



Individual Information

Name/District Jen Mallo / 4

Campaign Address/Phone/Email

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Social Media Accounts

Facebook: @jenmallo4boe
Twitter: @Jen_Mallo

Education History

MA: East Asian Studies, George Washington University
BA: Economics, East Asian Studies, Wittenberg University

Languages Spoken/Other Skills

English, Chinese

Relevant Experience

Member, Board of Education 2018-present
Board of Education Policy Committee Chairperson, Legal Services Administration of Maryland Association of Boards of Education, HCPSS rep
University of Maryland School of Medicine Medical Scientist Training Program Administration
Community Advisory Committee Chairperson (2 years), Vice Chairperson (2 years), member (6+years)
PTA: President, Secretary, Cultural Arts Chair, Reading Room Coordinator, Science Fair Coordinator, grant writer, and more
Project Manager: Multiple Artist in Residences at Multiple Schools
President and administrator for East Columbia Preschool

List who has been compensated to provide services to your campaign. List your campaign managers. Note current cash on hand. Note your donations received and spent, although you need not include figures that are already filed on campaign finance reports.

This information is available via my campaign finance reports.

List organizations/groups/committees (both education-related and not) of which you are an official member.

CAC, PTAC, PTA member of SES, HCMS, WLHS and multiple other PTAs
Howard County League of Women Voters
NAACP, Howard County Chapter
HCCA
PFLAG

Community Interest / Position Questions

1. Why are you running? Explain why you are qualified to hold this position. Please include your experiences doing volunteer or non-profit work, in Howard County and elsewhere. (Character limit please 1200)

I am running to be re-elected to the Board of Education (BOE) because I believe my experience, my knowledge, values, and principles are needed on the Board. I actively champion progressive values, prioritizing the needs of the most vulnerable students, and do the time-consuming hard work that is necessary to be a successful Board member.

I have been on the BOE for 16 months and serve as the Policy Committee Chair for the BOE. I serve as the BOE's representative to the Legal Services Administration of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education.

Leading up to my time on the BOE, I was the Chairperson for the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), the liaison between the BOE and the community at large. I served for two years as Vice Chairperson before my two terms as Chairperson for the CAC. I am the only Board member and candidate who has served on multiple policy advisory committees, which review and revise the school system's policies. I have been a PTA President, PTA Secretary, Coordinator for the Carson Reading Room at Swansfield Elementary School, Science Fair Coordinator, grants writer and project manager, literacy project lead, Cultural Arts Coordinator, and parent volunteer for individual school-based efforts for robotics, orchestra, and soccer while my own children attended Swansfield Elementary, Harpers Choice Middle and Wilde Lake High Schools.

Prior to serving in these 20 years' worth of public education roles, I was the President and chief administrator for East Columbia Preschool, a cooperative preschool in Columbia, MD. Also, during this time I became involved in the Howard County Public School System through the Infants and Toddlers program when one of my children began receiving special education services.

Within the community, I am the coordinator for Blessings in a Backpack for Swansfield Elementary School. This volunteer position coordinates the distribution of weekend food packs for over 50+ students during the school year. I have been in this role since 2018 and have nearly doubled the size of the program since taking it over. During the time of the coronavirus pandemic, I have sought additional grant funds to serve upwards of 250 students per weekend to expand to meet the needs of the community.

Additionally, I am currently leading a group of volunteers who are making facemasks for healthcare workers (particularly serving nursing homes with our initial deliveries of masks) as personal protective equipment. This new grassroots effort was initiated by me at the request of a local infectious diseases doctor who has developed healthcare protocols adopted by the CDC to reduce the spread and risk of infections in nursing homes.

2. Do you believe the Board of Education race should remain non-partisan on the ballot? If so, how is your campaign remaining non-partisan? (Character limit 1200)

I believe that the Board of Education should remain non-partisan on the ballot so that all voters, regardless of party affiliation, are able to vote in the primary.

My campaign has remained non-partisan by actively engaging community members regardless of their political affiliation. I have invited individuals of all political affiliations to participate in my events. In the previous campaign, I took every opportunity offered to me by both major political parties to speak with and interact with their members and will continue to do the same when those opportunities are provided to me.

I have strong working relationships with local elected officials from both political parties. I also remain non-partisan by not engaging in partisan attacks on local elected officials with whom I will need good working relationships. I believe that you cannot be an effective Board member if you consistently criticize and attack our local elected officials on social media or other public platforms.

There are some in our community that believe I am partisan since I have strong support for my re-election bid by most local Democratic elected officials. It accurate to say that we share many of the same values, principles, and priorities with respect to public education and Howard County Public Schools. I don't believe some of the initiatives suggested by my opponents such as charter schools or allowing staff to be armed are consistent with Howard County values, but my opposition to these ideas is not based on partisan affiliation.

3. Do you believe the Superintendent's requested budget is too high, too low or just right? If too low, how much should it be, and what other county budget items should be cut to fund it? If too high what should be cut from the request? (Character limit 1200)

I believe the Superintendent's requested budget to be just right. The Superintendent is responsible for asking for what he believes the school system needs. He has identified critical needs and has asked for that level of funding. The BOE, County Executive, and County Council have different responsibilities when it comes to the evaluation of the budget – and these should not be confused with the obligation of the Superintendent to put forward an accurate assessment of the school system's needs.

