

Washington County Teachers Association
Washington County Educational Support Personnel, Inc.
Candidate Questionnaire: Board of Education
2018 Election

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Your interview will take place at the WCTA Office. Date and time to be confirmed.
10811 Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740

Questionnaires are the property of the Washington County Teachers Association (WCTA).
Responses will be shared with our members. WCTA reserves the right to make candidate
responses to this questionnaire public.

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

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE:

John F. Krowka

DATE SUBMITTED:

5/30/18

Candidates: In order to be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. Clarifications, explanations, and other information may be attached, but please be certain to indicate clearly the questions(s) to which you refer. Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to WCTA.

1. I am running for office because of the urgent needs of our students and our community. I've lived in Boonsboro for 17 years and want to give back to my community. My experience as a Ph.D. scientist has given me analytical problem-solving skills that would be of great benefit as a member of the BoE. My experience as a team-player and a bridge-builder to find common ground among people with divergent interests will be helpful in getting the stakeholders in our school system to work together. As a farmer I relate to the proud agricultural heritage of Washington County and as a champion of diversity I am prepared to work towards meeting the needs of all students.
2. I have a Ph.D. in immunology from the University of Alberta and worked in HIV- and other infectious-disease -research. I taught Microbiology to nursing and culinary students at CTC Shepherd (now Blue Ridge). I worked as a Senior Environmental Scientist and Microbiologist for a trade association, the Personal Care Products Council in Washington, DC for 11 years before retiring in 2016. I am actively involved and support many community organizations. I am currently a member of the Maryland Farm Bureau, Maryland Organic Food and Farming Association, Northern Nut Growers Association, United Democrats of Washington County, MD, Washington County Democratic Central Committee, and the Washington County People's Alliance.
3. Maintenance of Effort is a critically-important safeguard that needs to be strengthened, not diminished or waived. It is the bare minimum required for our schools. Rebasement and other strategies to circumvent the MoE requirements could greatly hurt our schools and our community. We need to work with the County Commissioners and State Legislators to develop a long-term plan, timeline, and budget to provide high-quality education for every student in Washington County.
4. Since the beginning of 2018 I have attended a few school-related activities every week. I regularly attend the BoE meetings and have already met with many school principals, trying to visit every school in Washington County. Some principals (Smithsburg High, Williamsport High, Bester) have not responded to my requests. I would be sure to visit these schools as a member of the BoE. I have also been meeting with many community leaders and groups involved with our educational system. Community engagement is essential to meet the needs of our students and I will continue to meet with as many stakeholders as possible if elected.
5. I support the recommendations in the Maryland Teacher Staffing Report 2016-2018 (<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DEE/ProgramApproval/MarylandTeacherStaffingReport20162018.pdf>). Working to secure funding from federal, national, state, and local agencies to provide incentives is critically important as is working with legislators to secure additional funding. In addition to providing good salaries for teachers, administrators, and ESPs, we need to provide better support and working conditions for these employees. As I mentioned in my public comments to the BOE on Feb 27, 2018, we need additional stakeholder input and a

more detailed diversity plan that can begin to be implemented quickly. Tolerance and respect need to be woven into the fabric of education in the WCPS.

6. Working with federal and state legislators to provide better healthcare benefits is critically-important to all employees. Working with legislators, and insurance, pharmaceutical, and other companies to ensure reasonably-priced healthcare options for all has been achieved in other countries including Canada and can be done here without breaking the bank. It is a very complex issue but as a member of the BoE I would work to maximize benefits and keep costs as low as possible.
7. Preparing students for jobs is the greatest unmet need. While a high percentage of our students graduate from our schools, many cannot find jobs that pay a living wage. A college degree may be right for some but not for all. Our community needs plumbers, mechanics, electricians, and graduates with other skills that are in demand by employers. Supporting vocational training, internships and certification must be part of a long-term strategy to develop the workforce that our community needs to prosper.
8. My top priorities for WCPS are: Smart School Spending, Preparing Students for Jobs, and Community Engagement. We can most efficiently use available funds by performing rigorous due diligence, establishing specific goals and timelines, measuring outcomes for all school programs, and long-term planning. Working closely with community organizations is essential for our students. The School Board can't do it alone. Helping our students and staff practice tolerance and respect for all must be integrated into our curricula and policies.
9. I would carefully evaluate facility rentals, advertising, printing services and other line items in the budget to determine if they are cost-effective and could be scaled back. The BoE needs to do more long-term planning to ensure that today's expenditures are most effectively integrated into meeting future needs. Farming is an important part of Washington County's heritage and it surprises me that interest in these areas is waning. Many exciting opportunities exist in organic and aquaponic farming, value-added products such as wine, cheese and beer, soil microbiology and biological management of pests and weeds, and other areas of agriculture. I'd like to carefully review our Ag Ed programs and consult with stakeholders to determine how our programs to prepare students for jobs in agriculture can be improved.
10. I can appreciate the need for standardized testing, but do we really need so much of it? I'd like to work with federal, state, and local agencies to streamline testing and make it more relevant to determining students' abilities. Improving early childhood education will benefit the students and teachers in years ahead. Providing more counsellors and adequately-paid ESPs will help the teachers to do what they do best, teaching students.
11. Board members need to be more active in advocating for and securing funding. During an information session with current board members for BoE candidates I asked: "What are your plans for using additional funds if the "Fix the Fund" measure is passed by voters. Their reply was, "That will be determined by the state legislators". We should be working with legislators

