



Candidate Questionnaire 2018 Anne Arundel County Board of Education

Take Action AAC and its parent, Progressive Maryland, are grassroots, community-based organizations that work to progress social, environmental, economic, and racial justice, and to advance the principle that all individuals and groups are entitled to fair and impartial treatment, equality, and equal opportunity. Elected officials have an enormous impact on our efforts to reduce inequality and improve the lives of residents all over the county and the state. It is our responsibility to not only advocate for residents, but also to empower them to engage in the political process at every level. To that end, Take Action AAC supports candidates who work to build a society and economy that works for all Marylanders, with special emphasis on traditionally marginalized groups.

To be considered for our endorsement for the Anne Arundel County Board of Education, please complete this questionnaire, including sources of funding and specific examples where appropriate. Return the completed questionnaire to TakeActionAAC@gmail.com, **no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, June 8, 2018**. Your responses will be available to the public at ProgressiveMaryland.org and TakeActionAAC.com.

Candidate Information

Candidate Information	
Name	Dana Schallheim
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Party	Non-partisan
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Campaign Contact Information	
Committee Name	Friends of Dana Schallheim
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Treasurer Contact Information	
Treasurer Name	Kelly Cornacchia
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Candidate History		
Previous Elected Office	Years Served	Major Endorsements
None, first-time candidate		

Progressive Maryland / Take Action AAC
Have you ever been endorsed by Progressive Maryland, and for what office(s)?
No, first-time candidate.
Have you ever assisted Progressive Maryland in achieving its goals?
No, but I have been semi-politically active for years. Over the past 30+ years I've supported candidates, organizations, and single-issue referendums I believe in through volunteerism at the ACLU of Mississippi, The Nature Conservancy, and many, many others. I've canvassed, phone banked, fundraised, and helped execute programs and events for candidates, organizations, and issues I believe in.

Questions:

1. Recent events across the country have highlighted the myriad challenges facing students and society. These include mental health issues (including suicide), opioid and alcohol addiction, bullying, harassment, hate crimes, and more. In addition, school shootings increase stress and remove school as a place of safety and security. How would you rate AACPS's performance supporting students in these areas, what continuing concerns do you have, and what specific recommendations would you make?

I believe that AACPS is not currently fulfilling its full potential in any of the areas listed above to "Elevate all students. Eliminate all gaps." This year alone there have been several unconscionable instances of bullying and hate crimes including the discovery of nooses and swastikas on school property as well as the flying of rebel flags on school property and the

alleged use of hate speech by a teacher and a bus driver towards students. This is not acceptable, nor does it create a safe learning environment for students.

AACPS's lackluster response to these events are a far cry from the swift, decisive action I would expect from our school leadership. Instead, the policies are seemingly tilted in favor of the perpetrator and the deck seems to be stacked against the student(s) who file complaints. If the Board of Education already had stricter policies in place, for example a zero-tolerance policy regarding use of hate speech and symbols of hate for all students and staff as suggested by Reverend Stephen A. Tillett during a recent NAACP Town Hall meeting, intolerable events would be less likely to occur.

Although having a zero-tolerance policy in place is a great first step, it is not the only step required to erase unacceptable behavior. The Board of Education must develop and fully support policies and initiatives via continual parent and community education and require age-appropriate programming utilizing culturally responsive learning pedagogy at every grade level which focuses on multicultural and social justice education, compassion, celebrating diversity, practicing empathy, and allows for open and safe discussion of issues surrounding culture, race and racism.

Additionally, several schools within the AACPS system still utilize portable classrooms or have entries or open classroom layouts that do not meet today's unfortunate need for upgraded security measures. While I applaud the injection of \$15 million dollars into the school system to be used for school security upgrades including double entry doors, video entry systems, upgraded locks, and more Security Resource Officers (SROs), these security measures do not go far enough to keep our children safe. Every school, including all elementary schools, needs a full-time SRO on duty. As we all witnessed with the horrors that occurred at Sandy Hook, violence can happen anywhere and at any time, including at an elementary school.

Lastly, AACPS needs to employ enough mental health services staff to adequately support the mental and emotional needs of all our students. This includes following the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) guidelines regarding student to staff ratios for school counselors and school psychologists at all schools. By intervening earlier, and at the first signs of trauma and/or behavioral problems, students will avoid larger, and likely costlier, problems later.

