

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

Name: Linda Murray  
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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:** Linda Murray **DATE SUBMITTED:** May 15, 2018

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.



Candidate Name Linda J. Murray

School Board Candidate Questionnaire – 2018

1. Why are you seeking office as a member of the Board of Education? What experience best prepares you to be a member of the elected Board?

I have more than 40 years of experience in the field of education working with students from pre-K through middle school. I served on the PTA as a member and president. I've worked in various parts of the school system starting as a cafeteria lunch assistant and for 26 years as paraprofessional in Special Education, retiring in 2016. In June of 2017, I was appointed to fill a seat on the Board of Education where I currently chair the Curriculum and Instruction Committee. I am also a member of the Human Resources Committee, The Legislative Response Team, SECAC and the WCPS Education Foundation.

I am seeking election because I feel that my work on the Board is just beginning. As a former ESP I feel that I bring a different perspective than other members or candidates.

2. Briefly share your education, employment history, and organization/community involvement.

I am a graduate of North Hagerstown High School and graduated with high honors from Hagerstown Junior College. I have been involved in education beginning with my children's elementary school as a homeroom mother, mentor, cafeteria/playground assistant, PTA member, co-president and president. I also substituted in the E.R. Hicks cafeteria before being hired at Salem Avenue Elementary in 1990 as an Instructional Assistant in Title I. After three years in the Title I program I became a paraprofessional in special education, where I have remained for the past 23 years. I have always looked for leadership opportunities, such as WCESP building representative, a member of the Support Personnel Advisory Committee under Dr. Morgan, and co-chair with Sheila Finkelstein of the Career Ladder Committee for Paraprofessionals. Currently, as detailed in question #1, I am involved with many committees with my position on the Board of Education.

3. Do you think Maintenance of Effort (MOE) should be waived by the state/counties during economic downturns?

Maintenance of Effort is necessary to the funding of our school system and should never be waived. The current County Commissioners have under funded the school system over several years, making us a Low Effort County. This makes it difficult for the school system to fund programs and give employees adequate salaries. With so many unfunded mandates being imposed on the WCPS from the state, in my opinion the County Commissioners and Board of Education should work together to adequately fund WCPS.

4. In the last year, how many times have you visited a Washington County Public School or attended a Board of Ed meeting?

In the last year I have visited a Washington County School at least 40 times for various programs and activities. I have visited a classroom on four occasions and have attended every BOE meeting.

5. Recruiting and retaining high-quality, employees is critically important to our success as a school system. Please describe your plan for recruiting new instructional staff and for keeping our experienced staff here.

Washington County produces top notch students every year. We should be encouraging these students to become educators and offer them incentives to come back and work for WCPS. Paraprofessionals also make excellent teachers and should be encouraged and given support if they desire to further their careers.

6. What actions would you take to continue to provide quality health care benefits to employees while keeping the costs affordable to employees and the Board?

This is an issue that is difficult because we are a self funding system. Our money pool is determined by the number of claims and when dealing with health issues it is something that can not be predicted. However, we should continually be looking for ways to provide the best health care for employees by getting bids and comparing services on a regular basis.

7. What, in your opinion, are the top unmet needs of our public school system?

Unfunded mandates are a strain on the WCPS budget, one example of this would be sick leave pay for substitutes. Safety is also a concern, especially in our open schools. Replacing our aging school buildings is also something we should address. The WCPS continues to look for ways to meet the needs of all students and staff, but it gets more difficult as the needs and demands get greater.

8. What are your three (3) top priorities for Washington County Public schools? How would you address these priorities.

My three priorities are school safety, recruiting and retaining quality staff and continuing to have a strong emphasis on early learning programs. We must continue to work with the state and county governments to ensure funding for these issues.

9. Can you think of any existing programs or initiatives that WCPS currently offers that should be abolished or scaled back? Any programs that WCPS should consider adding?

I think that WCPS should do away with MAP testing. I know as a system we are data driven, but it takes too much time from instruction and disrupts schedules several times during the year. I would like to see WCPS include more Restorative Practices training. I think the students would benefit greatly and we would see that bullying and discipline problems would decline.

10. Federal, State and local mandates and initiatives are placing increasing time intensive responsibilities on all school employees what ideas do you have to streamline, prioritize and reduce non-instructional work required of teachers?

I do not have any specific ideas, but would be open to having a dialogue to hear ideas from school staff on the issue.

11. What is the role of a Board of Education member in securing funding? When would your budget request of the county commissioners go above maintenance of effort?

As members of the Board of Education we should be diligent in seeking funds for our budget. I believe the county commissioners should look beyond maintenance of effort when funding the Board of Education budget because of the many issues we face, such as the safety, health and the well being of our students and staff.

12. What ideas do you have to ensure the adequate use of existing school space to avoid overcrowding in some schools well I use classrooms exist at other schools?

This is a very tough issue because it involves redistricting. Families have to move away from their home schools, which they have grown to love in order to fill space in another school.. Portable classrooms are not an option because they are expensive and not safe. There is no easy answer, but I am always open to suggestions.

13. What is your view of privatizing for outsourcing positions currently filled by BOE employees (i.e.. transportation or school maintenance?)

In certain areas it is necessary to hire contracted employees ( i.e. bus drivers) however, I would not be in favor of outsourcing custodians or maintenance personnel. We must be as loyal to our employees as they are to us. I believe in keeping our school system as it is, outsourcing creates more problems than it solves.

14. What concrete steps do you advocate to increase citizen and parental involvement/support for our school system?

Citizen and parental involvement has been declining in our schools. Part of the problem is school safety, because of this parents are not free to visit on a regular basis. Social media has helped some schools engage parents in their child's education, but more needs to be done and I am always open to suggestions on how to accomplish this goal.

15. As a member of the board of education, how will you incorporate the expertise of educators throughout the county when you're making decisions about the school system?

I believe it is important to get input from educators when making decisions about education. I have sought out the opinions of WCPS teachers and support staff in the past and will continue to do so if elected to serve another term

16. What is your view of right to work? Explain

I am in favor of all employees having to pay a fee to the unions. Currently in the WCPS many employees benefit from the grueling negotiations that take place every year, allowing all employees to get improved working conditions and raises, without having to contribute. This is very wrong.

17. Do you support the Supreme Court's decision in the Janus case? Explain.

The Supreme Court is schedule to hand down its decision on the Janice case sometime in June, so I cannot answer accurately at this time. However, as I stated in question 16 I am in favor of charging fees to nonunion members for the reasons stated above.

18. Please mark the appropriate box.

Support      Oppose

Private school vouchers or tuition tax credits		✓
Waivers of the Negotiated Agreement for charter schools		✓
Outsourcing / privatizing positions currently filled by BOE employees		✓
Merit pay for teachers and administrators		✓
Use of student data (i.e. test scores) in teacher and principal evaluations		✓
Taxing authority for the Board of Education		✓
Granting construction bids to non-prevailing wage companies		✓/
Extending the Superintendent's contract annually		✓
Fractionated tuition for non-public school students to take courses at a public school		✓

Comments:

I do not support taxing authority at this time for the BOE, but would not rule out consideration if necessary in the future.

19. Do you support or oppose the following topics as items for negotiations?

Support      Oppose

The content and or delivery of professional staff development	✓	
Peer assistance and or peer review	✓	
Configuration or selection of the School Improvement Team	✓	
Use of time on non-instructional days	✓	
Curriculum	✓	
School calendar	✓	

Comments: