

# 2020 Board of Education (BOE) Primary Election Candidate Questionnaire

Please return the completed questionnaire to [contact@bettermontgomery.us](mailto:contact@bettermontgomery.us) by 5:00pm on Friday, January 31, 2020.

**Name:** Jay Guan

**Town or City of Residency:** Clarksburg, MD

**Education:** Master of Science in Engineering, Systems Engineering.

Johns Hopkins University, 2015

Bachelor of Science, Aerospace Engineering,

University of California, San Diego, 2009

**Professional Background:** Aerospace Engineer

**Political Background:** Democratic Party

*I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking BOE office and I understand that Coalition for Better Montgomery PAC reserves the right to share my responses with the public.*

Candidate Signature:

Jay Guan

Date: 1/31/2020

## Part 1

1. Why do you want to serve on BOE?

I am running because I believe that we need to focus on a more rigorous STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) curriculum. We are on the cusp of the 4th industrial revolution. Millions of people will lose their jobs to automation, and we need to give rise to the next generation. As someone who works in NASA and the FAA, I understand what it will take to help our kids face the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities this revolution will bring. The Board of Education needs a new member, one who will not get trapped in the past and can instead look towards the future: a new generation with new challenges as well as old ones.

I am running because I believe that all of our kids should have access to a good quality education. Growing up in an immigrant, low-income family, I have a deep, personal understanding of the impacts of opportunity gap, cultural, language, and institutional barriers facing the socio-economically disadvantaged members of the community. I can bring these perspectives to the Board of Education.

I am running because I want to give back to the community. I have served in various MCPS advisory committees such as the District Assessment Advisory Committee, the Asian Pacific American Student Achievement Action Group, and the ESOL/Bilingual Advisory Committee. From these organizations, I have received both the experience and the leadership needed to serve as a member of the Board.

I am running because I am tired of the same old “us vs. them” conversations when it comes to education. The division, the polarization, and the lust for “blood”, is this who we are? Simply because we disagree with each other, we have to be mortal enemies? Simply because someone disagrees, they deserve to be “tarred and feathered”, to be doxx, to be bullied on social media? I believe we are better than this. I am a consensus builder. I will work to bridge the fissure that is growing within our county.

2. Why do you consider yourself the best candidate for the BOE seat you filed for?

I consider myself the best candidate for the BOE At-Large seat because of my background and my unique experience. My professional experience enables me to be clear-eyed about the upcoming changes to our way of life from new technology, and how to best prepare. As a student from a low-income family, I have a personal understanding of how best to address opportunity and achievement gap. My background as an immigrant also gives me an in-depth understanding of the challenges of immigrant families in MCPS.

My volunteer experience with the Chinese American Parent Association, Montgomery County, and various MCPS advisory committees give me insightful knowledge of MCPS decision making, operation, and the needs of various stakeholder.

3. What are your top three priorities if you are elected?

Establishment and expansion of future-ready CTE programs such as drone operators/autonomous vehicle operators, in partnership with relevant partners.

Seek continuous improvement to our STEAM curriculum and offering. Seek and evaluate innovative education and operational practices - such as the use of video-conferencing and other technology to expand the reach of popular programs and curriculum to more students

Seek ways to increase teacher autonomy.

## **Part 2**

### **1. BOE Policy-Making and Policy-Interpreting**

What issues do you see the BOE has in its policy-making and policy-interpreting process? How would you improve the current process?

The biggest issues in the BOE's current policy-making and interpreting process are the obtaining representative public input and effective communication of intent. The recent Upcounty Boundary Study and the District Wide Boundary Analysis are cases in point. Both were plagued by inconsistent communication. Furthermore, the means in which BOE obtain public input for various policy changes are increasingly outdated. The BOE needs to seriously consider how to establish a credible, persistent communication in various social media platforms.

### **2. Operating Budget**

What issues do you see in the FY2021 MCPS operating budget? What would you do differently?