2. Anne Arundel county covers a large geographical area that includes semi-urban, suburban, and rural areas, each with its own challenges. Access to school sponsored activities, support services, and career preparation opportunities can be limited because of physical distance, lack of public transportation (particularly in south county), and other challenges. Similarly, school board meetings occur at times and a location that make it difficult for many to attend. How do you recommend that the Board improve student access to services and

opportunities? What steps can the board take to make it easier for county residents to be engaged in board deliberations and decision-making?

While I applaud the current board's expansion of the Triple E program into the Annapolis cluster (pending approval of funding by the Anne Arundel County Council) as well as the large number of magnet and choice programs available, there are many clusters within AACPS that do not have these programs or whose children are unable or unlikely to take advantage of choice AACPS programs due to being unaware that these programs exist or because of a lack of bus services or unacceptably long bus commutes. Beyond just making sure that these wonderful, innovative programs are distributed equally throughout the county, providing adequate bus services and properly educating parents and students of the existence of these programs is crucial to establishing lasting equity.

Additionally, not every middle and high school has activity buses in place to allow students to take advantage of after school tutoring sessions and clubs. Some schools never had activity bus services and some schools, such as Annapolis High School, used to have several activity buses and now only have one bus to serve its 2,000 students. I am hopeful that once the bus scheduling software is fully implemented, some of the money saved by eliminating existing inefficiencies can be shifted towards establishing adequate activity bus services for all middle and high schools so that all students can take advantage of the amazing extracurricular clubs AACPS schools offer.

I would like to involve the community in brainstorming sessions to come up with ideas for how to better involve parents and students in board deliberations and meetings. Some ideas to better involve the community include the addition of periodic online town hall meetings, round table discussions, and an interactive "suggestions box" on the AACPS website. Existing AACPS committees including the Parent Involvement Advisory Council (PIAC) and the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) should interact more frequently and directly with the Board and serve as a focus group or sounding board to assist with policy development. I also believe that the board should occasionally conduct its meetings in schools throughout the county.

3. Anne Arundel county is home to some of the most beautiful scenery and environmental treasures in the country. How can AACPS better utilize this unique environment as an educational resource, to prepare students for environmentally-focused careers, and to convey the critical need to respect and care for our environment?

Currently about 40% of graduates have completed some type of internship before graduation. I'd like to see this number eventually expand to 100% and include more national and local environmental organizations, such as The Nature Conservancy, as well as continued investment and expansion of programs at Arlington Echo. Science classes and curriculum could also be expanded to include more environmental science courses.

A community service requirement should be added to existing graduation requirements. AACPS could partner with environmental organizations to organize work parties to eradicate invasive non-native plant species such as bamboo and Japanese knotweed, park and bay clean-up events, etc. thus refocusing curriculum away from simply teaching to the test and back towards mastery of subjects and real-world experiences.

4. Anne Arundel is one of the wealthiest of Maryland's 19 counties. However, our teacher salaries rank near the bottom. These poor salaries, overcrowded schools, large class sizes, and lack of supports – guidance counselors, mental health providers, teaching specialists, and teacher's assistants in particular – are some causes of AACPS' teacher retention problems. How can the board increase retention among teachers and other critical staff?

Nearly all issues identified in this questionnaire ultimately hinge on teacher recruitment and retention. Pay, prep time, training, resources, and working conditions at every elementary, middle, and high school must be equal to at least the median of their counterparts in surrounding counties. Additionally, lost steps must be restored to all staff whose steps were frozen during the financial crisis. Until AACPS can match the compensation packages of surrounding counties without decreasing current health benefits and pension, we will continue to lose teachers and staff to surrounding areas.

Additionally, AACPS can strengthen its relationships with state and regional colleges and universities to provide loan forgiveness and other incentives in exchange for signing contracts to provide several years of service within the AACPS system. This model can be established for classroom teachers, STEM, advanced course, vocational, ESOL, and special education teachers as well as school counselors and school psychologists.

A similar approach can be implemented with Maryland's top employers, including hospitals, government agencies, military bases, etc. to provide incentives to recruit teachers to Anne Arundel County producing a win-win model for both parties. Attracting and retaining excellent teachers is a major component to sustaining excellent schools – the caliber of schools that could bolster the recruitment efforts of our state's major employers.

We must stop viewing teaching as a job that merely supplements a spouse's income. Education must become our state's highest priority and the Board of Education's budget must be fully funded every year, with the focus on the school level. If our schools succeed, property and graduation values increase, and crime and unemployment decrease. Budgets must be crafted that reflect actual need, focus on the school level, and the Board of Education must work relentlessly with our local and state officials to ensure that our schools and our children are put first.

