

2024 WCTA & WCESP
Washington County Board of Education
Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE: Stan Stouffer

OFFICE SOUGHT: Board of Education

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

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Stan Stouffer 
DATE SUBMITTED: 2/26/24

*Candidates: 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 clearly indicate the questions(s) to which you refer. **Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to WCTA & WCESP.***

Education Funding

Background Points

- With a critical need in closing education gaps, expanding programs and services, community schools, and improving student achievement, in 2016, lawmakers formed the Kirwan Commission to meet the challenges of a changing global economy and prepare Maryland students to be successful citizens in the 21st century.
- The Kirwan Commission's recommendations evolved into The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which originally passed in 2020, was vetoed by Governor Hogan, and had its veto overridden in 2021. The Blueprint revises the state's school funding formula for the first time in nearly two decades. Over the next 13 years, the Blueprint calls for billions of dollars of new investment in Maryland schools that would expand career and technical education programs, community schools, and pre-k; provide more resources for students from backgrounds of poverty and students with special needs; increase educator pay; hire more educators and expand and diversify the educator pipeline; and create a new, more rigorous accountability system. These programs are designed to raise achievement and address Maryland's economic inequality with programs to target concentrated poverty.
- The Board of Education will have a significant impact on implementation of the Blueprint, including future funding and success of Washington County schools. The Blueprint is landmark legislation, but there is a continued need for investment in Washington County schools to see that the Blueprint is successfully implemented, and in ensuring that educator voices are heard and respected throughout implementation.

1. Please provide your general and specific thoughts on how the county can address the unmet needs facing our schools. Detail how you would prioritize available state and county resources in your budget deliberations.

The greatest unmet need is securing funding from the commissioners to fund the needs-based budgets that the BOE approves each year. A huge need is to fund salaries and wages for the members of the three bargaining groups. On the teacher pay scale, there is a need to improve the middle and the top of the scales so WCPS can attract and retain teachers and members of that bargaining unit long term. The same goes for A and S especially school level administrators. WCPS struggles to hire and retain classroom paraprofessionals and has had to contract such personnel. Competitive pay is a priority for me. I have stated that I will not vote to decrease the salary pool in the FY 2025 budget to balance it. If we cannot hire competent staff, then it is impossible to successfully conduct the many diverse programs offered by WCPS.

On the capital budget side, WCPS needs to obtain funding to replace or build permanent internal walls in those schools that have an open interior. This is needed

for the improved safety of our students. Funding is also needed for constantly occurring systemic maintenance projects.

Blueprint Pillars One through Four dictate the purpose of state funds for the stated objectives of those pillars.

2. There is considerable room for improvement in educator recruitment and retention. Class sizes have increased because of cost-cutting measures and/or due to hiring freezes, layoffs, and retirements. Many support personnel positions have been eliminated. And Maryland is always challenged with filling educator jobs because we import nearly half of all certificated teachers from prep programs in other states. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these shortages. At the same time, the Blueprint calls for the hiring of 15,000 additional educators to provide more individualized attention to students. How will you address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention? **Recruitment of teachers and support personnel is increasingly difficult in today's financial and educational environment. Teacher recruitment is difficult and more competitive because of the decrease in the number of prospective teachers enrolled in teacher education programs. Retention is more difficult because of the increased mobility of today's educators. Recruitment of ESP is challenging because of competition from private entities. Recruitment of minority staff is complicated because of the small numbers of minority students enrolled in teacher education programs. Attracting potential minority candidates to WCPS is hard because of our county's rural nature even though we have the highest starting in the state (at least we were highest).**

Recruitment and retention require offering competitive starting and continuing salaries and wages, excellent health plan, and safe and professional working conditions. Funding is the key component needed to enable the establishment of excellent salaries and wages. As one member of a seven-member board, I have advocated strongly for good pay, an employee health plan with excellent benefits and fair cost, and CBAs that consist of language that provide excellent working conditions and other protections for employees.

