christian Heritage month



nor would I want a Hispanic American month.

If the education is executed properly through instruction, students will learn and appreciate the world's rich history.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Education is the great equalizer and the key to everyone's success. My mother obtained a GED and my father a third-grade education. However, they instilled in their children that education provides for all and I was able to graduate with two degrees in Engineering.

I am a believer in education basics such as Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic - the three R's. I think public schools are so enamored by technology they have lost sight of building core skills that were historically taught from books.

We evolved as a nation of one room school that created many great people including our founding fathers. We need to get back to basics.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

History is objective, it happened and in many cases we have documented it. It becomes subjective when adults overlay their political and ideological beliefs. I think that ALL history should be taught including mistakes, tragedies, and blame should be exposed. I do not wish to relive the mistakes we made historically and do not agree with those that want to rewrite history. My opinion on the Holocaust is stated above and I think it is a hugely significant historical event that should never be forgotten.

The current trend to inject LGBT curriculum into K-12 is disturbing because much of it has been proven to be age inappropriate and sexually explicit. Again, historically there have been members of the LGBT community that have contributed to humanity on the world stage and in America. It should not be problematic to recognize those persons and their contributions. However, I am firm in that age appropriate materials must be respected in and I do not condone sexually explicit or pornographic material or curriculum regardless of whether if it's gay, heterosexual, or trans - it has no place in an environment that should be promoting academic excellence.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Learning loss has affected ALL students not just black, low income, and disabled learners. Learning loss had been trending before COVID and the nation's report card from NAEP exposed that schools that are reporting academic successes are not being truthful. I think that LCPS is also "fudging" the numbers when it comes to academics and we need to be more introspective when setting goals and measuring our successes. We cannot compare ourselves to other school districts and are content with mediocrity but instead we should strive to academic excellence and be the thought leader in public education for the

Commonwealth.

Unfortunately, public schools were found to have misused COVID funds to push political agendas related to sexually explicit books and critical race theory. This was a huge disservice to parents and students and the school board needs to be frank and honest about acknowledging exactly where students stand academically today and put measures in place immediately to deal with learning loss.

ALGONKIAN DISTRICT

April Moore Chandler

aprilforalgonkian.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

We must ensure that our public schools remain inclusive and responsive to all students. Every student should feel safe, seen, and respected in our public schools. Students should be at the center of every decision or policy that impacts our public schools. Our school buildings should be safe, and we should ensure that our facilities are maintained appropriately. Students should have access to cutting-edge academic, athletics, and extracurricular opportunities.

We must recruit and retain highly effective educators by focusing on improving pay and working conditions. Highly trained professionals are the backbone and very foundation of our public schools. LCPS should recruit and work hard to retain the best professionals in the region. Providing competitive wages, creating a supportive and collaborative culture, and improving working conditions will foster an environment that best supports our students.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Wholeheartedly, I am committed to maintaining an inclusive school calendar that includes faith observance days that align with the makeup of our county. Loudoun County Public Schools currently serves a diverse population of students. To best serve all our students, the district calendar must account for the religious observances of our students so that certain students do not miss valuable class time to observe their holiest of days. Recognizing and celebrating the diversity of Loudoun's students and introducing our children to the ideas of fairness and inclusion is helpful and useful for preparing students to be citizens of the world.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Everyone should feel safe, seen, and supported in our public schools. No one should feel excluded, intimidated, and frightened, and when Jewish students and families report that they are experiencing discrimination, we have an obligation to confront antisemitism head-on. First and foremost, we need to ensure that our curriculum includes accurate and complete history. Our libraries need to contain books that represent Jewish characters. We must work

together in partnership with the community to ensure our public schools are welcoming spaces. We have to work with our educators and provide them with appropriate support and training through professional development to ensure they know how to challenge negative stereotypes and discrimination in the moment. We also need to ensure that school staff are appropriately trained in trauma-responsive practices while offering appropriate disciplinary action, accountability, and the opportunity for the perpetrator to learn from the incident.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

As a public high school student, I had the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust from a survivor, Rudolf "Rudy" Herz, who lived in my community and made it a priority to share the history of the Holocaust. Mr. Hertz was well-known in our community and came to share his experiences with students year after year. His testimony deeply impacted me and caused me to commit to working in support of true equality. Having had this experience, I sincerely believe that public schools are an effective place to learn about each other and our complex history as humans.

Data shows that Americans, especially Americans who are younger than me, do not have an accurate understanding of the Holocaust. Americans have lost a sense of the number of humans brutally murdered in this genocide or how it happened. Expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism in the World History curriculum, celebrating Jewish American Heritage Month, and offering expanding access to teaching resources are all initiatives I would support as a school board member. These restorative practices could go a long way in overcoming Americans' lack of knowledge regarding this history. We must tell the truth so this travesty can never be repeated again.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

In a district like Loudoun, cultural competency is a necessity. Our division is deeply diverse, with more than 58% of current students identifying as a culture other than white. LCPS students have the opportunity to expand and develop their cultural competency every day by interacting and engaging with their classmates. One of the most essential lessons I learned as a teacher was knowing your students, understanding the challenges and opportunities they face, and building connections are keys to success. To authentically teach our diverse community of students, we need a curriculum that includes many diverse perspectives. It is essential to offer students in cultural identity groups a more profound sense of self and all students the opportunity to know more about their world. To this end, we must commit to ensuring that our social studies curriculum is complex, encourages the development of critical thinking skills, contains extensive and inclusive perspectives, and is wholly accurate.

