

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

Name: Linda Murray  
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Campaign Treasurer: Anna K. Mollo

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: 07/05/22

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 \_\_\_\_\_

**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 another term on the Board of Education because I am passionate about education and want to continue advocating for Washington County Public Schools. I believe we have a great school system and by working collaboratively we will get through the difficulties of the past few years. Since being appointed to the Board in 2017, I was elected to a four-year term in 2018. I have served on many committees, have had excellent attendance, and come to meetings prepared. Recently, I worked collaboratively with other Board members to appoint a new Superintendent. I think my greatest strength is listening to stakeholders and looking at issues from all sides before making a final decision.**

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

**I am a graduate of Washington County Public Schools and Hagerstown Community College. Most recently I am in the process of enrolling at the University of Maryland Global Campus to pursue my bachelor's degree. In 1990, I began my career with WCPS working as a Paraprofessional at Salem Avenue Elementary School, retiring after 26 years of service. Having an ESP background helps to bring a different perspective to the Board. After retirement I was a substitute teacher until my appointment to the Board. I also volunteered at my grandson's elementary school until Covid. Currently I am in my second year as a seasonal worker for the City of Hagerstown, which involves working special events, the Train Hub at the city park, the Claude M. Potterfield Pool, and the Greens at Hamilton Run (golf course.) I enjoy the interaction with the community and am able to get a lot of valuable feedback.**

3. 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?

**It is disturbing to see the lack of funding provided by our current Board of County Commissioners. Maintenance of Effort should NEVER be waived, especially in an economic downturn, when the school system needs it more. I don't think any citizens were against last year's tax increase, but because it was an election year the Commissioners voted to decrease taxes when that money could have been designated for education. I am in favor of any formula that holds our County Commissioners accountable for paying their share to public education.**

4. 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)?  
**This past year I visited Emma K. Doub, Ruth Ann Monroe, Eastern, Salem Avenue, Sharpsburg, Tech High and Greenbriar where I was excited to be a guest reader in fourth grade. I toured Eastern with Dan**



**Fowler and staff invited me to observe their dismissal process to see if I could take back suggestions on how to streamline it. I also was a regular patron at the Future Stars Salon at Tech High. I have also attended various school activities beyond the school day. My Board meeting attendance is excellent, only missing two business meetings in 5 years. It is very important to me that I am available and come prepared to do the work of the Board.**

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.

**I commend all of our staff members for their hard work and dedication during these past few years. It was very hard, but everyone pulled together, and the majority made it through. To recruit new staff, we must start by growing our own, offering scholarships to high school graduates and paraprofessionals that want to become teachers. Perhaps we could offer a one-time bonus to WCPS staff who actively recruit for their school. However, working conditions must be improved. Student behaviors must also be improved, and respect must be returned to our buildings. I believe that working collaboratively with WCTA, WESP and our new superintendent we can devise strategies to address these issues and receive more money for adequate raises that will help recruit and retain staff in our schools.**

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?

**WCPS currently has the best health care/wellness benefits in Washington County. The ad hoc committee does an excellent job staying aware of the employee's needs. WCPS has not had to raise cost to employees in several years and the deductible also remains low. My hope is that we can keep this committee in place in order to have fair representation about health care decisions.**

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

- (1) **Adequate Funding**, although the Blueprint for MD Schools sounds promising, but I worry that Washington County will not get its fair share of the pot. It is up to us to stay in touch with our elected officials in Annapolis to make sure we are not overlooked. I also believe that we need to break down our budget into small requests, like HCC does, perhaps the commissioners will understand our needs better.
- (2) **Student Behaviors**, student behaviors are out of control. We need to form a taskforce that includes our other elected officials and stakeholders to formulate ways to properly address this issue. All students are entitled to an education, but when they get out of control then all students suffer.
- (3) **Improved Work Climate**, all people deserve to work in a desirable climate. We need to stop "dumping" on teachers and reduce their workload. The Blueprint for MD Schools calls for increased teacher planning time. However, this can only be implemented if we have the staff needed for coverage. I am optimistic that the Blue Print will provide the needed resources for all of these things to come together.

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

**I can think of a few that I have mentioned, but I think one important unmet need for WCPS would be Capital Improvement Funding to replace our aging buildings. To not have a current plan in place for school replacement is poor governance from the BOCC.**

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 WCPS is constantly looking at their course offerings and making needed adjustments. I am excited that a group of parents made us aware of the need to have sign language offered as a world language graduation requirement. I would like to see WCPS invest in Marshall Street School and strengthen the programs for our special needs students.**

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 think teachers attend too many unnecessary meetings. Ideas can be communicated through email to allow the teachers more time to focus on their classroom needs. I would be open to hearing suggestions from teachers on how else to reduce their workload.**

11. 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?

**BOE members should always be advocating for school funding. As I stated before, we need to break the budget into smaller sections to be presented throughout the year to help the BOCC understand and be aware of our needs.**

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

**WCPS has had to use outside contractors to have adequate special education coverage as determined by the law. ALL attempts must be made to employ staff, however if you can't hire enough people to run the buses, how do you get students to school? I will always advocate for WCPS to hire staff before contracted people.**

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

**Every school should have a Citizens Advisory Committee and or PTA. There should also be a county wide CAC and schools should be creative in trying to recruit parents for these committees. Parents always love to see their children performing, perhaps that could be one way to get their attention and bring up important school issues. I like the way some schools go to the homes to meet the student and family the week before school begins. It opens up a dialog with the parents and can give the staff an insight to the child's background as well.**



14. 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 often rely on the opinions of my friends who are still employed in the school system for feedback on issues. Visiting schools regularly and having conversations with school staff is also a way that helps me in making decisions.**

15. 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.

**Never! Every child is entitled to a free public education through tax dollar funding, which is often inadequate. To allow families a tax break because they choose an alternative education for their children should not be allowed.**

16. 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.

**I am happy with the way WCPS does negotiations and would not like to see change at this time.**

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

**I am really at a loss to give an adequate answer at this time. After having read the document, I still have questions. How will we find adequate staffing, where will the funding come from? Will the changes be overwhelming or welcome? Will this encourage more people to get into education or drive them away? Hopefully, these questions will be answered in the near future as we get more into the implementation of the Blue Print.**

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

**I think community schools will be very beneficial, especially in our high poverty schools. The offer of many extra services will give much needed help to families and students, and I will fully support them in every way I can.**

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

**Putting a counselor in every school is a good start, but again finding them is a problem. How do we recruit school counselors? I think our HR team does an excellent job in recruitment, but many positions remain unfilled. Are we marketing these jobs and the benefits adequately? Does it come down to salary? Caseload? These are the things we need to find out and address.**

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

Yes X

No

**Comments: Students have different learning styles. For the student who may have social anxiety or mental health issues and thrives on virtual learning then ABLE works well for them.**

21. 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?

**WCPS should always strive to have its own employees and ONLY use contracted personnel when legally necessary.**

22. 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 X

No

**Comments: I believe that teachers should have professional autonomy as long as they teach the facts, without interjecting their opinions. For example, the Civil War was fought over states rights, one being the right to own slaves. Slavery was wrong then and it is now, and in my opinion it led to racism in this country, but opinion is not fact, therefore as a teacher I should not express my opinions to influence my students (although it could lead to a very good student led discussion.)**

23. 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?

**WCPS has a Supervisor of Equity in Excellence who over sees the equity training of school personnel. I have just learned that not all school principals are allowing this in their schools. I am planning on meeting with the Dr. Sovine to discuss the importance of having an equity coach in every school. All students must be given what they need if they are going to succeed!**

24. 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 X

No

**Comments: I support your position on charter schools being under the control of our local school board.**

25. 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 X

No

Comments

26. 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).

**It is my belief that all groups must work collaboratively when faced with challenges in order to find what the best outcome is for everyone.**



27. 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: I would like a more in-depth explanation on merit pay.

28. 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	X	
Distance Learning	X	
Curriculum	X	
School calendar	X	

Comments: