



2016 Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

Please return the completed questionnaire to Nick List, nlist@mceanea.org by 5:00 pm on Monday, February 22, 2016.

Name: Phil Kauffman

Address: 17621 Gatsby Terrace, Olney, MD 20832

Phone Number(s): (301) 570-4836

Email: info@philkauffman.com

Website: www.philkauffman.com

Children	Age	School
Rachel	28	Brooke Grove, Farquhar, Blake
Jordana	26	Sherwood ES, Farquhar, Blake

Education and Training (list degrees, licenses, etc.):

University of Pennsylvania, B.A. Economics 1974	
University of Md School of Law, J.D. 1977	

Occupation: Retired

Employer: Formerly employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of General Counsel

Address: 810 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20420

General Responsibilities: Served as a Deputy Assistant General Counsel and supervised a national staff of attorneys responsible for providing legal support to the VA's \$18 billion health care and information technology acquisition program.

Union Membership (past or present): None

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

Candidate Signature: Phil Kauffman

Date: 2/22/16

Part I

1. Why are you running for this position? What personal attributes, characteristics, and experiences make you the right candidate for this position?

It has been an honor to serve on the Board of Education for the last seven years. I am running for re-election because there is still much we have to do. While our school system has had many successes, it faces enormous challenges. I believe I am the right person, working together with our new superintendent, to provide the leadership, experience and stability necessary to meet those challenges. I am now completing my second term on the Board. I have served as its President and Vice President, and chaired both its Fiscal and Policy Management Committees. These experiences provide me with a deep understanding of our operating and capital budgets and school system policies. I have also developed relationships with elected officials which allow me to effectively advocate for our budget. I have strong community ties from my many years as a PTA activist. I am also a leader in the state Maryland Association of Boards of Education, serving there on the Board of Directors, as well as several committees. I have a B.A. in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania and a J.D from the University of Maryland. Those experiences provide me with a statewide and national perspective and the ability to observe how challenges are addressed in other systems. They also provide insight into the challenges of how to make the best choices to support greater numbers of students with fewer funds.

2. What is your view of personal and institutional change? Incremental or transformational? What change, if any, do you believe MCPS needs to undertake?

I believe that large institutions like Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), even highly successful ones, must constantly reassess their performance and be willing to change to meet future challenges. What works today may not work tomorrow. Sometimes the change can be incremental. However, I believe that MCPS is at a crossroads and transformational change may be warranted. It has been a high performing school district but it has not met the needs of many children, especially at many of our schools that are highly impacted by poverty. It is a moral and economic imperative that we address the challenges of our skyrocketing enrollment of students who continue to arrive with a multitude of needs. We also need to foresee what schools and education will look like in the future and position ourselves for those changes. To

do this, we will need to restore many of the positions that were eliminated, particularly for class size. We must enhance our staff development programs. We must be deliberate about our approaches to the various achievement gaps and use research-based practices to maximize our chances to successfully eliminate those gaps. We should expand our pre-k programs and Linkages to Learning as programs that are proven to work. We must review the resources we already have and determine which of those funds are being invested wisely and if not, reprogram and repurpose funds to meet the needs of our students today. But we need to be sensitive to the needs of the individuals in our system who will need to adapt to change.

3. In your opinion, what are the purpose and value of student assessments at the county, state and national levels? Given the current landscape what are the ramifications for students and educators?

At the national level, assessments provide critical data on the performance of school districts. At the state level, information from assessments provides information on individual schools. And at the local level, we need assessment data to determine whether students are actually learning the delivered curriculum so appropriate interventions, including accountability for results, can be made. One of the most controversial issues affecting our schools involves testing. How much are we testing students and how do we use test results to evaluate staff, inform instructional practice, and hold schools and educators accountable? How much time should be taken away from instruction for testing? Are the results received in a timely manner to guide instruction? Are the tests we are using properly aligned with the curriculum we are teaching? I support the rigor of the common core and the need to encourage critical thinking but I am concerned that we don't have the assessments right yet. This year, the Board eliminated semester exams and replaced them with quarter assessments, as it is working diligently to look for new ways to support learning and ensure that testing is timely and relevant to instruction. We must ensure that the tests and assessments we give are achieving the right purpose, to improve student achievement. We must make sure that all tests are well designed and are aligned with college and career-readiness standards. They must provide timely data on whether our students are on track or where they need improvement.

4. Specifically, what programs and initiatives are currently being implemented successfully by MCPS to close the achievement gap? What is still needed? What is not working?

