

## 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:** Pavel Sukhobok

**Town or City of Residency:** Rockville

**Education:** JD/MBA

**Professional Background:** Co-founder of local tutoring business, founder of 501(c)(30) nonprofit Makuyu Education Center

**Political Background:** Ran for MCDCC unsuccessfully.

*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: Pavel Sukhobok

Date: 1/31/2020

### Part 1

1. Why do you want to serve on BOE? To improve the curriculum, fix the grading system, stop redistricting, and provide access to special testing to all.
2. Why do you consider yourself the best candidate for the BOE seat you filed for? I am the only one who actually has a real platform. Lynne has no platform, except to elevate students' voices, whatever that means. Others are one issue candidates. I'll vote against redistricting, but I am planning on doing a lot more than that too.
3. What are your top three priorities if you are elected?
  1. Improve the curriculum
  2. Fix the grading system
  3. Stop redistricting
  4. Bonus: Prove access to special testing for all and stop its abuse.

### Part 2

#### 4. 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 BOE has been the opposite of transparent and accountable. From holding meetings in private, to change the focus of the boundary study, to hiding their real motivations, transparency and accountability need to be brought to the forefront of policy-making and policy-interpreting process. I proud myself on the fact that Makuyu Education Initiative is extraordinarily accountable and transparent, and plan on continuing that practice at BOE.

#### 5. Operating Budget

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

The MCPS operating budget is rather wasteful. Why do virtually all developed (and many developing) countries consistently beat us in the educational rankings? It is because while we have candidates running on issues like snow days, how many days students should get for activism, whether we should solar panels on our roofs, they are focus on....EDUCATION. Imagine that! AT the end of the

day, the most prized asset of MCPS is the great teachers, not turf football fields, iPads, etc. The funding should be spent on personnel more, and almost everything else less.

**6. Curriculum**

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

Where do I start? From eliminating finals and midterms to creating a grading system the discourages finishing strong, the MCPS board has been making one disastrous decision after another. In what world is it a good idea to eliminate midterms and finals if students will have to take them in college? I've personally had students tell me after graduating that they are struggling on those tests because they never got an opportunity to build strong study habits. I can't tell you how many students have told me that after getting a good grade first quarter they are planning on taking it easy the second. What can parents or educators say to that? I'd be doing the same if I was a student. One of the most surprising things since filing (before I even really told anyone), I've had countless students approach me personally and ask to help! They understand! They know the policies are ridiculous! They know that the easiest way is not always the right!

**7. 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?

- A. No, demographics should be one of several factors, equally weighed.
- B. No, since I disagree with prioritizing demographics, I don't think the analysis should be conducted based on this change.
- C. I don't support the boundary analysis in which demographics is prioritized.

**8. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

Many of 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?

Some students have personally told me that pipes are leaking on their faces. Those issues need to be fixed. I'll defer to the experts on what needs to be fixed, renovated, or replaced, but safety should be a paramount concern and anything related to that should be fixed.

**9. 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?

If you are referring to having everyone tested for GT programs instead of having parents and students choose to be tested, I support it. While I sense an ulterior motive, on its face, it is a good policy and will allow all students to be considered, including ones that may not know about it. Of course, the test needs to be changed! They have been administering the same test year in and year out, last time I checked. Since the test has been leaked, the students who have the resources to find it, often times are the ones who get into those programs.

**10. 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?

You know who suffers the most from a poor curriculum and a broken grading system? The poor. The parents who can afford it, send their students to tutoring centers. Those under the poverty threshold don't have that option. That's why it is so important to make sure that the schools are teaching students how to properly read, writing and do math. Now, as far as measuring opportunity gap, testing should be used. As much as it is frowned upon, testing is a very accuracy measure of performance. That's why colleges place such a heavy weight on them. However, funding SHOULD never be tied to test scores. It back fires either way. The schools who don't get good testing scores either lose funding, although the root of the issue is poverty, or get more funding, which may encourage cheating, as we've seen in other school districts.

#### **11. Kirwan Commission**

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

I support the goals and policies in general, but I am not comfortable with the price tag:

1. Pre-K should be expanded to all 3 and 4 year olds of poor families. This is different to expanding it to all 4 year olds.
2. Since teachers are the basis of education, I am very much in favor of raising their salaries. I am not just saying that to pander. At my tutoring center, instructors make \$100 for teaching courses. The Makuyu Education Instructors are paid two or three times how much teachers are paid in similar circumstances. At the end of the day, personnel is everything for education.
3. Training for well paying professions should be a priority, but the funds need to be carefully allocated. I support on the job training with local business who have been carefully vetted and have a history of contributing to the community.

We can do all of those things without paying \$4 billion per year and raising taxes.