Nationally and locally, books depicting



experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

Nothing good ever begins with a book ban. As an advocate for intellectual freedom and equal rights, I believe our libraries in school and out should be diverse and contain books representative of all kinds of human experiences. I am entirely and adamantly against removing books that depict experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, and the struggle for racial equality. Our school libraries should be built by librarians who are highly trained subject area experts to ensure that all these perspectives and more are included. It is appropriate for parents to determine what is right for their child, but it is not appropriate for a small group or single parent to determine what is suitable for ALL students to have access to in our school libraries or curriculum. Banning books deprives our students of access to information, new ideas, and educational experiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

School boards should focus on addressing the needs of students. We do know that students from marginalized populations have been most impacted. We should allocate resources to help accelerate learning and support students as they move forward through new concepts, like high-dosage tutoring tied to course content and extending learning time interventions. We can also focus on hiring teachers and teaching assistants who reflect the makeup of our community, as findings indicate that students learn better in school when they can view their teachers as role models. Supportive school environments and strong teacher-student relationships speed recovery from learning loss. We can also support these efforts by prioritizing training and supporting teachers as they continue to adjust how they deliver and assess lessons. We must also prioritize providing our schools with the resources they need to support struggling students.

ASHBURN DISTRICT

Deana Griffiths

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Parent's Rights, Education, 8040/Safety and Security.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I believe it is finalized. Yes.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools

have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

I am Jewish myself. More education about Jewish History and the Holocaust must be taught. It is essential.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

I support expanding the Holocaust and Jewish Education completely. I am the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. I grew up learning through reading, chilling documentaries and through survivors in my family. My grandparents escaped the Nazis in September 1939. We lost my father's whole side of the family. Kids today need to know the suffering of the Jewish people and the Holocaust. I feel like it is completely lost today. I completely support adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month. We must combat antisemitism.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

I believe American History should be taught, the good and the bad. I agree that kids should be taught about other cultures. I believe that is vital.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I believe the history and details of the Holocaust should be taught and books should be provided. Civil Rights books should be taught along with the history of this country. The good and the bad. I DO NOT believe LGBTQ books should be given out or taught in the schools. Books on sexuality should NOT be discussed in K-12. If you are in High School, you can go to the local library. These books should not be available in school libraries. Not necessary.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address

the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Get back to teaching academics and get away from all the Social and Emotional Learning programs. Get back to the basics; Reading Writing, Arithmetic, English and History, etc. Offering special tutoring for kids that struggle. Every child learns differently.

CATOCTIN DISTRICT

Daniel A. Brubaker

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

1) CRT and Marxist indoctrination/rubrics, 2) Exposure of kids to physical and moral harm, 3) School personnel keeping secrets from parents, counseling transitions, etc.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Not necessarily. Have not fully considered the topic. Allowance should be made for observance; not sure if school closures are always warranted. Very willing to hear arguments on all sides of this question.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Schools should be safe for all kids. All dangerous situations, or potentially dangerous situations, should be properly investigated and dealt with. Law enforcement should be called if needed.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

I support such initiatives. I note with alarm what appears to be a growing trend of antisemitism on the American Left today. Our daughter reports it too. The school board should be warm to appropriate steps to address antisemitism.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

I oppose SEL because (despite some worthy contents) it is

ideologically driven and destructive. So, my answer depends upon what is meant by “cultural competency.” Generally, I believe kids should receive a well-rounded education, giving a full and balanced view of history, cultures, and the world.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

School libraries should be curated. Sexually explicit books (e.g., giving instructions or depicting sexual acts) should be presumed inappropriate for public schools & admitted to school libraries or classrooms ONLY after review, not vice versa. Regarding other matters, balance and truthfulness are key. I see too much of a social agenda, not enough solid history.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

What was done to kids during the pandemic is a travesty. I warned the school board but they did not listen. Kids of modest means were hurt most. The new school board needs to cut bloat in admin and redirect resources to the classrooms, hiring more school staff, reducing class sizes, and take other needed steps to restore what was lost.

Megan Lockwood

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

1) Ensuring that all students are safe, heard and academically challenged in our schools, 2) Rebuilding trust and establishing open communication between the schools and the community, 3) Getting politics and extremism out of our schools and refocusing on working

together to create the best education for our students and best working environment for our educators.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes, absolutely.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

We need to do more to track these trends and educate our students about the dangers of racism, homophobia and religious discrimination. We need to be clear that incidents of violence or discrimination will not be tolerated. We also should be doing more outreach to at-risk and marginalized communities (eg: Jewish, Muslim, LGBTQ, BIPOC) to understand the issues they are facing, and to assure we are working together to address them.

The Governor's Commission to Combat

Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The school board should ensure that students receive not only accurate academic and history instruction, but exposure to the wider world and knowledge of challenges that the Jewish community and others continue to face. If we cannot acknowledge and learn from our history we are doomed to repeat it.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

I have seen first hand through my own children and students the benefits of being introduced to cultural knowledge that they might have no other way of being exposed to. Accurate, fact-based instruction in cultural and world history is critical to helping our students grow into responsible, successful global citizens.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I support parents' rights to choose what their own child is exposed to, but oppose wider censorship in all forms. Yes, these topics can be sensitive or even painful, but pretending they do not exist is actively damaging to our students and wider community.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Learning loss due to COVID is a huge problem that has largely been unsuccessfully addressed. We need to re-evaluate our approach to testing, discipline, absenteeism and remediation to combat these gaps. We cannot blithely continue “business as usual” because the educational field has been fundamentally altered.