As for the Blueprint, I truly believe that the law contains provisions that will need to be adjusted to reflect reality.

Public Funding for Private Schools

Background Points

- The WCTA & WCESP associations believe any education dollars spent outside of improving public schools makes it harder to make the progress necessary to provide a world-class education for every student.
- Non-public school funding for programs in the budget such as textbooks, technology, school construction, and vouchers reduce the state's General Fund while subsidizing the cost of private education. Data from the first few years of the BOOST program indicated that more than 70% of voucher recipients already attended and paid for private school before receiving the voucher.
- The Maryland State Department of Education requires a certificate of approval or registration for private schools; it does not accredit or license them. Private schools do not have to report or administer teacher qualifications, class sizes, adherence to College and Career Readiness Standards, student retention rates, graduation rates, demographics, or discipline or suspension policies. Without these measures, it is impossible to effectively evaluate the programs funneling public tax dollars to private schools.

3. As a Board member, are you in favor of allocating public funding to home and privately schooled students?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments: **Public schools were established to educate the masses. Public education has enough trouble meeting all stakeholders' demands when funding agencies are reluctant to fully fund public school budgets. The tragedy is that there are public officials in Washington County who support school vouchers because they rationalize their position by saying that the public schools will only improve if they have competition. Our opponents would cut public school funding and say do the same or more with fewer resources.**

Evaluations and Less Testing, More Learning

Background Points

- The WCTA & WCESP associations believe that educator evaluation systems must be educator-informed, research-based, and collaboratively developed. Evaluation systems should be fair, transparent, timely, rigorous, valid, and designed to improve instruction by focusing on teaching and learning.
- **Maryland** law mandates that student growth is a "significant component" and "one of the multiple measures" in a teacher's evaluation. No evaluation criterion can account for more than 35%. The law also mandates that evaluation systems must be mutually agreed upon at the local level.
- A key provision of evaluation systems is the requirement for local agreement between school boards, superintendents, and local associations. Such local development allows for the evaluation system to meet the unique needs of each district.
- The WCTA & WCESP associations believe the continued push for high-stakes student assessments undermines educator's creativity and their ability to respond to the needs of students. Instead of high-stakes assessments, WCTA & WCESP supports high-quality assessments that support student learning from a rich curriculum and with room for educator's voices in the development of curriculum and assessment.
- Additionally, the WCTA & WCESP associations support rigorous and relevant professional development through the continued alignment of evaluation systems.

4. Do you support or oppose local autonomy to develop evaluation systems in compliance with statute and regulation?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

Personally, I disagree with the MD law that student growth should be a factor in teacher evaluation. There are factors that affect student achievement that no teacher can control. Teacher evaluation should be based on components that a teacher can control such as preparing lesson plans and delivery of instruction and other interactions with students. I have never been a fan of high-stakes student assessments that change rather frequently. During my teaching career I remember the Maryland Functional tests, the thirteen high school assessments that were proposed although only four were ever developed and used, PARCC , and now the various tests of MCAP. Remember the Blueprint was created after extensive examination of successful schools in other nations, many of which have less standardized testing.

5. Do you support or oppose efforts to overturn school districts mutually agreed upon, statutorily compliant evaluation models in pursuit of one-size-fits-all models developed by federal and state agencies, rather than local education agencies?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments: **This is an issue concerning local governance which seems to be slowly disintegrating.**

6. As an elected Board of Education member, how will you work with WCPS, WCTA & WCESP to implement the Less Testing, More Learning Act?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments: **I would advocate for any proposal proffered by the three entities to decrease testing. However, decreasing testing will be difficult because of the call for increased accountability from state and federal levels.**

