

2024 MCPS Board of Education Candidate Snapshot

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This Spring, we MCEA educators can take a step towards electing three (3) MCPS Board of Education (BoE) members who reflect our values. We need members on the Board of Education who will listen to us, hold MCPS administrators accountable, and work with the County Council to make sure that we have the resources we need to provide the first-class education that our students deserve. Board members must also be responsible for improving our working conditions, so that MCPS can attract and retain quality educators.

There are three (3) Board of Education seats up for election: At-Large, District 2, and District 4 .

1. All three (3) seats are elected at-large.
2. Everyone in the county can vote for one (1) candidate for each seat.
3. BoE positions are non-partisan, so all candidates will be listed on both Republican and Democratic ballots.
4. The two (2) top vote-getters in each race will automatically be on the ballot for the General Election in November.
5. This year, all three (3) seats are highly contested, with three (3) or more candidates running for election.
6. Candidates' views have real differences, so it will be important to make careful study of their experience and positions on public education.

MCEA Endorsement Process

MCEA's endorsement process is highly democratic. Any member can participate in the candidate interviews. At each stage of the endorsement process, a 58% supermajority is required to move a candidate forward for MCEA's endorsement.

Step One: The MCEA PALS (Political and Legislative Support) Committee creates and shares a questionnaire for all candidates. Those who submit a complete questionnaire by the deadline are invited to participate in candidate interviews.

Step Two: This year's candidate interviews are scheduled for Saturday, March 3rd. MCEA members who participate in the interviews will end the day by recommending which candidates, if any, MCEA should move forward to the PALS Committee for endorsement. If you would like to be a part of the interview team, sign up here.

Step Three: The PALS Committee takes the interview team's recommendations under advisement and makes their own recommendations for endorsement to the MCEA Board of Directors.

Step Four: The MCEA Board of Directors will take the PAL's Committee's recommended endorsement under advisement and make their own recommendations to MCEA's Representative Assembly (RA).

Step Five: The RA debates the Board's motions to endorse (or not) candidates for each of the three seats. The RA is the final decision maker on the MCEA endorsements.

Voters in our county historically have trusted our recommendations, so our collective action to reach out to inform them is critical. You have a role to play. Learn how you can get involved in educating voters at: <https://www.mceanea.org/appleballotvolunteers/>

What follows is an overview of the candidates based on information available online and self-reported in their questionnaires.

At-Large Candidates



Lynne Harris - Incumbent

- Elected to her first term on the MCPS BoE in 2020.
- Taught at Thomas Edison High School of Technology from 2016 through 2020.
- Served in numerous volunteer leadership roles in local PTA and with the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA).
- Past work experience includes serving as legislative director to Councilmember Tom Hucker and as a public health nurse in clinical settings.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election



Sharif Hidayat

- Sharif Hidayat served for 20 years as a Montgomery County police officer, working with HOAs, civic associations and non-profits.
- He is an MCPS parent and active on the PTA.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election



Melissa Kim

- Senior advisor at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Past work experience includes serving as a Charter School administrator, as a deputy chancellor, and as a principal in the District of Columbia Public Schools.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election

At-Large Candidates continued on next page

At-Large Candidates

No photo available

Jonathon Long

- Parent of a student who receives special education services.
- Earned an MBA, with work experience in technology solutions for data entry and systems process improvement.
- Obtained early career experience serving at a children's shelter.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election



Fitzgerald Mofor

- Graduate of MCPS and Washington University School of Law
- Campaign experience in the Maryland General Assembly.
- Served as a paraeducator in Howard County.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election



Rita Montoya

- MCPS parent and a current PTA president.
- Served as a small business/nonprofit advisor, a lawyer and former juvenile public defender

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election

District 2 Candidates



Brenda M. Diaz

- Former MCPS teacher.
- Testified against COVID-19 vaccination in schools at the MCPS Board of Education.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election



Ricky Fai Mui

- Veteran with a 12-year career in the U.S. Navy.
- Worked as a management consultant with the Accenture consulting firm serving federal government clients.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election



Rebecca Smondrowski - Incumbent

- Elected to her third, four-year term on MCPS Board of Education November 3, 2020.
- Previously worked as a legislative aide for Maryland State Senator Roger Manno.
- Volunteer experience includes various leadership roles in the Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations (MCCPTA) Board of Directors
- Serves as a member of various committees of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education's (MABE)

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election

District 2 Candidates continued on next page

District 2 Candidates



Aby Thioye

- Bachelor and Master of Science from the University of Maryland
- Currently works in clinical research at the National Institute of Health
- Mother of five MCPS students.

Did not submit a questionnaire by the deadline for consideration of MCEA's endorsement



Natalie Zimmerman

- Second grade teacher at Wheaton Woods Elementary School.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election

District 4 Candidates



Shebra Evans - Incumbent

- Elected to a second four-year term on November 3, 2020.
- Held numerous volunteer leadership roles with the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA)
- Previously, worked as a financial analyst in the cable and energy industry.
- BA in Economics and Finance from Tennessee State University.
- Mother of two children. One is an MCPS student, and the other is an MCPS graduate.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election



Bethany Mandel

- Columnist and political and cultural commentator who writes for *Deseret News* and *Ricochet*, known for public criticism of COVID-19 vaccination and mask policies in schools.
- Co-wrote *Stolen Youth: How Radicals Are Erasing Innocence and Indoctrinating a Generation* with Karol Markowicz.
- Homeschools her six children and is currently involved in a lawsuit against the Montgomery County BoE.

Not seeking MCEA's endorsement



Laura Stewart

- Community, local and state PTA leader for over a decade.
- Earned a paralegal degree from Prince George's Community College.
- Worked for 10 years in the telecommunications industry.
- Mother of two MCPS graduates.

Seeking MCEA's endorsement in this election

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