DULLES DISTRICT

Melinda Mansfield

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Literacy
Special Education/Transparency/
Communication
Mental Health/Safety

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar

that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Our students and families deserve welcoming and safe schools. The increase in hate speech and antisemitism is disturbing and must be addressed with a consistent, proactive response that includes prevention and remediation. LCPS has a protocol for responding to racial slurs and hate speech in schools. We must ensure that the protocol is implemented consistently in all schools, data is taken, information is investigated, and brought to the school board and the community so we may work together and problem-solve. We can always do better with awareness and education and continue to have sessions with the Anti-Defamation League and other stakeholders.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

We live in a multicultural, pluralistic society, and it is incumbent on our schools to help students learn about, understand, and accept different kinds of people. Therefore, our policies, curriculum, and school climate must be inclusive. The school district must also use the current standards of learning for history as a map and guide for what students must minimally learn in each grade and subject. To help implement corrective and restorative work, the School Board, through a request of the curriculum and instruction committee and various stakeholder committees, may go through the RFP process to procure culturally competent core curriculum and supplemental instructional materials. In addition, the School Board can vote to provide funds to increase antisemitism awareness and training.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency by teaching students about themselves and others in their history, geography, economics, civics, and sociology classes. There should be diversity and representation of many kinds of people and cultures in textbooks, role models, historical periods and figures, literature, media, etc. Curriculum should be evidence-based, truthful, and historically accurate. I believe the only way to decrease fear and judgment about other cultures is to learn about them to encourage honest discussions. This is the first step in helping to inspire and promote empathy and understanding. We all want a welcoming, affirming, and inclusive environment for all students.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

My position is that being uncomfortable is okay with support and education. I had a teacher in 8th grade, Mrs. Couser, who taught a month-long class on WWII and concentration camps. She used

actual footage and documents. It was uncomfortable, challenging, emotional, and at times confusing. But what Mrs. Couser taught was powerful and made such an impression that I remember it 40 years later. During that month, I learned why empathy and speaking up is essential. I learned that people can be so fearful that they will look for others to blame. I learned about propaganda and how media influences thinking and can be used to hurt and divide people. I also learned about human resiliency. She insisted that we know so that we would work to ensure it never happens again to any population. She was inspirational. When I went to Buchenwald and Dachau in high school, I collected and bought materials for her to use in her future classes. She was overwhelmed when I gave them to her. I wanted her to know that I listened and that she fulfilled her mission for at least one of her students.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Remediation of at-risk students in special education requires time, staffing, and federal, state, and local funding. Funding is inadequate, and we must advocate for more. Congress promised to cover 40% of the extra cost of special education when it passed IDEA, but it only covered 14%. In Virginia, The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) recently published a report (July 10, 2023) investigating Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula. JLARC reports that the formulas utilized to calculate funding are outdated and "systematically underestimate division compensation costs." In addition, while state funding for at-risk and English learners has increased, state funding for special education has decreased by 16%, even though the special education population and costs have grown. That does not help school districts create successful remediation programs. Research studies indicate that the most effective ways to help students are lowering teacher-student ratios, reducing class size, and providing intense daily tutoring with an evidence-based curriculum and highly skilled tutors who are consistently coached, trained, and monitored with no more than two students with similar weaknesses in a small group. The best results occur when tutoring occurs at school during the regular day.

LEESBURG DISTRICT

Lauren Shernoff

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

School Safety, Closing Achievement Gaps, and Transparency.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I recognize that all religious holidays are important and should be respected and ideally we would be able to accommodate them all. That being said there are several factors that go into a school calendar. I would like to work towards a balance that honors a diverse calendar while having more 5 day school weeks which provides families with consistency that's currently lacking. With the learning gaps we have seen from the pandemic years, consistency of consecutive days is essential for academic growth. The top priority of a school system should be safety and academics. We need a calendar that prioritizes learning and allows religious excused absences, provides take-home work, and gives assurances that no important tests will take place on any religious holiday when they are not given as days off.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the

rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

I take this issue VERY seriously. My husband is Jewish, so this is very personal for me and my family. Hate, of any kind, has no place in our schools. What is troubling to me, is that we, as adults are not setting a good example of how to treat one another. In this polarized culture, and the age of social media, it has become common place to bully and viciously attack people who might disagree with you. It has to begin with us as adults first, committing to coming together and leveraging our differences so we can set an example for our kids. I would work hard to make sure that all students feel safe and protected. I also believe that we have to take this seriously, and have serious consequences when it is discovered. Accountability and Discipline are two extremely weak areas in LCPS.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

I support this kind of work. I believe that educating the next generation on the heinous missteps of the past is imperative to them taking ownership in not repeating it. School Board members have the ability to vote on curriculum and I would like to see that take place.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

I believe all history should be taught. I believe it should be taught with accuracy and lacking bias. I also believe in developmentally appropriateness. At times, these topics can be sensitive and extremely complex and that has to be taken into account when we think about how and when this content is delivered. As an educator for the last 16 years, and a former classroom teacher, I understand that while the curriculum matters, there is no perfect program and it is the teaching of the curriculum and how it is adapted that matters most. With that experience, I will be able to more accurately evaluate the merits and pitfalls of a given curriculum and communicate that out to the community.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LBGTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I do not believe in book banning, but I do believe in looking at books with an eye for what is developmentally appropriate. I also believe that parents should know what their child is reading in class and checking out from the library. We have ratings for movies for a reason. Similarly, I think we need to examine books for their educational merit, and content, particularly when it comes to sexually explicit content.