Collective Bargaining

7. Do you support or oppose public education employees' rights to bargain collectively?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments: **ABSOLUTELY SUPPORT!!!! Maryland teachers have had collective bargaining rights since 1968. I strongly opposed the BOE case against the WCESP when Dr. Michael was superintendent. My position was simply that there was no way that the Special Appeals after 50 years was going to rule that wages were not a negotiable item. I also am not a fan of two sides going to impasse. Collective bargaining groups and boards of education should be capable of negotiating a mutually acceptable contract.**

8. How familiar are you with the WCTA & WCESP contracts?

Familiar

Unfamiliar

Additional Comments: **Because of my many years of teaching and experience with WCTA, I am probably more familiar with the teachers' CBA than with the WCESP CBA. However, when issues arise concerning either contract, I always ask questions of staff and read the related parts of the CBA involved.**

9. What changes, if any, would you like to see? And how would you honor the negotiated agreement, especially in tight fiscal times? **Once a CBA is signed and is in force, it cannot be changed unless both parties mutually agree. If an issue arises that needs mutual agreement for resolution, then an MOU can be drafted and agreed to by both parties, but the MOU does not become part of the CBA. I am a great proponent of the adage "that if is not broken, then don't fix it." Multi-year contracts would be desirable for language and compensation; however, a multi-year contract for salary/wages would not be advisable because of the uncertainty of funding under from our county commissioners.**

Continuing Impact of the Pandemic

Background Points

- The pandemic has exacerbated a pre-existing, multifaceted housing crisis. Housing costs continue to rise, keeping some families out of the market entirely, while those whose incomes were slashed during the pandemic have fallen so far behind that the Census Bureau estimates 7 million households as of late June 2021 face eviction when the temporary moratorium on eviction enacted during the pandemic is lifted.
- The pandemic has also increased stresses, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), food insecurity, and digital divide issues for our students.

10. How will you address increased needs for mental health support for students and educators in the wake of the pandemic? **Educators can be helped by allowing more planning through early school dismissals, which WCPS has done. Educators can avail themselves of various wellness programs through WCPS and learn new stress – management strategies that they can implement through the workday. Educators can meet to share resources. Administrators can assist with improving educator mental health by fostering an environment of trust. Educators want to know that they can go to a administrator with their concerns and suggestions and get a fair response, A leader who exhibits trust establishes two-way communication and listens to concerns and suggestions with respect and an open mind. An educator must be encouraged to do things for themselves that support good mental and physical health. Opportunities for professional development can be provided that might assist educators to achieve better mental health. Administrators can support educators by creating means to show thoughts of gratitude to staff members that can be shared at staff meetings, in school announcements, staff newsletters, staff appreciation meals, or having the community express their gratitude.**

Mental health support for students should not just be important after a pandemic. Student mental problems existed before and after the pandemic. For several years, WCPS has invested in more counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other staff to deal with the ever-increasing student mental health issues. Providing a school and learning environment that is positive and caring is a basic need for dealing with mental health issues.

However, WCPS cannot ameliorate the mental health crisis alone. The crisis is a community problem. Other public and private entities must do their part. Parents of

students must step up also and seek assistance if their children are experiencing mental and physical health issues. Community schools are a source of assistance.

11. The pandemic further illuminated the immediate need for reliable, affordable access to technology for all students and educators in our state. How would you propose to eliminate the digital divide? **This is really an issue for state and local governing bodies and agencies.**

Racial and Social Justice

Background Points

- The WCTA & WCESP associations unequivocally believe that our diversity makes us stronger. We fundamentally believe that schools should be safe, welcoming, and nurturing learning environments for students of all backgrounds and beliefs, and places where all our students see themselves in the lessons they learn and experiences they enjoy. While students of color made up approximately 64% of the student population across the state in school year 2019-2020, our state had only 29% teachers of color, 38% principals of color, and 45% assistant principals of color. MSEA was represented on the Kirwan Commission and a vocal advocate of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future in part because of our support for training and developing high-quality teachers and education leaders, particularly those from diverse and historically underrepresented backgrounds.
- Every child, regardless of their background or zip code, deserves education justice and equitable access to opportunities, resources, and supports. We believe that the lives of our Black and Brown students matter and that all our students have a fundamental right to be educated in safe, healthy, and supportive learning communities and all our educators deserve safe, healthy, and supportive working environments.
- The history of Maryland and U.S. history is far more diverse than is generally reflected in the content and courses currently taught in our public schools. Far too many Marylanders can progress through their formal primary and secondary education and rarely, if ever, see themselves reflected in the content they are learning or hear about themselves in the stories they read and are told. This lack of inclusivity negatively impacts not only our students' ownership of and agency in their learning, but it also adversely impacts their overall engagement in their learning and portrays a one-sided view of our history for all students. This disconnect is further exacerbated by the dearth of a more diverse field of educators in our schools and by the disproportionate (and sometime inaccurate) representations seen in society and in our culture that ultimately reinforces a sense of "otherness" for the people, communities, and cultures who have been rendered less relevant and less valuable. The WCTA & WCESP associations recognize the vital importance of ensuring that all students learn about historical figures who not only had a tremendous impact on the forming of our state and our nation but whose actions and sacrifices laid the foundation upon which this nation's pledge of "liberty and justice for all" must be built.
- The WCTA & WCESP associations are committed to developing critical thinking skills in our students because we know that they enable them to better understand the problems our society faces and to develop collective solutions. To that end, we are abundantly clear that truth and honesty are fundamental components of teaching and learning, as are academic integrity and professional responsibility. Our essential mission is to prepare our students for college, career, and life and to play an active role in our democracy.

12. The WCTA & WCESP associations support 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 classrooms, schools, and districts. Do you support or oppose this position?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments: **I was intrigued by the phrasing of this question especially with the use of the word "truth." WCBOE policy INB and administrative regulation INB-R speak to the Teaching About Political, Cultural, and Other Controversial Issues. Policy INB's Purpose states "to support the balanced and objective teaching of controversial issues related to the curriculum. Such teaching promotes the ability of students to evaluate diverse perspectives constructively, critically, and respectfully." I believe the policy gives educators the deference to teach and not be accused of indoctrination.**

13. How will you support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students throughout the county? What specific policies do you support whose goals are focused on providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports? **WCBOE policies ACA (Equity), GBA (Diversity), and JFH (Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation). These are policies approved by the elected BOE for supporting DEI.**

Community Schools

Background Points

- Poverty dramatically and negatively affects the wellbeing of children, particularly in the areas of physical health, mental health, safe housing, access to technology, parental support, family planning services, nutrition, youth employment, and education. Each of these areas play a large role in whether students can learn and do well in school—making it imperative that these opportunity gaps be closed if we want to provide an equitable education in our communities. According to data collected by MSDE, in 2022, 48% of Maryland public school students were enrolled for free and reduced-price meals this school year (meaning their family income level is at or below 185% of federal income poverty guidelines).
- The WCTA & WCESP associations support the establishment of community schools. We recognize that community schools can be transformative if done right—that is if they involve the community in a meaningful and ongoing way and are more than wrap-around services at a school.
- Community schools generally have the following four components: (1) they serve a high concentration of students in poverty; (2) they employ a full-time coordinator to lead community school-related services; (3) they conduct a needs assessment to identify key obstacles to learning and the services needed to close the opportunity gaps; and (4) they work with community partners to bring those needed services into the school building or nearby locations to make them accessible to students and community members.
- The Blueprint phases in community schools beginning in FY20, starting with 219 schools with 80% or more of their students enrolled for free and reduced-price meals. Community schools will be added, phased in according to highest levels of poverty first, until FY27, when a predicted 557—nearly one-third of all schools in the state—are projected to become community schools. That makes this one of the largest-scale expansions of community schools in the nation.
- The WCTA & WCESP associations support equitable and adequate resources to provide every student with an opportunity to learn in a safe and non-disruptive environment. Establishing and funding community schools is a research-based strategy for closing opportunity gaps and building strong communities.

