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Dana Schallheim: I'm ready to fight for all of our students

As a parent and member of the Anne Arundel County Public Schools community, I want to advocate and be a voice for our children.

Having the ability to develop and uphold policies that affect more than 84,000 students and 5,600 teachers is both an awesome and weighty responsibility and not something I take lightly. I have never viewed myself as a politician or political candidate and don't view serving on the board as a steppingstone or résumé piece, but as an unparalleled opportunity to effect real change and positively impact the lives of thousands of children.

For more than 30 years I have been volunteering for organizations I believe in and advocating for children and underserved populations. Volunteering and advocacy work have always fed my soul. Highlights of my volunteer career include being named the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi's Volunteer of the Year and leading a campaign that raised \$80,000 through the Children's Organ Transplant Association. I currently volunteer regularly at my daughter's public elementary school.



I believe in our teachers and staff and will fight for our students — all our students. Never afraid of a challenge or lacking the persistence and dedication to be successful, I will serve with enthusiasm and integrity, and bring fiscal oversight and accountability back to the board. Additionally, as an at-home mom, I have the time to devote to being an effective member of the board.

Thriving communities are contingent upon successful public schools. Communities with underfunded public schools experience lower graduation rates and property values and higher crime and unemployment rates. Fully funding our public schools will ultimately save taxpayers an enormous amount of money in property values alone in the long run.

If successful, my top priorities include:

- Working with the General Assembly, the governor's office, the county executive and the County Council to ensure that both the Anne Arundel County tax cap and education funding formulas are updated to meet the current needs of our schools, including implementing the Kirwan Commission's recommendations.

- Closing funding, program and resource gaps between schools to ensure that, upon graduation, all students will be adequately equipped to pursue the path of their choosing.
- Truly focusing on teacher retention, including making up steps lost during the years wages were frozen and establishing pay and working conditions for all teachers, secretaries and staff equal to their counterparts in surrounding counties. Retaining our amazing teachers costs far less than recruiting new teachers.
- Decreasing class sizes. To accomplish this goal we need to not only retain the amazing educators we have but recruit new teachers to keep up with ever-increasing enrollment. Relationships with local and regional colleges and universities as well as with local industry partners and major employers must be strengthened to bolster recruitment efforts and hiring incentives.
- Developing budgets that reflect actual school needs, including budgeting for the appropriate number of school counselors, psychologists, social workers and pupil personnel workers, as well as the appropriate number of teachers to keep class sizes manageable.
- Aligning K-12 school start times with evidence-based research. This goal includes working with the AACPS transportation department to fully implement the bus scheduling software over the summer, eliminating inefficiencies and applying those savings to establishing healthy school start times for all of AACPS.
- Providing consistent needed fiscal oversight, accountability and transparency, including understanding budget projections versus actual expenditures and knowing exactly how unanticipated budget surpluses were spent.

Before having my daughter, I worked as an energy consultant on behalf of the federal government and utility clients in support of energy efficiency and renewable energy programs. I have two degrees in business, including a master of business administration I received in 2002 from the University of Brighton in England. My husband and I have been married for 10 years and are raising our daughter in Severna Park.

For more information about me please visit [www.Facebook.com/DanaforBOE](https://www.facebook.com/DanaforBOE) or www.DanaforBOE.com.

Dana Schallheim is a candidate for Anne Arundel County Board of Education in District 5.