

Colleen Morris, President
Doug Lea, Vice-President
Teri Dennison, Treasurer
Sarai Gray, Secretary



5082 Dorsey Hall Drive, Suite 102 Ellicott City, MD 21042
Phone: 410-997-3440 FAX: 410-997-3443 www.hceanea.org

**QUESTIONNAIRE TO CANDIDATES FOR
HOWARD COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION**

If you wish to be considered as a recommended candidate by HCEA, please complete and return this questionnaire to HCEA at amaloney@mseanea.org or HCEA, 5082 Dorsey Hall Drive, #102, Ellicott City, MD 21042, Attention: Amy Maloney. Upon receipt you will be contacted to schedule an interview where follow up questions on the issues below may be asked as well as questions on new topics. **The deadline for submission is Friday, March 2nd.**

Name:

Jen Mallo

Address:

12026 White Cord Way

Phone number(s):

410-493-4554

Email:

jenmallo4boe@gmail.com

Education/Training (list degrees and institutions where received):

- 1) Master of Arts in East Asian Studies, George Washington University
- 2) Bachelor of Arts in Economics and East Asian Studies, Wittenberg University

Occupation:

Community Advocate

Current or past elective offices held:

- HCPSS Community Advisory Council (CAC) Chairperson
- HCPSS CAC Vice Chairperson
- Swansfield PTA President
- Swansfield PTA Secretary
- East Columbia Preschool President

Community/Professional Activities:

Wilde Lake HS PTSA, Wilde Lake HS Boosters, Swansfield ES PTA, League of Women Voters, Blessings in a Backpack Coordinator in Training, HCPSS Community Advisory Council

Current or past union membership:

N/A

**Howard County Board of Education
Candidate Questionnaire**

1. Do you support or oppose Maryland's maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund at least the same per pupil allocation in local aid for education as the prior year unless a waiver is granted?
- Support
 Oppose

Additional Comments:

I fully support the maintenance of effort (MOE) law as it establishes regulatory minimums for secured revenue and funding of the schools. That being said, the current formulation for MOE critically underfunds growing school districts. With HCPSS providing pre-K to approximately 1,500 students that are not counted in MOE and the 1,000-1,500 additional students enrolled after the MOE deadline calculation, the law does not accurately count the size of the population being served. We need to work with both the county and the state legislature to change the MOE calculations to accurately reflect the size of the student population for MOE to adequately fund operating costs.

2. Do you support or oppose public education employees' right to bargain collectively?
- Support
 Oppose

Additional Comments:

I fully support the right of public education employees to bargain collectively. Collective bargaining rights are fundamental to establishing and maintaining a high performing school system as they are an essential element in attracting and engaging a high quality staff. In a system with effective collective bargaining, teachers and staff know that they have a seat at the bargaining table to determine what rights, protections, and due process will be afforded to them. This system allows for clear expectations to be set for all parties – not simply dictated by the Board or Administration.

If we look at national trends, we see that effective collective bargaining is a critical element in educational performance. As a general rule, states which value the input of teachers and staff in the design of the system perform much higher than those that do not. Currently, one need only look at our neighbors in West Virginia to see the damage that can be done when full collective bargaining rights – to include compensation – are eliminated.

Collective bargaining agreements provide tremendous value to a school system. Many people simply believe that these negotiations are limited to pay and benefits, but do not realize the complexity and level of detail presented in the bargaining agreement regarding due process, expectations, policy, regulations and requirements. Without explicit determination as part of the contract, there are no guarantees that rights are

protected and enforced. Without collective bargaining, there is the potential for inequitable enforcement of personal leave, of sick leave, of hiring of substitutes, of planning time, and more.

The right of public employee unions to effectively operate is currently under attack in the US Supreme Court case *Janus v. AFSCME*. Anti-union advocates are attempting to overturn the prevailing *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* regarding the collection of agency fees or fair share fees from non-members. As a Board Member, I would work with HCEA and other elected officials to ensure that possible adverse effects of a new Court ruling do not impair the ability of HCEA to effectively represent its members through collective bargaining.

3. As a BOE member would your preference be for single year or multi-year collective bargaining agreements? Do you support Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA's) for educators?