now to make sure that the WCPS' needs are met. Our lobbying efforts need to be more proactive. We need to make sure that all available sources of funding are used. I recently became aware of funding from the Washington County Arts Council that were not utilized by the BoE.

12. The WCPS BoE needs to work closely with the County Commissioners to address the long-term growth prospects for the areas within the County. Consolidation of some schools such as is currently being considered needs to be evaluated in terms of cost-effectiveness. Simply addressing overall population growth estimates is not adequate. While plans are being developed for the Cascade Town Center, the WCPS must address the educational needs that this development would create. Each annual budget must be submitted with appropriate plans to meet future needs rather than just addressing current crises.
13. Outsourcing needs to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in terms of cost-effectiveness as well as the ability to meet the needs of the students and the WCPS. Internal management reform may be better in some cases than outsourcing. Data from other counties and communities need to be carefully evaluated before services are outsourced. Outsourcing of transportation, for example has been successful for other school districts with aging fleets and limited resources.
14. We need to get more members of the community, not only parents involved with our schools. Social media and other strategies can be more effectively used to engage the community. We need to try new approaches to get people excited about learning and its benefits. Engagement of more local organizations and businesses would be very helpful. Perhaps we could try some interactive online "listening sessions" where questions could be answered in real time to encourage greater community participation.
15. We have a wealth of local talent that is underutilized in making decisions about the school system. In some cases, it may be cost-effective to employ consultants that have experience with highly-effective school programs. Much can be learned from what has worked well in other schools. Our school programs and problems are not unique to Washington County. It is critically important in developing programs such as early childhood education and diversity to get input from all stakeholders before implementing them.
16. Right-to-work laws prohibit union security agreements, or agreements between employers and labor unions, that govern the extent to which an established union can require employees' membership, payment of union dues, or fees as a condition of employment. These laws make it harder for working people to form unions and collectively bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. In general, I am a strong supporter of Unions have who won hard-fought battles to secure safeguards necessary for workers to maintain a good standard of living.
17. Justice Gorsuch's presence on the Supreme Court makes it likely that they will narrowly rule against the unions in *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*. An aggressive campaign to get members to opt out of Unions by wealthy donors is anticipated. It will be a fierce battle but support for

unions is growing as more people become aware of their valuable role unions have played in protecting American workers from the 1800s through the present.

18. I am unable to give absolute answers for many of the statements listed. Vouchers or credits generally undermine the public schools but may be advisable in situations where public schools cannot meet the students' needs. Waivers of Negotiated Agreements seem rarely to be prudent. Outsourcing does not frequently maintain high-quality services and lower costs but may need to be considered in some situations. Merit pay may reward outstanding employees but may not benefit the students or the schools. Graduation rates alone, for example, are not sufficient for rewarding principals but must be considered along with other criteria. I am generally opposed to taxing authority for the Board of Education. It could create incentives for Board members to vote against the interests of the students and schools to keep taxes lower and get re-elected. The County Commissioners and BoE would benefit from long-range planning together to get a better idea of anticipated needs beyond the annual budget cycle. The current procedures for a 4-year contract and annual review of the Superintendent's performance by the BoE appears to be functioning effectively and is consistent with procedures in other schools.

19. Fractionated tuition for non-public school students may be logistically challenging and difficult for budgeting. It might place an undue burden on the public schools by permitting outsourcing of the teaching of expense-heavy courses by private schools to the WCPS. The curriculum and school calendar would need to meet state requirements and may not be able to be negotiated at the level of the WCPS. Staff development, peer assistance/review, the School Improvement Team, and time use on non-instructional days appear to be suitable topics for negotiation.