

Washington County Teachers Association  
Washington County Educational Support Personnel, Inc.  
Candidate Questionnaire: Board of Education  
2022 Election

Name: Fred Chavis

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Campaign Treasurer: Kimberly Duff

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:** *Fredrick Chavis* **DATE SUBMITTED:** 07/11/2022

*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 by **July 12, 2022.***



**Candidate Name: Fred Chavis**

**School Board Candidate Questionnaire – 2022**

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 am seeking office as a member of the BOE because Washington County is in a time of change and our students/educators need true representation. I recognized that while I was in the classroom, there were so many other issues I wanted to address in the school system that I could not do from my classroom. I want all of our students to know someone is on the board with their best interest and safety at heart. I want our educators to know I get it and will always stand up for them.

My dad had dyslexia growing up. When he would try to explain to teachers what was going on and how words were appearing he was dismissed. Today, my dad tells me, he wished he had someone like me as a teacher, someone like me that actually cared about their students. I pay attention to our students and educators. I feel the pulse of our community because I am present in the community. Through my work in the community, I have been in meetings with elected officials and leaders routinely. I recognize the voice I have and use it for the good of our community. I do not shy away from voicing concerns and speaking up for the people. That is what I will continue to do as a BOE member.

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

I graduated from NC State University, Raleigh, NC, with a Bachelor's Degree in Animal Science. When my family moved to Maryland I became involved in the school system which I actually never thought I would find myself. I began coaching football at Hancock, before accepting a science teacher position at Northern Middle, and finally becoming Head Coach of Track & Field at Williamsport High School. After leaving the school system, I was the Executive Director at the Robert W. Johnson Community Center. I am now the owner of a nonprofit, Liberation. Liberation aims to provide bridges of opportunity for our youth that take them out of their current environment while also addressing the root causes that force our young people to drugs and violence. The youth is where my heart lies. I value community work. I coach track for a club league, H-Town Rollerz and I coach basketball for the Ruth Ann Monroe Sumer League at Wheaton Park. I am the President of the Washington County NAACP.

1. Do you think Maintenance of Effort (MOE) should be waived by the state/counties during economic downturns? Do you support or oppose Maryland's updated maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund the local share of all wealth-equalized formulas, instead of only the foundation formula?

I do not think it should be waived. I think local governments should take advantage of resources that allow them to at least meet the minimum maintenance of effort funding level such as the American Rescue Plan Act during times of economic downturn. I believe the new formula allows funding to be adjusted and based on factors such as the needs of special needs students based on each child, per pupil. I support increasing funding for the maintenance of effort based on wealth and efforts. Inflation and other factors must be taken into consideration that will adjust funding accordingly.

3. In the last year, how many times have you visited a Washington County Public School or classroom or attended a Board of Ed meeting? If you visited schools, what was the purpose of your visit(s)?

I have visited schools in WCPS at least 12 times. These visits included support for educators and admin with support and participation in events such as Black History Month. I have attended all Board of Education mostly virtually.

4. 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.

It is crucial that educators feel appreciated. We must remove barriers that make continuing education difficult. An educator's time is valuable and it's time our school system shows that. One of my focus points will be in ensuring The Department of Human Resources is doing everything it can to support educators in certification. This also includes working with our Maryland State government on certification.

Recruitment is a lot easier when the leadership is efficient, diverse, and empathetic. In order to bring in more teachers, we must show that we want them here and are inclusive of diverse groups of educators working in our county.

My plan for recruitment begins in our high schools. I want our students exposed to prerequisite courses to be educators through "Future Educators" programming and a pathway that is provided and supported through our school system. I will work with the state government on student loan forgiveness for our current teachers and plans for the next generation.

My plan for retaining begins with all schools being required to have highly effective educators who also serve as mentor teachers in their schools. Several schools that I have visited do not have mentor teachers, which makes it difficult for teachers new to the career or new to the county to have a clear expectation of the school and guide them to be successful. It is not enough to have one or two lead teachers that must be shared with numerous teachers, may not be well versed in that subject, and are no longer in the classroom or Mentor Teachers housed in the central office. The Mentor Teachers should be paid a stipend for this invaluable work. Additionally, new teachers should have the opportunity to participate in professional developments, and conferences, and observe highly effective teachers throughout the school year that is focused on new teachers. Some Mentor Teachers provide the opportunity to observe highly effective teachers, however, this must be expanded.

Teachers must have time to collaborate with their colleagues with vertical alignment of skills and content and horizontal alignment of skills and content. As a former teacher myself and after talking with other teachers we share similar sentiments of feeling isolated, and that little time is provided for in-depth collaboration that would be beneficial for both teachers and students. This means that teachers have to do it all, which leaves little time outside of work for personal time and causes burnout.

5. 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?

Unfortunately, Cigna Medical Insurance has given many WCPS employees a difficult time this fiscal year and the previous fiscal years. As a Board of Education member, I would be interested in looking into other insurance companies that make it easier to get testing done, such as MRIs, and pay a higher percentage for medical needs. It is unacceptable that employees and their families who are facing a medical issue have to wait an extended amount of time and have to make numerous phone calls and emails to be approved. It seems like Cigna Medical Insurance has made a lot of contract changes that are negatively impacting WCPS employees and families, so I think it is important that we reevaluate the medical insurance options to ensure our employees and families are getting the best coverage.

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

1. Increasing diversity of educators
2. Focus on ensuring educators have enough time
3. A fully funded education budget

I want to address the lack of diversity in our educators from the top-down. Many educators of color do not come to our county because there is no representation and that creates a feeling of possibly being isolated when joining WCPS. I know several educators of color who live in Washington County but commute to other counties such as Frederick County, Montgomery County, and Washington D.C. because of the lack of diversity and the lack of welcoming environment in Washington County. Not only will I be that true representation, but I also want to install an incentive to keep the commuters here and have teachers from other areas relocate to Washington County. There is an increasing number of people settling outside of the big cities because of the cost of living, now is the best time to capitalize on this shift by showing people in other counties all that we have to offer, however first we need our leaders in the school system to be representative of the diversity we want to see in our schools. Much of how we recruit teachers is dependent on a fully-funded education budget.

Our teachers need professional development, collaboration time, and personal planning time to be effective. I would implement a plan for more early release days and teacher workdays.

I will work with County Commissioners by first focusing on the county commissioners who value education. I have been working with current candidates on building the necessary relationships to get this done. Our current county commissioners have not supported this, but they are not fully to blame when you have individuals sitting on the Board of Education who are apathetic about how the funding turns out. Counties that value education eliminates the issues of a lack of education that leads to poverty and the social ills that are formed out of poverty, such as crime, drugs, etc.

7. What, in your opinion, is the top *unmet need* of our public school system?

The top unmet need of our public school system I believe is the needs of the students. The current board is not doing everything they can to support ALL students. In fact, the plight of students of color is often dismissed. Racism has always had access in our schools because the behaviors and actions have always been tolerated. Implementation of diverse education tends to be blocked and unsupported. However, this school system enjoys using the word diversity when it benefits the conversation, meanwhile, our population of students is suffering from the lack of inclusive policies and instruction. Our student population is very diverse. Our families are diverse. Our community is diverse. Our policies and curriculum must be inclusive of that. In order to accomplish a revamp of education in WCPS, we need an increase in our education funding!

8. 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 the Community Specialist role is one that has not served its essential purpose. I believe on paper it sounds like an effective role; however, the execution of the role has been poorly done. The purpose of this role only makes sense if it is filled with someone in the respective community of the schools. I would like to see this program be revamped to ensure we are heading to community schools. The title of the role changed from Counselor to Specialist, which is a step but it is not nearly enough. Additionally, the grant funding that has been provided for Community Schools is not being utilized to its' fullest potential. For example, in some situations funding has been used for the maintenance of the school rather than for developing school programs. At several schools that are offering after-school programs, the enrollment is low and/or are not serving populations that are in most need of the program. Educators should continue to have the option to run after-school programs for additional pay, but there should also be community organizations coming in and hosting programs. Additionally, we must make sure that through the Community Schools we are offering programs that support parents/guardians and families. There must be a strong relationship between the school and community resources.

I also am a huge supporter of the equity initiative. I will direct more resources to ensure this department has what they need to ensure equity education throughout all of our schools. Equity in education means that all students are getting what they need in the form of resources and support at the time in which they need it. Equity values every student and does not force students to assimilate to something that is not genuine to them. When directing more resources to the Equity and Excellence department the way in which educators respond to student behavior and provide instruction will change, leading to a space where students feel valued and are accountable for their learning.

9. 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 think teachers would benefit from more half-days and teacher workdays scheduled throughout the school year. Days are focused on non-instructional work leave school days for education and instruction.

10. What is the role of a board of education member in securing funding? How can the WCBOE convince Commissioners to fund above maintenance of effort?

I think it begins with relationships. Right now, the current commissioners and the Board of Education members have a terrible relationship. Complaining and whining won't get the job done. Rather than just presenting the budget, I will focus on presenting the importance of each breakdown of the budget and how it bridges to other aspects of our county. I have already been speaking with County Commissioner candidates building rapport. The Board of Education must do a better job at explaining the use of tax

money and a detailed budget that shows passion and dedication to the school system. Some of the current Board members do not care about the budget. They are just sitting on a seat and that must change. I believe my voice will be crucial in increasing the funding for education.

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

I believe this is a bad idea. It leads to a lack of accountability due to the fact that recourse and actions to fix grievances must run through the company providing the services to the school system. It actually does not save money as many think it does and the quality of the work leads to more issues in our schools.

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

I will be implementing a parent advisory committee that includes representation from each of our communities to ensure all voices are heard and included. I will push for PTA/PTO meetings across our county that allow those individuals who represent the communities on the parent advisory committee to present during PTA/PTO meetings. It is also important for BOE members to visit the communities they serve. Their presence advocates for the community to be involved.

As mentioned previously, we must make changes to the way our Community Schools function in WCPS. If we create authentic relationships between schools and the community then parents will be more inclined to be involved, especially since a large percentage of parents/guardians work in Washington County. Parents/guardians can use their role in the community to make a positive impact in schools. School administration should be encouraged to ensure that their schools are hosting community events, including opportunities for parents to volunteer, learn a skill through specific programming, etc. I understand during COVID volunteers were not allowed in schools, however, now we must provide opportunities for volunteering. After speaking with quite a bit of parents it is clear that they value education and want to be of service to their student's school(s), however, they don't feel included or welcomed. One important fact to note is that there have been a lot of attacks on education and educators in the county, so we must ensure our educators are protected from this when allowing parents/guardians in our schools.



13. As a member of the Board of Education, how will you incorporate the expertise of educators throughout the county when you are making decisions about the school system?

I will dedicate time to sitting with educators on policy and initiatives I have ambitions to push for and issues that I may not be familiar with since I am not teaching in the schools. During county-wide professional development days, I plan to be present these days to listen to teachers' grievances and possible solutions to the issues. Educators who are in the schools each day, know best the issues facing our schools—so it is important that I make myself available to listen and collaborate on solutions. Very few schools are visited by the current board of education members— in fact, they tend to only visit the schools they are comfortable with. The lack of involvement at all schools across the county dismisses and excludes an entire group of highly effective teachers in schools that have a diverse group of students. If we are going to include the expertise of teachers, let's also include the expertise of teachers who work in schools with a high population of diverse students.

14. Should county or state tax dollars be used to off-set families' tuition at private schools in the form of vouchers or other programs? Explain.

No, because the public schools in Washington County have a lot to offer our students. Once we begin to provide vouchers or other programs for private schools then we will slowly dismantle public schools. Privatized education leads to less accountability for schools and takes away money from our schools, specifically English Language students and students with disabilities. Authentic reform of public schools is necessary, and diverting our funds and focus elsewhere will harm our public schools. Tax subsidies for private education are inequitable because it financially benefits high-income earners. No data shows an increase in academic performance by students who receive a voucher to attend private schools across the United States.

15. Should elected BOE members sit in on negotiations sessions? Many districts incorporate BOE members into the teams that mean rather than relying on a staff person to summarize the sessions and the proposals.

BOE members should be present and sit in negotiation sessions. You can still have someone to summarize or present, but it is important for the board to be there in solidarity with what we are seeking.

16. The Blueprint for Maryland's future should positively impact Maryland's public schools. What do you identify as the Blueprint's strengths and weaknesses?

Strengths: Early Childhood Education, High Quality and Diverse Teachers, More Resources to Ensure Students Success (Poverty Grant)

Weaknesses: The College and Career Readiness

17. How will you support the expansion of community schools as a member of the Board of Education?

I will push for more involvement from community organizations, community leaders, and business owners to play a role in our schools. I will also look to revamp the Community Specialist role to be filled by individuals present in the communities.

On the other side, the schools and BOE members need to be more present in the community. How many teachers are in our classrooms that have not once visited the communities they serve? Teachers dedicate volunteer time to community events. This includes BOE members.

18. How will you address increased needs for mental health supports or students and educators in the wake of the pandemic?

I think mental health needs must be met in our schools even looking past the pandemic. Mental health did not begin with the pandemic and this should not be seen as a post-pandemic initiative. I have seen time and time again, black students being punished for their emotions and mental state. I would like to use the Poverty Grant (a new name would be preferred) to dedicate resources to mental health professionals present in our schools consistently.

19. Do you support a permanent, virtual school, such as ABLE within WCPS?

**Yes**

No

Comments: I think ABLE is a beneficial program for families who desire to be a part of the program. I know some of the teachers who are part of the current program and they are great educators. Students learn differently, and this option supports learning styles that some students aren't able to get in the large settings, like the classroom.

20. How will you, as a member of the BOE, ensure that the teachers, support personnel, tutors, etc. utilized by WCPS, including those employed at ABLE, are school system employees, not privately provided contractors?

I think it begins with transparency to the public. If we are looking to hire, we need make it public to the communities. I will voice opposition to any contracted services through companies outsourcing their services. We must have educators teaching our students who are familiar with the community and make sure we are providing opportunities for educators to make additional money.

21. WCTA supports honesty in education. To encourage critical thinking, we believe educators should have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classroom. Do you support or oppose this position?

**Yes**

No

Comments: I support it. The teacher creates the environment and culture of their classroom. A highly effective teacher recognizes the diversity of their classroom and is able to engage, respect, and empower those different voices through honest education.

22. How will you support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students in WCPS? What specific policies do you support whose goals are focused on providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

I will ensure highly effective equity coaches are in every school and the developments are mandatory. I believe that the office of Equity and Excellence should be expanded with representatives who are effective and well-versed. Most school systems have a team for their Equity Department, and

unfortunately, we only have one person in that department in Washington County. Though she does an amazing job, we need to expand so that we are most effective and efficient.

Professional developments hosted by Equity must continue and be provided more often. Many staff members dismiss this training because perhaps their student body is not diverse in race, but diversity goes beyond that. I will push for an inclusive curriculum, practices, reading material, and holidays to be supported to make all students feel included and welcomed. I will also address our discipline protocols with the admin. There is a high disparity of referrals for black students compared to white students. Our referral system must be fair and educators must understand their own biases to grow for the better. Equity is not CRT. Diversity is not CRT. Inclusion is not CRT. The quicker we stop trying to keep things the same, spread misinformation, and dedicate time to burning books, we can actually focus on what our students and educators need.

23. WCTA, WCESP and MSEA support public charter schools that are under the control of local school boards, require making enrollment open to all student, require the hiring of certificated teachers, are held to the identical standards at traditional schools, and protect collective bargaining rights of employees hired at the school. Do you support or oppose our position regarding charter schools?

**Yes**

No

Comments: All students deserve the opportunities. I support this position regarding charter schools as long as all students can access it.

24. WCTA, WCESP, and MSEA have supported increasing Maryland's minimum wage. Do you support a proposal for a uniform living wage across the state, indexing it to the keep pace with the cost of living and apply it to hourly employees in WCPS?

**Yes**

No

Comments: Yes, I support increasing pay. It is important that all our employees make a livable wage, and that means WCPS must keep up with the increase in the cost of living. If we want our employees in WCPS to be efficient and effective in their roles it is important that we show them that we value them and their work.

25. Please explain how you would work with WCTA and WCESP when faced with potential policies or legislation relating to education issues (i.e., student discipline, employee rights, special education, teacher certification, curriculum development, Association rights).

I will work with WCTA and WCESP through consistent meetings and collaboration. A school board not included WCTA and WCESP in policy is a school board uninformed and not doing everything it can to make equitable decisions. I am that individual that appreciates not only insight but advice. Our decisions on the board have a domino effect and I want to ensure the dominoes do not fall negatively.

26. Please mark the appropriate box.

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

Comments:

Merit pay for teachers and administrators- I oppose this initiative because after talking with educators in various school systems they have shared similar sentiments. On paper it seems great, however, I have seen how teachers' scores decreased after implementing merit pay because observers score them low because the school system would have to put out a lot of money if too many teachers receive merit pay. Observations of teachers quickly become disingenuous and bureaucratic. Additionally, I am concerned that the standards will not be fair for teachers and administrators who work with a high percentage of low-income families and students in special education. I am interested in knowing what would be the criteria, and how they would plan on ensuring that the very different schools would be taken in account. From conversations I have had with educators in various counties, educators will be less centered on student growth and achievement and more focused on manipulating numbers which leads to a conflict of morality. Teachers should be paid what their worth, despite implementing this initiative.

The Taxing Authority of BOE—I support this notion if we are referring to our local system becoming fiscally independent.

Is the goal of fractionating tuition to promote students to attend public schools?

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

	Support	Oppose
The content and or delivery of professional staff development	X	
Configuration or selection of the School Improvement Team	X	
Job descriptions and Wage placement	X	
Use of time on non-instructional days	X	
Peer assistance and or peer review		
Distance Learning	X	
Curriculum	X	
School calendar	X	

Comments:

Peer assistance and or peer review- I would need more information. Is the question asking should schools have peer mentors? I need more information before I share my vote.