My preference would be for multiyear agreements. One value of multiyear agreements is that they provide stability and predictability for both the educators and the Board. It provides the union members with financial assurances they need. It provides the BOE and the Superintendent with the ability to plan and execute long-term strategies to solve budgetary problems and concerns. Another value of multiyear agreements is the avoidance of 'crisis management.' Every budget year seems to represent a crisis. When times are good, there are always those who want to freeze salaries so that new programs can be started. Likewise, when times are bad there are always those who first look at freezing salaries. A multiyear agreement enables both sides to develop a more strategic plan to managing necessary increases in compensation. Finally, the use of multiyear agreements also allows for the development of a more strategic hiring plan. It is incumbent upon human resources to continue to hire highly qualified prospective teachers and employees as quickly as possible in the increasingly competitive market. A multiyear agreement provides the stability and groundwork for that to happen. Highly qualified personnel are less likely to accept offers in a system that cannot accurately predict what will happen to pay and benefits.

As a former federal employee and economics major in my undergraduate studies, I both value and support COLAs as a way to have adjustments to deal with market variability and inflationary pressures. In the last five years, inflation has been historically low hovering at 2.1% and below, which is considered to be a healthy inflation rate for the nation allowing for stable, contained growth. Accordingly, COLAs would be recommended to be low. As we look to the current market volatility and sweeping changes to national tax laws, we might be faced with inflationary pressures. On February 27, 2018, Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell indicated that he intends to continue gradual interest rate increases from central bank while keeping an eye on price inflation with hopes to keep it around 2%. He also stated that he is trying to circumvent the potential for overheating the economy given the recent government stimulus and strong world economy. In this case, COLAs are a reasonable way for the union to negotiate for adequate compensation while protecting the livelihoods and paychecks against inflationary pressures.

If inflation occurs, then increased tax revenue follows with increases in wages and prices. As such, it would follow that the county should be able to fund COLAs commensurate with revenue growth in time of higher inflationary pressure.

When organizations fail to implement annual COLAs, the effects may not be felt in a single year – but the long term impact can be dramatic. Some of our surrounding counties are finding that out as their high performing staff applies for positions with HCPSS.

4. As a BOE member, would you be in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by BOE employees?

Support

Oppose

Additional Comments:

I support a holistic school environment, where custodians, cafeteria personnel and maintenance services are provided by individuals who are part of the HCPSS team. At an individual school level, the people filling those roles are integral to support educators. Our teachers, paraeducators, and school-based administrators have to know that these support personnel have their back. Administrators are better served by being able to choose which individuals to hire, to choose which individuals will fit well into their particular school culture, and which individuals they can work well with on a day to day basis.

If we were to contract out these positions, then it is likely that placement of custodial, cafeteria and maintenance personnel would no longer lie in the hands of those who know the school best. As well, I believe that institutional history, knowledge of a particular school and student body, consistency of the same person being at the same location day in and day out is important to fulfill the mission well. If we were to contract out these services, that institutional history of knowing what is where and how things work in a school could easily be lost. The consistency of having the same person show up every day could be compromised. The relationships that are built with these individuals add to the school and its functioning.

Every time I am back at Swansfield Elementary School, where my own children attended, I always make it a point to go visit Trish Borowski, the custodian because she and I got to know each other over the many years I was there. This relationship that I built with her, allowed me to better function as a PTA President when I needed her help or expertise. If the custodian position were outsourced, I would have had a much harder time executing my events, a harder time supporting the teachers, and a less collaborative working team.

5. What are the top three things you would focus on in the next four years if you are elected to the Board of Education?

As a BOE member, I plan to focus on fiscal responsibility, empowering teachers, and equity. More specifically:

Fiscal Responsibility:

We need a strategic plan to reduce the school department's budget deficit through careful examination of the numbers and a collaborative partnership with county leaders. Our strategy for alleviating the deficit cannot be requiring staff to pay a disproportionate share of their health care costs. And we need to ensure that the county is a strong steward of our instructional professionals' health care fund.

Planning must be collaborative with Howard County's administration as well as with its County Council. Passing a budget is not sufficient. There needs to be a comprehensive plan for developing a spending plan that takes into account the district's broad funding needs rather than just an annual one. The new board must define goals for the district and quantifiable metrics for determining what success is.

Empowering Teachers:

We, in this county, are fortunate to receive thousands of teaching applications each year. As a result, we have access to the best of the best, which means we can thoughtfully and deliberately select those teachers with the skills and experience necessary to succeed in our increasingly diverse community. In fact, we have been so successful in hiring talented staff that we should endeavor to trust in their ability to meet the learning needs of all of our students.

One of the ways we can unlock teachers' potential and allow them to do what they do best is to reduce standardized testing to legal minimums, and those that work to recognize gaps in identifying student potential.

We need to begin to provide wrap-around community services, to include mental health services, in our schools so that our teachers can focus on teaching in the classroom in a safe and secure environment.

Equity:

We need to work towards increased equity. Equity is not just as simple as equity between schools or even races. It is complex and its needs are woven throughout layers of our school system. A sampling of where we can take steps to improve equity is as follows:

We should develop a hiring plan to ensure that every school has an instructional team that reflects its diverse student and community population, while balancing the need for teachers with experience and innovation.

Instructional staffing should be deliberate, intentional, and strategic.

We should examine the execution of discipline for African Americans in the wake of the disproportionate and troubling number of African American students who are suspended from county schools each year.

We should look at the discretionary spending in the schools given the inability of some to raise adequate funds.

Technology is not going away. Female participation in technology classes is inequitable. We need to promote the equitable enrollment and higher level of engagement among girls in STEM classes.

Redistricting is inevitable. We must approach with consideration to racial and socio-economic concerns.

Courses offerings between different high schools are not equitable. Every course needs to be offered in person or online.

6. What are the strengths and flaws of our current budgeting process for Howard County schools? How will you assure that the funds provided by the funding authority are spent as intended?

The last couple of years, the current budget process has seemed rushed rather than deliberative with the need to schedule secondary public hearings, requests for additional information, and additional last-minute work sessions. I would like to move towards a more deliberative process by moving the Superintendent Operating Budget deliver date to early to mid December, as is done in some of our surrounding counties. This would allow greater time for analysis, evaluation, reasonable requests for pertinent details, and the ability of stakeholders to more fully participate in the process.

I would also recommend that as Board members, we publicly provide the Superintendent with our budgeting priorities in September or October, so that he is allotted sufficient time to align the budget accordingly.

One of the current strengths is the growing trend towards transparency. This year, the Superintendent not only provided the summary, the complete budget books, but also the budget book in spreadsheet format. The spreadsheet format of the operating budget allows for comprehensive and detailed data analytics to be performed. This is a wonderful new development that we will need to continue providing and utilizing. Once a month, in the consent agenda of the BOE meetings is the Operating Budget Finance Report. I will do my homework with this document. I will come prepared to ask questions having looked for variances, discrepancies, and overages. It might be worthwhile to expand the data included in this report to look at historical spending and revenue rates compared to current spending and revenue rates in non-summary format for multiple years rather than just the previous year.

7. How would you work collaboratively with HCEA on issues that impact the Board of Education employees whom we represent?

Collaboration starts with listening, learning, doing one's homework, and then collectively developing plans to move forward. I will work collaboratively with HCEA by starting with listening. I want to learn what HCEA's strategic vision is for its members. Then we can discuss and formulate ways for policy and procedure to align with vision.

While I was an active member of the HCPSS Community Advisory Committee, I served on five different policy review committees (School Attendance Areas, Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media, Field Trips (Domestic), International Student Travel, School Sponsored Publications and Productions) and the Indoor Environment Quality Initiative. This work by its very nature is collaborative. My time on these committees helped me to develop the skill sets to listen to other's concerns, blend them with my own and the community I represented, and then to formulate precise and meaningful wording to be used in the policy.

Additionally, I believe I have a proven track record from my days as chairperson of the HCPSS CAC delivering regular testimony and public hearings to the Board on sometimes contentious issues, but in a constructive, productive and non-antagonistic way.

I also believe strongly in the role of HCEA to provide due process for its members. Due process and the institutional framework that supports it, allow for fairness and justice when there are contentious issues.

8. In your opinion, is there statutory/regulatory language permitting the State Superintendent to “disapprove” a locally developed and mutually agreed upon evaluation plan and default that county to the state evaluation model? (If yes, please cite the language that provides the authority)

The Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act Consolidated State Plan when addressing Disproportionate Rates of Access to Educators states "Consistent with ESEA section 1111(g)(1)(B) , this description should not be construed as requiring a State to develop or implement a teacher, principal or other school leader evaluation system." This document in defining an Ineffective Educator states "An educator who is deemed unsuccessful by a State approved local evaluation model." Further, in the proposed language of the Every Student Succeeds Act, § 299.18: SUPPORTING EXCELLENT EDUCATORS "Each State Educational Agency would also describe how it will work with LEAs in the State to develop or implement State or local teacher and principal or other school leader evaluation and support systems"

These pieces of the regulations do not provide for regulatory removal and replacement of local evaluation models, but instead indicate that approval of the local model is required at a state level.

9. What are your plans to work with educators to effectively implement the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Maryland’s Protect Our Schools Act (POSA)?