We also need to know HOW to use books with complex topics to teach our students. There are many beautiful books out there about these topics, that do not cross any lines of inappropriateness, and they can be excellent vehicles for learning and conversation.

In our polarized culture, people view you as either a book banner or not. It's really not that simple. We have got to find a common sense way around these divisive narratives about books. I work as a literacy coach and the power of books as a tool for learning is essential. I believe we can find a balance to evaluate books for educational value as well as properly evaluate books people in the community are concerned about.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

I would say this is the number 1 reason I am running for school board. I have spent my career working in Title 1 schools that have a majority of these populations represented. The learning challenges, post Covid, are real and in LCPS the gaps are staggering. I believe that political rhetoric and "hot topics," have dominated the conversation about schools, and our students and their academics are being sidelined as a result.

Here are 3 places I think we should start to begin closing achievement gaps for our sub groups.

Streamline initiatives and requirements for teachers that distract from core and targeted instruction so they can actually teach!

Evaluate all levels of curriculum, the training and fidelity of delivery, and make sure it is evidence based.

Partner with educators, parents, and specialists to collaborate and problem solve, study data around achievement gaps, and develop new strategies.

I recently wrote a Facebook post on this topic that goes into more detail as it is a cornerstone of my platform and you can find more there or on www.laurenforleesburg.com/dyk.

LITTLE RIVER DISTRICT

Dr. Sumera Rashid

rashid4va.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Among many other challenging elements, the three most important issues facing the County's schools today centered around the following:

Inclusivity - I vow to promote a safe and welcoming environment regardless of an individual's background, race, gender, or abilities.

Academic excellence - I support ensuring that our schools provide the highest quality of education to students.

Transparency - I believe that in order to ensure trust from the community, a transparent school board is essential in order to ensure responsible decision-making and fostering open communication.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

It is important to foster an inclusive environment through awareness building and an approach that involves education, which can incorporate teachings about those of different faiths and diversity. Workshops for students, staff, and teachers that entail training on diversity must be offered. Available resources from local community organizations and cultural institutions will help in combating existing stereotypes. Establishing clear policies and guidelines that prohibit discrimination and harassment must be promoted in order to implement disciplinary measures and ensure that reporting mechanisms are in place. Overall, promoting dialogue and inclusion



can help to celebrate diversity in schools and in the community. Encouraging parental involvement through resources, such as workshops, can help in this celebration along with establishing a regular channel of communication. In addition, forming partnerships with local organizations and developing collaborative projects with other schools can enhance inclusivity and awareness of diversity.

The Governor’s Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board’s role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

School Boards should collaborate with educators to integrate this corrective and restorative work, such as ensuring that lessons go beyond Holocaust education and cover broader Jewish experiences and contributions to society. They must support these restorative practices and provide guidance to facilitate the process and ensure its effective implementation. School Boards must actively work towards creating a safe and inclusive environment and involve the implementation of programs that promote diversity and cultural understanding. Overall, the School Board must evaluate and review policies on a regular basis in order to assess their effectiveness.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction by incorporating principles such as diversity and content that avoids bias and reflects lived experiences, histories, multicultural and global perspectives. Incorporating interdisciplinary connections such as music, art, and sociology, can provide students with a variety of exposure. In addition, critical thinking and analysis, such as debates, educational resources that includes textbooks multimedia materials and online platforms, and ongoing professional development to educators could serve the community with different forms of engagement. Engaging with local communities and cultural organizations, regular formative assessments, such as class discussions and projects, and written assignments, can further the use of the curriculum serving as a tool for fostering cultural competency.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

It is important to ensure that students have access to many different perspectives and historical events. This can foster understanding, empathy, and critical thinking. Books that address topics such as the Holocaust or racial equality help students to gain a deeper understanding of historical events. By removing such books, the students’ exposure to diverse perspectives becomes limited. In

addition, by removing books related to Holocaust experiences and racial equality, school’s risk to continue or increase ignorance or disregard experiences of marginalized communities. Although it is important to consider the appropriateness of books for different age groups, removing books in their entirety is not beneficial. Age appropriate selections or establishing guidelines for book selection will be more effective. Overall, having an inclusive curriculum and diverse literature, ensures a comprehensive and well-rounded education that fosters cultural competency and promotes social justice.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

The School Board should respond to address the ongoing need of students who have fallen behind. The Board should assess the extent of the learning loss by gathering data and conducting assessments. In addition, it is important for the Board to engage with stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and students, in the decision-making processes. Seeking their input and collaborating on potential solutions can help to prioritize the needs of the entire school community. In addition, finding resources that target interventions that address such student needs can involve after school tutoring, small group instruction, or additional support staff. The School Board should also invest in professional development for teachers and staff in order to enhance their skills in addressing the learning loss. Collaborating with community organizations can help support and augment the existing efforts and extend the reach of available assistance. Overall, using technology and digital resources and fostering a supportive learning environment can help create a positive and inclusive school environment that supports the social emotional well-being of students. Working with local and state authorities to advocate for ongoing funding and monitoring and adjusting strategies can help address the evolving needs of students.

Prince William County

AT-LARGE CHAIRPERSON

Carrie Rist

Carrie4Chair.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County’s schools today?

ACADEMICS: Our county schools remain in a deep academic hole, following the extended COVID-related closures and ineffective virtual instruction. Going forward, our school board must remain laser-focused on its core mission of education – not on faddish political causes.

SAFETY: County schools have increasingly tolerated violence and disorder — including drug use, sexual harassment, and bullying. We must raise our standards and reintroduce appropriate consequences

for student misconduct.

TRANSPARENCY: Parents should know exactly what students are taught in district classrooms — and when serious incidents occur inside a school, all families should be notified in a candid, timely manner. As the first and most important educators of their children, moms and dads should never be left in the dark.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Absolutely. Prince William County has a rich and diverse tapestry of different faith groups, and it’s important that our school system be respectful and inclusive towards them.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

There is no place for antisemitism or any form of hatred in our schools. PWCPSS must implement, communicate and enforce a zero-tolerance policy against antisemitic hate and violence – guided and informed by Jewish community leaders – so that Jewish students and their families feel included, respected, and safe in every single one of our schools.

The Governor’s Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board’s role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

I enthusiastically and unequivocally support all recommended actions that were outlined in the Commission’s 2022 report on combatting antisemitism. As School Board Chair, I would utilize this report, along with additional guidance from leaders in the Jewish community, to inform our school district’s efforts to fight antisemitism in a clear, consistent and systematic manner. In particular, I would (1) insist that our district utilize the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism; (2) insist that our curricula remain free of ideological biases that might harm Jewish students; and (3) work with the Superintendent of Schools to ensure that our history curriculum includes the stories of heroic Jewish-American figures like Haym Salomon, Edward Solomon, and Emma Lazarus.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

We can – and must – teach American history and world history in a candid, factual manner that affirms our shared humanity and respects a multiplicity of valid perspectives. We must not impose a narrow-

minded, ideological worldview on students in the name of diversity – instead, we should aim to foster open-mindedness, tolerance, and – above all – kindness. The Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism’s “K-12 Pro-Human Learning Standards” offer a positive, unifying approach that I believe could serve as an able template for our schools.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

We have an obligation to establish a culture of kindness and tolerance in our schools, including by recognizing and incorporating America’s diversity tapestry of historical contributions and modern perspectives, while simultaneously ensuring that our schools never become places of politicized instruction.

One of the best ways to present this diversity of views – while respecting and keeping our schools out of conflict with the parents that entrust their children to us – is to ensure that all materials are age-appropriate, and that age-inappropriate materials are not accessible to our young students. Regarding sensitive issues or controversial books, families should always be informed and, if parents feel that a certain assignment is not right for their child, then alternative materials should be made available.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

County schools were closed for an unnecessarily long time – well after private schools reopened safely. While all students suffered in various ways (academically and otherwise), it is true that traditionally disadvantaged students suffered the most. It should be the top priority of the School Board to close the achievement gap by (1) working to ensure that every student is able to access the learning resources they need – at home and at school – to meet academic standards for each grade; (2) providing additional services and evidence-based support are provided, as-needed, to students and their families to address mental health challenges; and (3) consulting with a diverse group of parents, teachers, and counselors in doing so.

BRENTSVILLE DISTRICT

Adele E. Jackson*

adeleforschoolboard.com



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County’s schools today?

Academic success for all students, safety and security for staff and students, and continuing to increase family/parent engagement.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I was a supporter of the recently adopted inclusive school calendar in PWCS and maintain my support and full commitment for the current calendar.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving

many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Creating a climate of inclusion and acceptance can be done both in and out of the classroom. I support resolutions and policies that promote safety, security, and inclusion for all, including but not limited to, a resolution for Jewish American Heritage Month, inclusive calendar, and a Code of Behavior that specially outlines consequences for targeted harassment. Academic success is linked to whether or not a student feels safe and included in their classroom.

The Governor’s Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board’s role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

The role of the School Board is to ensure that PWCS policies match regulations/laws set by the Commonwealth and VDOE. The School Board’s policy states that the curriculum shall align with Virginia’s Standards of Learning. While the responsibility of day-to-day instruction falls under the Superintendent’s purview I believe in closely monitoring all changes, including this report. At times support at a local budget level, i.e. purchasing of materials, is necessary to support state initiatives; closely monitoring these reports is essential especially when the Board is considering the purchase of new textbooks.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

As a current educator I understand firsthand that classroom instruction and materials should reflect the diverse needs of the student population. Student success is linked to feeling safe and included. One of PWCS’ strengths is the diversity of our community-PWCS’ curriculum and instructional materials must reflect the diverse needs of our student population. All school employees must complete cultural competency training as set by the VDOE. As I am committed that all students feel safe and will continue to govern from a place of respect and inclusion. I will support this commitment through policy and budgetary decisions.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

PWCS has a policy for selecting materials for instruction and a process for parents/guardians to participate or review these materials. I am a firm believer that students should have age appropriate access to diverse materials that reflect their community. I am a full supporter of libraries and librarians as an important tool for students to learn about history and their community.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address

the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

PWCS has a research based plan for recovery and re-engagement. As a current educator I intend to support this evidence driven plan and the professionals who are charged with implementing it. I will continue to monitor data during transparent conversations during School Board meetings. I will continue to use my experience as a teacher, school board member, and parent to advocate for academic success in collaboration with the board and the superintendent.