14. Do you support or oppose local efforts to create and support community schools in areas of concentrated poverty? Do you support the transformative model of community schools or the wrap-around service model of community schools?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments: I support the establishment of community schools to assist in identifying key obstacles to learning and to provide services needed to close opportunity gaps. However, the public must be educated about their existence and purpose.

Parental Involvement and Public Support

Background Points

- It is calculated that school age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school.
- Research shows that the most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parental involvement in schools and parental expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school.
- Additionally, research indicates there are three major factors that influence parental involvement in schools:
 - Parents' belief that they can impact what is important, necessary on behalf of their children school.
 - The extent to which parents believe that they can have a positive influence on their children's education; and
 - Parents' perceptions that their children and school want them to be involved.

15. As a Board member, what would you do to ensure that parents and families from all faiths and no matter where they're from are welcomed and supported in our schools?

As a BOE member, I vote on policies that govern the operation of WCPS. Through interaction with the Superintendent, I can inquire about the execution of those policies and suggest improvements if deficiencies are present. I can also visit schools and inquire if any problems exist.

Privatization

Background Points

- The WCTA & WCESP associations oppose any effort to outsource or privatize education jobs that are part of a bargaining unit. We maintain that any attempt to outsource or privatize jobs of public educators violates collective bargaining agreements because such an effort is in essence terminating or firing bargaining unit positions.
- Outsourcing and privatization efforts have threatened teacher and education support professional (ESP) jobs for years. In the last few years, Anne Arundel County has attempted to outsource teaching services for deaf and blind students, Talbot County has discussed privatizing transportation services, and Kent County has attempted to privatize custodial services. There have been multi-county efforts on the Eastern Shore to outsource the hiring of occupational therapists and physical therapists to work in the schools.
- When jobs are outsourced, quality control is diminished, and safety is compromised. Public employees are subject to background checks that private employers often do not require. After privatizing, local school boards lose control over the individuals working in schools and have little ability to provide input on job performance.
- Privatizers often use an argument of cost-savings as a means of winning contracts. The amount is often misleading because they intentionally underestimate first year operating costs. Ultimately, they reduce hours, health care coverage, or just cut jobs. All these steps lead to increase in local unemployment and less money in the community overall.

16. As a Board member, are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

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ABSOLUTELY OPPOSE!!!!!! My position about this has been consistently firm for years. While outsourcing such positions might potentially save money (wages, benefits, pension contributions, taxes), the opportunity costs would create a decline in the quality of job performance and potential issues in various of school safety. As long as I am a BOE member, I will not vote for outsourcing positions. I can

Essay Question

What are the top three things you would like to accomplish in the next four years if you are elected to the Board? **Since the ninth grade of high school, I wanted to be a high school social studies teacher. That dream was fulfilled and during the adventure I acquired numerous other titles. Sixty-six years of my life have been involved in education as a student, educator, and elected board of education member.**

I want to continue to be an ardent advocate for public education in Washington County and a voice of reason. Decision making should be the result of non-partisanship and not emanate from a partisan political dogma.

Limiting projected accomplishments to three is difficult, and there are so many that it is tough to prioritize them. A major one will be to continue the battle for full local funding for future needs-based budgets. Graduating students who are highly literate in all areas of academic studies by removing obstacles to achieving academic success for all students. Successfully implementing the Blueprint although some objectives of some pillars will need amending as they do not reflect educational reality. Creating a working climate that attracts competent professional and ESP staff. Helping to develop and implement the first strategic plan for WCPS. Developing a plan to eliminate overcrowding in some of our schools, especially North and South High Schools. Building upon our successes and striving to strengthen our weaknesses.

Dealing with the seemingly endless issues of education can be tiring, aggravating, and yet rewarding. It can be a thankless job. Yet, we must remember, "It is all about the kids."