

Public education is a pathway that can lead toward social justice. Discuss this idea as it relates to your educational philosophy and/or your platform. Include your thoughts on achievement gaps, disparate pre-academic readiness, housing affordability, and socio-economic diversity.

I believe we should be providing all of our students, especially our economically disadvantaged students, the best learning environment and instruction possible to maximize their level of achievement. My personal advocacy over the past three years has focused on precisely that.

Housing policy is economic policy and is also education policy. We have a neighborhood-based school system here in Arlington, and that means our neighborhood schools reflect the socioeconomic demographics of our neighborhoods. While School Board does not establish County policies, I believe our school board should be proactive in forging a partnership (not just a collaborative working relationship) with the County Board and ensure our County leaders understand how their decisions affect our schools' needs and abilities to serve students.

Additionally, the School Board can make decisions and implement policies that mitigate educational challenges that result from County policies:

Increase students' opportunities for more diverse academic and social experiences through Academic Partner School programs. The students from each partner school would engage in joint academic projects, go on field trips together, hold joint events and fundraisers. The PTAs can join forces to provide additional resources and opportunities for students at both schools, training for teachers at both schools, and engage in advocacy together.

Making decisions and policies that uphold our stated values of diversity and inclusivity.

Increase preschool opportunities beyond APS' capacity through possible efforts with County Creative Preschoolers program, private providers, even businesses.

I also would work with CCPTA (County Council of PTAs) to encourage more collaboration between individual PTAs, less focus on fundraising, and more focus on advocacy and joint-programming.

My advocacy efforts over the past three years have been directed on these broader issues that directly impact APS and its ability to provide every student in every school a comparable academic experience – which is not what our students across our system currently have. I helped lead a grassroots effort to include policies and goals and tools for the geographic distribution of affordable housing options across our County in the County's Affordable Housing Master Plan. As a result of those efforts, a grassroots organization was formed that continued to advocate on the behalf of affordable housing and education policies that provide access to opportunities leading to higher achievement and economic mobility. I chaired the Education committee and have put forth several policy recommendations to our school board to address issues of educational equality, achievement disparities between students and between schools, and socioeconomic diversity.

Two of these recommendations are currently being considered by the Board as they revise admissions and transfer policies: (1) to allow students in the Virginia Preschool Initiative program to remain in the same school for K-5 regardless whether it is a neighborhood or an option school, and (2) to revise the HB Woodlawn lottery so that seats are allocated to every school – option and neighborhood schools – rather than including students who attend an option school in the pool of applicants from their assigned neighborhood school.

Economic diversity in particular has been shown to be a key element in raising the level of academic success of lower-income students. The resources more affluent families bring to a school is one element; but it is the exposure to students from different backgrounds and experiences that influence students: aspirations, vocabulary, seeing problems from different perspectives, developing social skills and the ability to communicate and interact with people who are different from one's self. Every student, regardless of socioeconomic background, benefits from diversity.

What responsibility do our schools have in addressing the crises created by the President's immigration policies?

It is the responsibility of APS to protect the school environment so that it is focused on the education of our students and our students are able to go about their usual routines, activities, and learning. Of course, APS is confined to the parameters of law and needs to stay within the bounds of what it can legally do.

We should, and I believe have established procedures to help ensure teachers and administrative staff are not responsible for dealing with ICE authorities, our classrooms are not unnecessarily interrupted, and students are not witness to disturbing actions. APS should inform all families (not just ones most at-risk) about its policies and procedures in this regard, including reassurances that our principals and staff will do everything they can to ensure a welcoming environment conducive to learning and feeling safe among friends. This reassurance should be given to families in their native languages - and regularly.

But the most important thing schools can do is focus on creating welcoming, inclusive school environments and ensuring each student knows they are a valued member of the school community. Schools must continue to strive to instill in our students the values of our school community. And our School Board needs to put words into action by making decisions and policies that uphold our stated values of diversity and inclusivity.

School capacity is a huge issue in APS. Beyond what is already in the plan, what creative ideas do you suggest for addressing the capacity challenge?

First, APS needs to devise a long-range master plan for capacity needs, to include an evaluation of current school facilities to determine the best and most efficient use of each site moving forward. This will require APS to work closely with the County and its developers to make sure we have as much information as possible for the most accurate projections we can have, and understanding which individual school(s) will be impacted by various development projects.

But beyond maximizing the efficient use of existing facilities and building new ones, there are other creative ways to manage overcrowding; and we can employ a combination of tactics to meet our needs.

1. Centralized instruction centers for music and arts, or for science. Based on the Fillmore Arts Center program in DC Public Schools, this is a tactic that can serve multiple purposes: reduce overcrowding; cost-savings for capital projects; equalizing the quality of instruction systemwide; facilitating opportunities for socioeconomically diverse student interactions; potentially increasing course offerings and level of instruction; increasing teacher collaboration and providing teacher/team planning time.
2. Though it would not be one of my first options, at the high school level, there are year-round schedule models whereby students attend different sessions (not the same calendar extended over a longer period of the year) and therefore fewer students are attending the school at any given time of the year. This model has been looked at in the past, and could be reconsidered in the future if necessary. This approach does pose other complications with standardized testing and participation in sports and other extracurricular activities, etc. Yet it is a model that has been implemented in other jurisdictions across the country, and we can look to successful examples for ways to manage the concerns.
3. Online learning is another tool that can be an effective means of instruction for some students and learning styles; but also has drawbacks. There is much more to the educational experience (classroom discussion, interaction with classmates) that an excess of online learning does not afford. I would not want to over-use online learning options to alleviate broad overcrowding.
4. We need to make sure all of our schools, including option programs (formerly called "choice") are optimally utilized; rezone neighborhood school boundaries system-wide without confining ourselves to specific geographical limits; and revise admissions and transfer policies to option schools and less-crowded neighborhood schools.

What factors do you believe are important to empower youth , beyond the K-12 classroom experience, to engage in further education or to join the workforce?

**Family and community involvement. Financial resources. Socioeconomic diversity – both within and outside the classroom itself.** Exposure to different ideas, perspectives, and experiences leads to aspirations and motivations a student may not have otherwise ever seen within him/herself. Exposure to a variety of experiences and perspectives opens a world of possibilities.

I would like to **bring schools into the community more and the community (including the business community) into our schools more.** There are the typical mentorship and buddy programs and business partnerships to offer internships and such. But our school system's success depends on the support of our community of taxpayers who may or may not have children who ever attend APS schools. We need them to be emotionally, as well a financially invested in our schools.

We have a very successful car decal design competition that joins Arlington Schools and the broader community together, and we display student artwork in APS administration buildings and public libraries. We can expand on those ideas: student artwork displays in our community centers, in senior centers and nursing homes, and featured in our retail establishments. What about a school-related video broadcast on one of the big screens in restaurants? Concerts in more public venues to attract attendees from the non-school community rather than in gymnasiums and cafeterias that accommodate or draw only parents and grandparents and maybe a few neighbors. Programs involving preschool classes and seniors in our senior centers or assisted living facilities. Could some of our local small businesses work with teachers to develop projects or assignments for students that also fill needs for their businesses, saving them money in return?

We have a positive relationship with Northern Virginia Community College. We can expand that relationship and develop others with the numerous post-secondary institutions in this area. Beyond dual-credit courses, can we develop formal mentorship programs and tutoring with college students? Helping high school students prepare for entrance exams or write college application essays. Invite alumni back to give lectures and presentations on their college and professional experiences.

APS strives to prepare students for college or the workforce. I believe every student should leave APS prepared for both. Even if a student does not, or cannot, continue on to college right after graduation, he or she should have developed the academic skills and intellectual curiosity to be successful in subsequent level classes or programs, should he/she become interested or have the opportunity to pursue them in the future. Some students simply can't afford to immediately continue their education and need to work a while first. Others may not think college is for them or they are not meant for college; but after being in a job for a number of years, for example, they may develop the desire to advance in their career. They should be equipped with the academic and interpersonal skills that will help them successfully complete the additional training that will enable them to advance or change careers.