We need to do better at this on many fronts. Our strategic planning framework has at its heart, academic success for all students regardless of their circumstances. The strategy has been to infuse and integrate resources and philosophy into the instructional programs in each classroom. For several years now, we have invested funds in differentiated instruction designed to reach all children despite gaps in their academic preparedness. We have invested in initiatives at the elementary level to significantly reduce class sizes in reading, for instance. In schools with high FARMS and mobility rates we have infused funds in the classrooms to address equity and preparedness issues. We have eliminated much of the "gatekeeping" from higher level AP and honors courses which has resulted in increased participation in those courses by

our students of color. Our career lattice program, which incentivizes lead teachers to work in high needs schools is gradually being implemented but it is too soon to tell if it will achieve desired results. We need to do a better job of communicating to the community our work in these areas, specifically delineating how our resources are targeted at closing the achievement gap. The gap in academic achievement is unacceptable to us on the Board even though our African American and Latino students outperform their counterparts nationwide. I would like to see better accountability and assessment measures to truly document what is working and what needs to be changed. I am particularly proud of our work this budget season in adding \$45 million to the superintendent's budget request, much of it targeted at equity and closing the achievement gap.

5. As a Board member, what metrics would you use to determine if MCPS policies and programs are closing the achievement gap?

I believe the metrics the Board has adopted, which are included in the Strategic Planning Framework, are appropriate. We will need to evaluate whether PARCC data will eventually be used rather than MAP. I would add a metric for third grade math. And I have questioned previously whether our goal of completing Algebra 1 in eighth grade with a grade of C or above is appropriate.

6. Given the dynamics of various relationships with administrators, parents, community members, the employee organizations and the county government, how can you work to build consensus within and between these groups?

Developing positive relationships with these groups is crucial to our success. There will always be tensions between, within and among all these groups. I have always tried to build consensus by careful listening to the interests of every stakeholder. The tension, to the extent that it is dynamic is critical for continuous improvement. Here in Montgomery County, we have a tradition of robust engagement with our community. We must continue that tradition and build on its successes in creating, sustaining and nurturing the school system that we have today. I can say that this was a cardinal principle on my mind as I worked with my colleagues on the Board to recruit and hire Dr. Jack Smith as the next superintendent of schools, a national leader with a proven record for community engagement and outreach. I look forward to the future, working with him and our community in the interest of all our students.

7. What are your views of the significant state wide policy issues that are impacting MCPS?

As we talk about educational reforms, especially on the issue of the achievement gap, it is vitally important that we all as a team examine how the state can be a partner and not a hindrance in our work. Statewide policies and regulations must be reviewed and hopefully revised to better serve the new population of children in our classrooms. The *Every School Succeeds* Act provides key changes from *No Child Left Behind* including greater focus on gaps

through an Opportunity Dashboard. The Dashboard will measure inputs that support successful schools, such as class size, counselor ratios, access to AP, etc. I support such a dashboard for Maryland. There is also a statewide focus on standardized testing. I look forward to the recommendations of the taskforce reviewing assessment strategies with a goal to eliminate unnecessary testing. There will also be a review of teacher and principal evaluation systems. I am pleased that MCPS successfully resisted using standardized test performance data as percentages in our evaluation system, unlike most other districts in Maryland. We need to continue our advocacy in this area.

8. Describe an environment where students and educators succeed. What resources and human capital are needed?

I have said it publicly; we need funds, we need increased resources to help all our students, especially our most vulnerable students. Sticking with maintenance of effort funding under the circumstances we find ourselves is highly inappropriate. At the same time, we must honestly look at the resources we already have and using contemporary and proven tools like zero-based budgeting, reprogram and repurpose funds to meet the needs of our students today. We need new and existing funding for training of the adults in our classrooms who are under increasing pressures to meet needs of children that go beyond just the instructional. Part of that training will include instituting a climate of respect for all children in the classroom.

9. What do you believe needs to be done to increase public support for our schools, and what do you see as your role in accomplishing this goal?

It is cliché that people do not move to Montgomery County for the roads. They do so for the schools. MCPS has a well-deserved reputation as one of the finest school systems in the country. Maintaining a quality public school system is essential if we want to keep a vibrant economy and a strong thriving community. Last year, the school system commissioned a study measuring the economic impact of our school system on the local and state economy. The results demonstrated that investments in the school system generate substantial economic benefits. I believe that most residents of Montgomery County, even those without children in the schools, support public school education and oppose cuts that would jeopardize its success. But the narrative must change. Public schools are the first welcoming beacon for most of our children and many of them do incredibly well. Even as we address the achievement gap, as we must, we must also approach our children's future from an asset model, not a deficit perspective. Many taxpayers do not see themselves in our school children. Elected officials need to reinforce the message that our schools are successful, while stressing that there is clearly more that needs to be done. We need to share MCPS' record of success in improving student achievement, but we also must point out that the bar for success is being continually raised and not all students' needs are being met. Essentially, as Board members, we need to tell the MCPS story, that we are successful, but if we want to maintain that success for all of our students, we will need additional resources.

10. Do you support Paid Family Leave policies, similar to those provided by DCPS for their professional, supporting services, and administrative staffs?

Paid Family Leave policies generally result in reduced absenteeism, reduced turnover, and increased productivity for employees. They also improve employee morale, which I believe has suffered over the last few years. As such, I would be supportive of carefully considering the adoption of such policies. However, we must be mindful of the fiscal impact and the priority of such policies compared to other items in the budget.

Part II

Please share your opinion on each of the following issues:

A. Class size

While the research is not conclusive regarding the impact of class size on student achievement, smaller class sizes help teachers build stronger relationships with students and help reduce teacher workload. In my opinion, class sizes in MCPS have gotten too large and it is one of my highest priorities as a Board member to restore class sizes to 2009 levels.

B. Universal pre-k

I favor an expansion of preschool programs. We need to invest in our children at an earlier age. There is strong evidence that a high quality prekindergarten program is an effective way to help all children succeed in school. Enhancing early child development appears to improve a child's ability to learn at later stages. Not only does early education improve a child's cognitive ability, but it increases the productivity of later educational initiatives.

C. Career and technology education

Not every child will go on to college. MCPS needs to do better with job preparation programs for students who are interested in career opportunities upon graduation. According to the Center on Education and the Workforce, 27 percent of students earning a vocational license or certificate earn more than a worker with a bachelor's degree. As more students graduate from high school, the number of positions requiring a high school diploma or less continues to decrease while the number of employment opportunities requiring at least postsecondary training or industrial certification has more than doubled. MCPS needs to work with the employer community to define the skills most essential in today's economy. The Edison program and our various career pathways should be adapted to create more programs across the county to address this need. We also need to review our transfer policy to allow students more choice of career programs that may not be offered at their neighborhood school.

D. Music and the arts

We cannot simply focus on the academic needs of our students. I believe that investing in art and music is essential to teaching the whole child. Our children need balance in their lives. Students learn valuable life skills both inside and outside the classroom. Children benefit from participation in band and choir, theater and debate, and many other activities. These experiences develop self-discipline, foster creativity and build relationships with other students and adults. Through the creative process, students learn problem solving and critical thinking skills. For many students, it is a way to engage with learning

E. School start times

In February, 2015, the Board acted to change bell times. This was an issue that the Board had considered for many years. The impetus for change was the early start time for high schools that MCPS first adopted in 1993, when it went to a four tier bus schedule. Calls for change over the years came from parents, students, staff, the U.S. Department of Education, the American Medical Association, the American College of Pediatrics, the State Department of Education, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and others. Mostly these calls for action were based on the sleep cycles of teenagers and the perceived harm from early bell times. I proposed a change to start times where elementary schools would have the earliest tier of bus schedules, followed by high schools and middle schools. Unfortunately, my proposal did not receive majority support on the Board. Going forward, we need to continue to evaluate the impact of the change, particularly on the Tier 2 Elementary schools, which have seen the most negative impact.

F. Teacher retention

Not only does MCPS need to attract the best teachers, it needs to retain those it hires. MCPS also needs to create the nurturing climate and appropriate incentives to attract and retain teachers and adults in the classroom whose diversity mirrors that of our community. There are significant costs associated with hiring new teachers and we don't want to lose those teachers we've invested in through professional development. MCPS needs to keep its staff by offering attractive compensation and benefits. More importantly, it needs to ensure that working conditions for teachers are optimal, including manageable class sizes, prep time, and a supportive environment.

G. Class discipline

We need consistent and fair application of disciplinary practices across our schools and students should know the consequences of misbehavior. However, we should recognize that discipline is a developmental process, and effective strategies should meet students' behavioral and developmental needs. We need to expand our use of restorative practices that allow students the opportunity to learn from their mistake and restore the relationships that were affected by their conduct. This is an area where more professional development is needed.

H. Grading policy/ final exams

The Board's change of final exams to marking period assessments precipitated a fresh look at our grading policy. The policy was last revised in 2003. I believe we need to review the policy comprehensively and evaluate whether revisions are warranted.

I. School calendar

The current calendar is rooted in our old agrarian society. The Board needs to work with teachers and appropriate partners to review the calendar to make it fit 21st century needs. Adding time for instruction should be a priority when there are sufficient revenues. A longer school year prevents the slide which occurs when students lose ground in learning if they stop reading.

J. Special Education burden of proof

I have supported proposals to change the burden of proof, except in cases where a student is placed unilaterally in a private school. While I understand the concerns raised about increased litigation and paperwork demands for staff, information I received from other states that made the switch demonstrated that those concerns were successfully addressed.

K. School choice

I support community schools. I believe that all of our schools should be excellent so that families don't feel they need to choose another school to get a superior education. However, for various reasons, the neighborhood school may not be the best fit for individual students. I do support public school choice options, where students could be allowed to choose another school based on program offerings or other criteria.