COLES DISTRICT

Lisa Zargarpur*

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County’s schools today?

1. Teacher/staff recruitment and retention. 2. School safety (not just in physical structures but also in the climate of our educational spaces) 3. Academic achievement- Students will leave our schools with the habits of mind and skills they need for post-secondary success. Underpinning all of this is family and community engagement.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes!

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

School boards can review current policy to see what might need to be in place for safe working and learning environments. Presuming that the board has already reviewed policies, issues like this should be handled at the classroom/school level first and that there is support for teachers and administrators through training and reflective practices. Using an equity framework, central office creates training and personnel support to school administrators.

The Governor’s Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board’s role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

PWCS does recognize Jewish American Heritage month. I have always supported efforts to include the study of history and develop critical thinking in our students. School boards typically do not work on curriculum, but we can, with majority support, direct division to be more inclusive in our curriculum and practices.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

A culturally competent curriculum includes diversity of voice,

perspective, and experiences beyond the dominant narratives. It should include global and local perspectives and offer authentic learning experiences. Professional development should include cultural competency and reflective practices. Curriculum should also be regularly evaluated and revised including students, teacher, and parent input.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

We should not censor books. If parents have a concern with content, they can reach out to the school and have a discussion about alternative materials.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Our Superintendent evaluates our programs on a continuous improvement cycle and informs us what we need to resource and how. We have already funded parent liaisons, offered credit recovery programs to high school students, hired more special education staff, offer robust summer programming, and offered supplemental tutoring. Internally we are evaluating classrooms and schools on educational practices and reviewing recommendations for training and staffing concerns. School boards and school divisions should also leverage grants and university partnerships to support student academic achievement.

NEABSCO DISTRICT

Tracy Blake

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Budget Constraints: Despite an increase in the FY 2024 budget, there are concerns about teacher pay, which is still at the bottom of the region, and per-pupil spending, which is among the lowest in Northern Virginia. These financial constraints impact the quality of education and services provided.

Academic Recovery and Enrichment: PWCS is focusing on academic recovery and enrichment programs, particularly during the summer, to address learning gaps that may have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Infrastructure and Maintenance: The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) faces challenges due to inflation, supply chain issues, and workforce problems. These affect the planning, construction, and maintenance of school facilities, potentially impacting the learning environment for students.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Certainly, I am committed to upholding the recently adopted inclusive calendar of Prince William County Schools (PWCS), which thoughtfully acknowledges and respects the observance days of various minority faiths. This calendar, designed with inclusivity in mind, ensures that school closures align with these significant religious observances. It is my belief that such a calendar fosters an environment of mutual respect and understanding, celebrating the diversity within our community. By maintaining this calendar, we continue to affirm our commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that every student feels seen, respected, and valued.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

To reverse the rising trend of antisemitism in schools, it is crucial to implement a multi-faceted approach that focuses on education, policies, and community involvement.

Firstly, education plays a vital role in combating antisemitism. Schools should incorporate comprehensive lessons on the history, culture, and contributions of Jewish people, as well as the dangers of prejudice and discrimination. This will foster understanding, empathy, and respect among students.

Secondly, schools must have clear and strict policies against antisemitism. These policies should be communicated effectively to students, parents, and staff, emphasizing the consequences of engaging in such behavior. It is essential to create a safe reporting system where incidents can be documented and addressed promptly.

Thirdly, fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment is crucial to protecting Jewish students. This can be achieved through the establishment of student-led clubs or organizations promoting diversity and inclusivity. Schools should also provide training and resources for staff to recognize and address antisemitic incidents effectively.

Lastly, collaboration with the broader community is essential. Schools should engage with local Jewish organizations, community leaders, and religious institutions to seek guidance, support, and partnerships. This collaboration can lead to joint initiatives, awareness campaigns, and community dialogues aimed at addressing and preventing antisemitism.

By implementing these measures, schools can create an environment that not only protects Jewish students but also promotes respect, acceptance, and understanding among all students.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative

work?

The School Board plays a crucial role in implementing the recommendations of the Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism. Here's how:

Policy Making: The Board can adopt policies that support the expansion of Holocaust education, inclusion of Judaism and ancient Israel studies in the World History curriculum, and programming for Jewish American Heritage Month.

Resource Allocation: The Board can allocate resources to ensure educators have access to materials for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC.

Community Engagement: The Board can engage with the community, including parents, students, and educators, to gather feedback and ensure the changes are effectively implemented and meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Monitoring and Evaluation: The Board can monitor the implementation of these recommendations and evaluate their impact on students' understanding and attitudes, adjusting strategies as necessary.

In essence, the School Board's role is to guide, support, and oversee the implementation of these recommendations, ensuring they contribute to a more inclusive, respectful, and knowledgeable school environment.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

Curriculum plays a crucial role in fostering cultural competency and ensuring comprehensive social studies instruction. By integrating diverse perspectives, histories, and experiences, curriculum can help students develop an understanding and appreciation for different cultures, identities, and societal issues. A comprehensive social studies curriculum should reflect the cultural diversity within a society, provide opportunities for critical thinking, and promote empathy and respect for others.

Firstly, a culturally competent curriculum acknowledges and includes the histories, contributions, and experiences of diverse cultural groups. It incorporates materials, resources, and activities that reflect the various perspectives and voices of different communities. This allows students to develop a more nuanced understanding of their own culture and the cultures of others, fostering empathy and appreciation for diversity.

Additionally, a comprehensive social studies curriculum should address social issues and injustices, such as racism, inequality, and discrimination. It should encourage students to critically analyze these issues, understand their historical context, and explore possible solutions. By doing so, curriculum can empower students to become active and engaged citizens, equipped with the knowledge and skills to address societal challenges.

Moreover, curriculum can promote cultural competency by incorporating experiential learning opportunities, such as field trips, guest speakers, and community engagement projects. These experiences provide students with firsthand exposure to different cultures, allowing them to interact and learn from individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

In conclusion, curriculum acts as a powerful tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring comprehensive social studies instruction. By incorporating diverse perspectives, addressing social issues, and providing experiential learning opportunities, curriculum can help students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to navigate an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and





other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I firmly believe in the importance of providing students with a comprehensive and inclusive education that reflects the diversity of our society. Efforts to remove books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other sensitive topics from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum are deeply concerning to me.

Censoring or removing these books denies students the opportunity to learn about historical events, diverse experiences, and social issues that are essential for fostering empathy, understanding, and critical thinking. By exposing students to a wide range of perspectives and narratives, we can promote cultural competency, encourage dialogue, and cultivate an inclusive and respectful learning environment.

I firmly believe that education should not shy away from difficult or controversial topics. Instead, it should provide a platform for students to explore, question, and engage with these issues in a safe and supportive environment. Banning or removing books limits students' access to information and inhibits their ability to develop a well-rounded understanding of the world.

As a school board member, I will advocate for the preservation of diverse literature and the inclusion of sensitive topics in our curriculum. I will work to ensure that our students have access to a wide range of resources that reflect the realities of our society and promote understanding and empathy.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

Addressing the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind due to the COVID-19 pandemic is of utmost importance to me as a democratic school board candidate. The pandemic has indeed exacerbated the existing achievement gap, disproportionately impacting marginalized students such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. As Federal funding is coming to an end, it is imperative for the School Board to respond proactively and effectively.

Firstly, I believe in investing in targeted and evidence-based interventions to support students who have fallen behind. This may include additional tutoring programs, summer and after-school enrichment programs, and individualized support for students with special needs. By providing these resources, we can bridge the gap and ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Secondly, it is crucial to address the systemic inequities that have contributed to the achievement gap. This includes examining and addressing issues such as unequal access to technology and internet connectivity, disparities in resources and facilities, and implicit biases within the educational system. The School Board must work collaboratively with educators, families, and community organizations to implement systemic changes that promote equity and ensure that all students receive a high-quality education.

Lastly, community engagement is vital in addressing the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind. The School Board should actively seek input from students, families, and community members to understand their concerns, experiences, and suggestions. By involving stakeholders in decision-making processes, we can build a collective approach that prioritizes the needs of marginalized students

and ensures their voices are heard.

In conclusion, the School Board must respond to the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind by investing in targeted interventions, addressing systemic inequities, and actively engaging with the community. By doing so, we can work towards closing the achievement gap and providing equal opportunities for all students to thrive.

Padreus Pratter

pratterforschoolboard.com/about



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

The three most important issues facing our schools today are school safety and security, academic achievement, and family and community engagement.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

The rise in reported incidents of antisemitism in schools is deeply concerning and requires immediate attention. To reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done, several actions should be taken:

Education and Awareness: Schools must prioritize education about antisemitism, its historical context, and its impact on individuals and communities. This includes promoting tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity.

Clear Policies and Reporting Mechanisms: Schools should establish clear policies against discrimination and harassment, explicitly addressing antisemitism. They should also provide accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms for students to report incidents.

Staff Training: Teachers and staff should receive training on recognizing and responding to antisemitism, including identifying and addressing subtle forms of discrimination. This training should also emphasize the importance of creating inclusive and safe environments for all students.

Collaboration with Community Organizations: Schools should collaborate with local Jewish organizations, community leaders, and parents to develop strategies and programs that actively promote inclusivity and address antisemitism.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History

curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

Inclusive Content: The curriculum should include a wide range of voices, narratives, and experiences from various cultures and communities. It should avoid a Eurocentric or ethnocentric bias and strive for a balanced representation of different perspectives.

Multicultural Approach: The curriculum should promote cultural diversity and encourage students to appreciate and respect different cultures. It should explore topics such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds, fostering empathy and understanding.

Critical Analysis: The curriculum should encourage students to critically analyze historical events, social issues, and cultural phenomena. It should teach them to examine multiple perspectives, challenge stereotypes, and understand the complexities of human experiences.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

A comprehensive social studies curriculum should encourage critical thinking and analysis of historical events, societal issues, and cultural phenomena. Students should be encouraged to examine biases, stereotypes, and power dynamics within historical narratives and current events. Educators should be trained in culturally responsive teaching practices, which involve creating an inclusive and respectful classroom environment.

In an interconnected world, it is important for students to develop a global perspective.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LBGTO narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I am promoting reading in an effort to improve literacy. Kids should be excited about reading. All books are of value and I will reject attempts to remove books from our schools.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

To address the ongoing need of students who have fallen behind, the school boards should consider implementing a comprehensive approach that focuses on academic support, intervention programs, and student well-being.

POTOMAC DISTRICT

Mario R. Beckles

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

Accountability- We need to raise school and student expectation!