What creative partnerships within Arlington County could you envision to achieve new and/or better outcomes for APS students or to assist in combating some of the current challenges faced by the school system?

Developing an integrated network of school, county, community and business sector resources. APS already maximizes its Virginia Preschool Initiative program. In order to provide additional preschool opportunities for families who do not currently have access, we should look to ensure we are maximizing our Montessori preschool program and also look outside of APS: are there possibilities with the County's Creative Preschoolers program or other private providers that we can create to expand access to more economically disadvantaged families?

APS can develop a stronger relationship with County services to help provide access to mental health and other services our students need but APS may not be fully able to provide.

Working in partnership with the County and Department of Transportation, we can establish bus routes to serve our secondary school students. This would also provide additional public transit service for the

broader community and reduce APS' transportation responsibility so that more of APS' existing resources can be devoted to transportation for our growing elementary school population.

Further developing volunteer and mentoring programs from community organizations and the business community. APS could reach out to the Chamber of Commerce and explore ideas for mutual benefit.

We can develop relationships with the public library network and more local arts groups and think of creative ways to bring more families from diverse backgrounds into programs outside of the school structure and venue.

Many elements of these general ideas already exist within APS. I believe APS needs to provide centralized coordination of all the various programs, services, and partners we currently have, and serve as a single point of contact and conduit to schools systemwide. Currently, we have a variety of things going on at different schools; and it is often left to the individual principals and PTAs to coordinate programs and services with individual groups or volunteers. Then another school may hear about a program somewhere else and ask that PTA to then help them establish the same program at their school. It would be more efficient for everyone to streamline programs and services between APS and the community, and more of our students would receive more benefit overall systemwide.

**What are your thoughts on the schools as a community space? How can schools be used for the benefit of students' families and/or residents without children?**

We have existing examples within our system of how schools can benefit community members without children in our schools: joint-use facilities with community centers and community theaters; the use of school spaces for community meetings and adult education classes; access to recreational facilities and amenities such as swimming pools, fields, and tennis courts.

As we build new schools, we can coordinate with the County and, for example, locate preschool programs or elementary schools next to/with senior community centers and/or public libraries.

We could potentially design a common school and public library – perhaps even located with a senior community center - which could expand the resources available to both students and the community by providing a larger range of offerings overall or by developing special collections – a music resource library for instance.

Could a state-of-the-art aquatics facility and an additional comprehensive high school be incorporated together?

Rather than competing with the County, proper planning and coordination (particularly as the need for additional schools continues) could produce mutually beneficial projects and overall cost-savings for the County.

**How can the School Board create a formal mechanism to empower the voices of teachers and students?**  
Empowering voices of teachers and students starts with the leadership style of the School Board, but more critically of the superintendent. The School Board could devise a formal vision or statement about the type of work climate APS desires, including references to the role(s) of teachers and students.

We can heighten the visibility and role of the Student Advisory Board, with a seat on the dais for a student representative during Board meetings. This is already done in other districts. The representative would not have voting authority; but would be able to ask questions and make comments on topics and presentations. The Student Advisory Board is currently proposing policy revisions to heighten its role, to better represent the student body by electing some members rather than all being appointed, rotating the location of meetings and increase participation among its members. The School Board should approve these changes.

Community satisfaction surveys and site surveys need to offer ways to make responses more anonymous. It can be discouraging to make comments about a particular situation if you have to identify what school and what grade or class you teach and there is a good chance of someone being able to identify you.

Some PTAs have a teacher liaison or a teacher/other staff person serving on the Board. This helps foster a better relationship with parents and is mutually beneficial for the PTA and teaching staff. Parents are more aware of teachers' needs, and teachers are more aware of the PTA's needs, resources, and limitations.

But it is primarily a matter of the work environment and management style –teacher input and feedback has to be welcomed. It's difficult to create a 'formal mechanism' per se – as it involves attitudes and expectations that cannot be quantified or dictated. But they can be directed by the School Board and fostered by the superintendent.