5. Private industry frequently partners with public entities, allowing both to meet their goals. The downside of this partnership can be the perception that the process is not transparent, critical information is hidden, outcomes are predetermined or made behind closed doors, and profit is prioritized over students. AACPS is not immune to this, nor is it immune to concerns

about the influence that campaign donors might have over board decisions. What steps can the board take to counter these concerns? Please include in your response whether candidates for the Board of Education should accept cash or in-kind campaign donations from businesses or organizations and if you plan to do so during this election cycle. If candidates do accept these donations, what policies should the school board have in place to eliminate the above concerns?

The only business AACPS should be in is the education business to fulfill its mission of "Elevating all students. Eliminating all gaps," such as working with local or regional employers as well as colleges and universities as part of a teacher recruitment and retention strategy. AACPS should not form any partnership that doesn't directly support AACPS's mission. Participation in businesses that have little to nothing to do with the education of our students and the fulfillment of the AACPS mission siphon precious time and energy from the many important issues facing our community such as bullying, inequity of resources between schools, ensuring that our special needs students receive the resources they deserve, etc.

Should partnerships be formed with entities that do not directly or obviously contribute to the education of our students, the public must first be fully briefed on such a proposal during a series of open Board of Education meetings and public forums to discuss potential partnerships and their relevance to the education of our children. Public briefings and forums must include the reasons for the potential partnership as well as full disclosure of any revenue AACPS stands to receive because of the partnership. A full description of the above must be prominently posted on the AACPS website and allow for public comment. All public comments should always be visible to the public.

If the partnership includes the sale, rezoning, lease or sublet of land owned by AACPS, or on or adjacent to existing school property for commercial use, consensus must be formed between parents, staff, and the immediate community before the Board votes to move forward with the project. All major Board of Education decisions should only be made during open meetings after seriously considering the public's input.

I am the only Board of Education candidate in Anne Arundel County that is *Small Money Certified*. This distinction is offered by Represent Maryland and its certification criteria includes an audit of my Maryland Board of Elections campaign finance reports. I also signed a pledge not to accept money from for-profit corporations or corporate PACs, developers/real estate firms, lobbyists and lobbying firms, and out-of-state PACs. Represent Maryland's full criteria for small money certification can be found at <http://www.representmaryland.org/updates/small-money-certification-criteria-2018>.

I believe all Board of Education candidates should hold themselves to a similar standard. Although it may be impossible to forbid Board of Education or any other candidates from accepting donations from certain types of businesses and organizations, without state or

Federal legislation, the public should always educate themselves about who their candidate is, including a review of their campaign finance reports to assess if they are beholden to any companies or organizations. Campaign finance reports for all candidates can be found at <https://campaignfinancemd.us/Public/ViewFiledReports>.

6. The AACPS budget is the clearest way to demonstrate board priorities. What are your priorities, and how would you ensure equity of services across the system? What decisions should be left to school leadership, and which should be determined by the Board and superintendent? Please incorporate examples that either support or run counter to your position.

The role of this, and any other, school board is to develop and enact school policy. The role of the superintendent is to implement policies the Board passes. The role of school leadership, including principals and vice principals, is to consistently enforce school policy. By first crafting budgets that reflect actual school need which are then fully funded by the County Executive and County Council, many of the priorities below can be accomplished.

The Board should develop policies to:

- Increase teacher, secretary, and staff pay and working conditions equal to the median of their counterparts in surrounding counties.
 - Restore all lost steps for our veteran teachers.
 - Decrease class sizes across the system.
 - Develop supplemental budgets for higher needs schools to provide resources, supplies and programming equal to those found in affluent schools to close equity gaps.
 - Hire additional special education teachers and assistants consistent with demand.
 - Hire enough school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and pupil personnel workers to meet ASCA and NASP recommendations at every school.
 - Update policies around IEPs and 504s including earlier invention, mandating parental consent for assessments, and reevaluating policies regarding acceptance of outside diagnosis.
 - Work with the state to implement the Kirwan Commission recommendations.
 - Align ALL school start times with evidence-based research.
7. Across the country, including in Anne Arundel County, acts of hate, intolerance, and exclusion that run counter to the ideals captured in the Constitution are on the rise. A strong society requires a commitment by all to active social, political, and economic engagement. How can or should AACPS and the Board help create engaged members of society?

The Board of Education must develop and fully support policies and initiatives via continual parent and community education and require age-appropriate programming utilizing culturally responsive learning pedagogy at every grade level which focuses on multicultural

and social justice education, compassion, celebrating diversity, practicing empathy, and allows for open and safe discussion of issues surrounding culture, race and racism.