Two issues I see with the FY2021 Operating Budget -

1. Our Technology Support and infrastructure portion of the budget has been increasing for the past 3 years, and yet the pace of implementation of new IT technology has been slow. Furthermore, MCPS information system suffered the same shortfall as many large organizations - its information system is a patch work of various software. It will become increasingly expensive to sustain this type of arrangement. Consolidation might be in order.

2. We have a growing fleet of buses to cope with enrollment surges. Each minute of bus operation leads to increased cost. In future boundary studies, we need to look into how we can reduce the need for transportation, thereby reducing operational complexity and cost.

### **3. Curriculum**

Do you believe MCPS curriculum is rigorous enough? What specific improvements would you suggest?

In my opinion, the current MCPS curriculums for CES and magnet programs provide adequate rigor. However, curriculums at local schools can use some strengthening. While curriculum such as Enriched Literacy Curriculum (ELC) and Compacted Math are becoming more and more prevalent in MCPS schools. There are still some top performing students who are not challenged enough. If elected, I will seek to expand the CES and magnet curriculum, and make it more accessible to our top performing students.

Lastly, STEAM curriculums in MCPS are taught in silos. This is in contrast with how real-world works. We need to ensure STEAM curriculums are taught in an interdisciplinary manner.

### **4. School Boundary**

Do you agree with the recent revisions of policy FAA in which one factor, demographic characteristics of student population, was elevated above the other three factors (geography, stability of school assignments over time and facility utilization)? Do you think it is necessary to conduct a countywide school boundary analysis based on this change? If so, what action would you like the BOE to take in the future as a result of the information provided by the boundary analysis?

I do not agree with elevating demographic characteristics above other factors. During the Upcounty Boundary Study, I testified on the importance of geography and the need to NOT trivialize the transportation challenges for families. I do not believe it necessary to conduct a countywide school boundary analysis solely based on the recent changes to Policy FAA. I think that the current study's metrics have major pitfalls. I do not think the Board should take some time to fully digest the data and understand its shortfall. However, I do think it is necessary for the Planning Board, MCDOT, and MCPS to conduct a joint analysis on the impact of housing needs and turn-over of existing housing on school facility utilization and transportation patterns. This analysis should inform the Subdivision Staging Plan and MCPS' own capital planning..

### **5. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

Many MCPS buildings are aging and in need of repair, updating, and in some cases, replacement. How would you set priorities for school construction and renovation?

We should prioritize school construction and renovation based on age of building, conditions, projected utilization, and housing development in the area. We should give special consideration to the age of building, projected utilization, and housing development.

### **6. Gifted and Talented (GT) Program**

BOE has changed how GT programs are administered in recent years. Do you consider these changes having a positive or negative impact? What initiatives will you undertake to ensure that the needs of GT students are met?

The change to the GT program selection process had a negative impact on transparency. A transparent and fair selection process is in the interests of all parties involved.

If elected, I will work to ensure that the selection committee, its member selection, and criteria used are apparent to all parties involved.

Lastly, I will work to ensure that all of our gifted and talented students have access to these GT programs with aptly challenging curriculums.

**7. Opportunity Gap**

What metrics would you use to measure the opportunity gap among students? Do you think BOE/MCPS has initiated and implemented policies and programs successfully to reduce the opportunity gap? What specific ideas or proposals do you have to close the opportunity gap?

Rigorous course offering at each school is one metric I would use measure opportunity gap among students. Measures such as the implementation of regional IB programs and the proliferation of ELC and compacted math are steps in the right direction.

**8. Kirwan Commission**

Do you support the recommendations by the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Kirwan Commission) and why?

I do support the Kirwan Commission recommendation, in particular the recommendation regarding community schools. In general, while the Kirwan Commission recommendations carry a high price tag, investment in education is vital to Maryland and Montgomery County's long term economic competitiveness and vitality..