Back to Basics- We need to raise standards of learning in reading, writing, math, history, civics and science and expand community partnership volunteer opportunities.

Parental Rights: We need to respect and listen to parents' voices in the children's education.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes, I support maintaining faith observance days on the adopted school calendar.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

My heart is grieved by the growing incidents of antisemitism in our community, commonwealth, and country. I would vigorously hold both students and staff accountable for any type of antisemitism.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

I would support the implementation of the Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism recommendations.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

My primary focus as a new school board member would be to restore academic excellence and achievement in PWCS. There remains a large COVID-related achievement gap with elementary

school students in reading, writing and math that MUST be closed first. When the current achievement gap is closed, I would consider more comprehensive social studies instruction.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

When our daughters were school age, before we went to the movies, I would naturally check the rating to see what the movie was rated G, PG or PG-13, etc. Today, in some of PWCS school libraries there are books that are R and X rated. These types of books should not be in any children's school library.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

This question is one of the main reasons why I am running. As a champion of academic excellence and achievement, I plan to address these needs as follows:

Accountability- We need to raise school and student expectation!

Back to Basics- We need to raise standards of learning in reading, writing, math, history, civics and science.

Community Partnership Expansion: Expand volunteer opportunities.

Respect and listen to parents' voices in their children's education.

Increase transparency and collaboration between schools and parents!

Restore safety and discipline in our schools.

WOODBRIIDGE DISTRICT

Jaylen Custis

linktr.ee/custisjk



What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

I believe the three most important issues facing county schools today are, one safety and security, two lack of accountability meaning that schools now a days are only passing kids along instead of ensuring they learn the material and lastly too much testing.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

Yes, I'm a military child raised my early years in Brooklyn New York they had several holidays observance days for everyone.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

We must hold those who cause harm to others accountable. No student who harms any student should be able to come back to school. School is suppose to be a place of learning as well as safe for all students. We can not continue to let bullies and those who harm others, whether it's physically, verbally or mentally walk. Hold students accountable for their actions.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

As a recent graduate myself class of 2022, I believe that students at least in my school were taught about the holocaust in depth. I believe that there should be a class that students in high school can voluntarily take in 11th, and 12th grade if they wish to go more in-depth about the dark history of our world in more detail. Such as slavery, Native American history etc.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social studies instruction?

My apologies I do not know what this question is asking specifically.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I believe that, all history should be taught once a student reaches a certain age and can understand it. Such as in high school. However there should be no sexual explicit content without parent approval.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets



for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

I believe that if a student is falling behind we have to ensure that we address it early until it is too late. When we catch it early we must take extra time in order to assist that student. If the student has fallen too far back by the end of the year then they must repeat the grade in order to retain the lost information.

Loree Y. Williams*

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What do you see as the three most important issues facing the County's schools today?

The three most important issues facing PWCS are providing a safe environment for staff and students, high-level learning with a focus on academic recovery, and equity in budget and services.

Will you commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar that provides for school closures coinciding with certain minority faith observance days?

I will absolutely commit to maintaining the recently adopted inclusive school calendar. To the best extent possible a public school system in the 10th most diverse county in the nation should do its best to honor the diversity of its community.

Reported incidents of antisemitism in schools have been on the rise in recent years, leaving

many Jewish students and families feeling excluded, intimidated, and frightened. What should be done to reverse this trend, protect Jewish students, and address the harm that has been done?

Educating the public of the critical harms of antisemitism is needed. Honoring and enforcing the non-discrimination and antibullying policies are critical at all levels. Working in collaboration with the community to spread awareness and continued problem solving is key.

The Governor's Commission to Combat Antisemitism issued a report in December 2022 with several school- and curriculum- related recommendations, such as expanding Holocaust education, including the study of Judaism and ancient Israel in the high school World History curriculum, adopting programming for Jewish American Heritage Month, and increasing educator access to resources for combatting antisemitism, such as those provided by the JCRC. What do you see as the School Board's role in implementing this corrective and restorative work?

It is the job of the School Board to work with the Superintendent to ensure that there are no barriers to resources and to ensure staff are provided with the necessary support to introduce or continue to educate students utilizing those resources. It is also the duty of the Board to publicly honor Jewish American Heritage Month.

What is your understanding of how curriculum can be a tool for fostering cultural competency and ensuring the most comprehensive social

studies instruction?

A curriculum that is diverse in all areas and encourages critical thinking is paramount to fostering cultural competency. It allows students to learn about norms outside of their own traditional experience and acceptance of others.

Nationally and locally, books depicting experiences from the Holocaust, LGBTQ narratives, the struggle for racial equality, and other topics perceived by some to be sensitive, have been removed from school libraries, classrooms, and curriculum. What is your position on these efforts?

I do not support book banning. Books should be taught at the appropriate grade level by content and there are professionals such as librarians whose role it is to provide guidance on this very issue. School Boards should trust and rely on these professionals.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already existing achievement gap, especially impacting students from marginalized populations, such as Brown, Black, low-income, and disabled learners. While Federal funding provided some outlets for addressing the losses experienced during the pandemic, that funding is coming to an end. How should the School Board respond to address the ongoing needs of students who have fallen behind?

The School Board should continue to work collaboratively with the Superintendent by supporting the Strategic Plan and Learning Recovery Plan. In addition, Board members have a responsibility to continue to educate themselves on this topic to be able to pass effective policy to address the needs of the school community.

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