In January 2018, the US Secretary of Education approved Maryland's plan for meeting the requirements of ESSA under the auspices of Maryland's POSA. The first step towards effectively implementing the plan in Howard County is to direct the Superintendent to share the plan with staff and the Board, how it will look once implemented, and what our expected outcomes will be. Whether this be developed as a module in professional development days before the start of each school year or in another form--the first thing to do is to hold the Superintendent and staff accountable for sharing that information far and wide and to set reasonable expectations. The Board should also direct the Superintendent to collect the data necessary to be used as metric. Just as legislators pushed to have data metrics for students that did not reflect one single, solitary day of testing, we too should develop a strategic plan to collect climate and safety data with repeated sampling over time. By doing so, the Board can ask the Superintendent for periodic updates throughout the performance period and if data trends are not leading towards favorable ratings, then we would have the opportunity to further direct the Superintendent towards course corrections.

The POSA legislation was designed with the goal of closing equity and opportunity gaps while preventing the top-down privatization of our schools. I will work with educators on identification of equity and opportunity gaps. I started my professional career as an analyst, and I understand the value of “doing my

homework” – evaluating data, analyzing trends, and looking for solutions. I will employ the skills I developed and honed as an analyst to evaluate our decisions and directions.

10. As a member of the Board of Education, what is the proper relationship with the school Superintendent, in your view?

The Board of Education directs and guides the Superintendent. The Superintendent reports to the Board and takes direction from them. The Superintendent is charged with the execution of the plans of the Board with an eye towards fiduciary responsibility, fidelity, and remaining mission centric to educate all our students well.

11. How do you define diversity in our student and educator population?

Diversity is any item that someone can use to define their identity. Diversity is the differences in races, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexuality, cultural identity, heritage, religion, age, and ideas.

12. What are your plans to make sure that the Howard County Board of Education is providing the best possible education for special needs students under the recent *Andrew v. Douglas County Board of Education* ruling?

Like ESSA and POSA, the decision handed down in *Andrew V. Douglas County Board of Education* needs to be conveyed to teachers, paraeducators, administrators, and staff. It is incumbent upon the Board to direct the Superintendent to relay this information and develop the training necessary for full understanding what the expectations are for staff as well as how compliance will be conducted and measured.

In particular, any training must emphasize that "*de minimus*" is not an acceptable standard, but that the standard written by Chief Justice Roberts states that IDEA require a school "to offer an IEP reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances."

In conjunction with a newly hired Director of Special Education, the Board should direct the Administration to develop a set of resources for teachers, parents, and students (where appropriate). These resources would outline what a special education process looks like starting from identification for evaluation all the way through one complete cycle of an IEP. The resources must have timelines so that parents know what to expect and when as well as so that educators know what is expected of them and when and approximately how to best budget their time to meet these deadlines.

Within the IEP cycle, there need to be measurable, quantifiable objectives like we have for report cards (i.e., is the skill non-emergent, emergent, achievable with assistance, or mastered). By developing meaningful, measurable objectives, we can then use data to evaluate if we are ensuring the best possible education for special needs students. As members of the Board, we can direct the Administration to collect

and evaluate this data for compliance and improvement.

13. With the passing of the Less Testing, More Learning Act of 2017, LEAs have to keep a cap on the amount of instructional time taken for testing. What current county assessments would you propose be kept? Which assessments do you think should be abandoned? Why or why not?

With Howard County already meeting the testing maximums outline in HB 461, we would not be "required" to further cap assessment time. That being said, I would prefer that we cull all non-legally mandated testing except two. I would preserve the MAP testing, but possibly reduce its frequency of administration. I would keep MAP testing because of its extremely successful gap identification of students not previously identified for acceleration. This test appears to remove the potential for unconscious bias and allows for talent spotting when a student has a discrepancy between their abilities and their placement. I would advocate for the continuation of this test or something similar that has a proven track record for identifying gaps in placement and equity, thereby taking steps to reduce the achievement gap.

The second standardized test that I would continue to administer to all third and fifth graders is COGAT. The COGAT test is one of the necessary tools to be used for gifted and talented placement. By administering the test to all third and fifth graders, we have the ability to identify students who are ready to tackle accelerated course materials regardless of their current placement. This allows for great inclusion of all accelerated learners into the proper challenging course level.

Other than MAP and COGAT, I would direct the Superintendent to only administer those tests that are necessary for legal compliance with ESSA, POSA, and high school graduation requirements. I believe that while standardized testing allows for insight into a student's performance, often our teachers are already aware of strengths and weaknesses of their students without subjecting them to the pressures of testing. The testing we do administer needs to be consistent with our curriculum and examined for discrepancies and disparities. The data should lead discovery and improvement.