

Republican Central Committee Questionnaire for Board of Education Candidates

Mary Kowalski

Are you or any of your immediate family members employees of CCPS or members of CCEA or MSEA?

I am not currently an employee of CCPS, nor are any of my immediate family members. I was a CCPS employee from 1999 until 2016.

Are your children or grandchildren students in CCPS?

I am the parent of a 2015 graduate of CCPS. I myself attended CCPS as a youngster, as did all of my siblings. I do not have grandchildren, at this point in time.

Do you have financial or budgeting background or experience to qualify you to hold a position that controls a \$350 million budget?

I have been fighting against waste and abuse in our county's budget for over 12 years, as an involved and active citizen. Working together, in collaboration with residents, business owners, parents and taxpayers, I have been active in the effort to hold our county commissioners accountable to the hard-working taxpayers. Working together, we were able to stave off the unnecessary waste incinerator project, which would have cost our county taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

In addition, as a Co-chair of Carroll Joint Neighborhood Association, I helped spearhead the fight against the expansion of our county-owned airport. The expansion was commonly known as the "runway to nowhere" by many citizens, and would have cost county taxpayers millions of dollars and served to make county government bigger. As a Republican, I believe it is very important to control the size of government.

I have many years of reviewing both our county and our school system's budget, having regularly attended and participated in Board of Commissioner and Board of Education meetings for many years.

In addition, I have a Master's Degree in Education and 17 years of experience working in Carroll County Public Schools. I understand the critical importance of reigning in waste and abuse, from the perspective of a taxpayer, a parent, and many years as a CCPS employee.

Do you believe it was necessary to close any schools in the CCPS system?

If we consistently and properly maintain our schools in a timely manner, then closing schools should be a very rare occasion. After all, our County Commissioners are now pushing for unprecedented growth with the Freedom Plan and Master Plan, which designate huge swaths of land in the county for significant residential and commercial growth. Closing schools seems to be nothing but an excuse to build new ones, and we have to ask why. Who benefits from this waste? There is now a push to build a new

mega-school in Westminster. This represents very poor planning, considering that we just closed New Windsor Middle, which was only 20 years old. Our elected officials are bilking the taxpayers, in my opinion, and it must stop.

Do you support funding over the MOE? No.

Do you support education vouchers? Yes.

Do you support expanding Career and Tech? I support expanding Career and Tech programs in surplus / available space in our school buildings throughout the county. I do not support the \$60 million dollar "modernization/addition" to the Career and Tech Center. This financial estimate comes from directors at the Board of Education headquarters.

Modernizations, we are told, often cost almost as much as building a new school. However, there has been little real evidence that a complete modernization is needed. We are simply given the vague statement, "Something must be done." Having toured the Career and Tech Center and been aware of the issue of surplus space in other school buildings, I believe it would be folly to support a modernization/addition. If we are laying off school employees and shutting down schools, where is the money coming from to do this?

We are currently spending approximately \$10 million per year in interest (debt service). This is a heavy anchor to our budget, and we must not add to it. However, how do you stop the politicians who spend money like there is no tomorrow, and then complain how broke they are.

While the Board of Education race is "non-partisan", party affiliation is a strong indicator of a particular set of values and ideals. What is your political party affiliation?
Republican.

What is or should be the role of the CCEA in our school system? It's role is to represent the interests of educators and school employees.

Who will you represent if elected to the BOE? I will represent the public interest at large. I will not see my role as representing special interests.

What is the most important thing voters should know about you? I have a "can do" attitude. I believe that every problem can be solved, when one applies their mind and heart to solving it.

How do you plan to work with other elected officials to accomplish what is best for students and taxpayers? I will work with elected officials to increase citizen involvement. At the present time, our Board of Education meetings are much too bureaucratic and are structured in such a way as to discourage citizen involvement.

Citizens must often wait for hours before they can give even a three-minute comment. They are told in advance that their questions will not be answered. They must meet with staff members at another time. I think this is wrong. I will advocate for making the Board of Education much more citizen-centered and less bureaucratic and “government-centered.” I will encourage other elected officials to move in this direction, as well.