4. Over time, the County Council and Board of Education have often disagreed on where responsibility lies regarding addressing overcapacity. There are varying beliefs regarding restricting development and redistricting as tools. How do you suggest the County Council and Board of Education work together to address overcapacity issues? (Character limit 1500)

The County Council (CC) needs to understand what the school system's needs are and what the existing infrastructure can support. It is incumbent on the BOE to provide them this information so that the CC can do its job efficiently and effectively. The BOE should not be involved in development decisions beyond taking positions on legislation which will have a direct impact on schools. As a Board member, I made it clear to the CC on my support for legislation to increase the period of time areas are closed to development when there is insufficient school capacity, as well as the need for increased funding for investment in new and renovated school facilities.

At the same time, the BOE has the responsibility to use its taxpayer funded capital investment efficiently and effectively. It must use school assignment (redistricting) to balance capacity across schools throughout the county. As painful as it is, we cannot have numerous schools below 90% capacity and ask for new state and local funding. It is incumbent upon the CC and County Executive (CE) to hold the BOE accountable for balancing capacity appropriately and for allocating capital funding when new capacity is needed. The BOE should not be in the position of arbitrarily trying to keep areas 'closed' to development by forcing students to attend over-crowded schools.

Working together in this case should really be about frank discussions on school system needs and county revenue generation abilities. We need to allow each elected body to do its own job with the full faith and confidence that the information needed will be provided by the other party.

5. How do you define Equity? Suggest how the HCPSS can better ensure equity. Give specific examples, including how to accomplish those goals in the budget. (Character limit 1500)

Equity is a lens through which we should view education to determine if students' needs, access, and opportunities are being adequately provided for or met. The lens should be used to guide our decision making, our priorities, and our analysis.

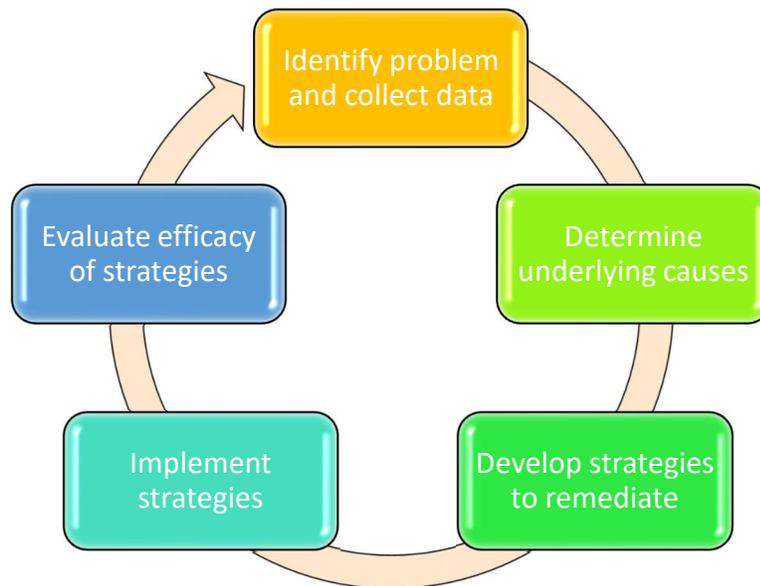
Within that framework, we know that as of today, it can specifically mean:

- making sure that students have access to the resources and supports they need for academic success
- making sure that students who are vulnerable have protections in place
- making sure that students who are hungry are fed because without that, they are unlikely to learn
- making sure that students who need IEPs and 504s be able to get them and then meeting those students with supports where they need it once the IEP or 504 accommodations are in place

- making sure that students who need academic acceleration through gifted and talented programs receive services
- making sure that students who are not college bound have opportunities to develop skills and knowledge that can make them successful adults in their community.

Equity is about ensuring that we do not have a one-size-fits-all or even a one-size-fits most approach to education.

If we know we have a problem, we need to identify specific steps to address the problem, implement the steps, and then reevaluate the steps taken. It is a cycle for improvement:



For example, we were able to determine that we have a problem with disproportionate discipline for students who are Black, Hispanic, male or receive special education services. The first step was to determine the validity and severity of the problem. The second step is for the school system to begin to understand the underlying reasons for the disproportionate discipline. Next, we develop a plan with concrete steps to address the underlying causes, to develop strategies to prevent the problems, and to continue to track the data. We implement the strategies to decrease disproportionate discipline and then evaluate our processes and results. This then takes us back to the beginning of the cycle.

We, as a school system, need to be open to criticism that can then lead us to identifying unknown problems.

The BOE needs to direct the Superintendent to align the budget with our equity priorities. For example, as we add more students who are Black or Latinx, then we need to add more Black Student Achievement Liaisons and Hispanic Achievement Liaisons. As our enrollment

grows and we add more students who are below grade level in reading and math, then we need to correspondingly invest more in reading specialists, literacy coaches, and math coaches. As we find our special education students' needs and numbers growing, we need to correspondingly add qualified special education staff. The school system already has formulas for differentiated staffing and this type of algorithm should also be used to develop staffing models for BSAP, HSAP, Reading Specialists, Literacy Coaches (RSTs) and Math Coaches (MSTs or MISTs).

Additionally, we need to continue to fund and expand the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. With a staff of 4 that conducts training for cultural proficiency, restorative justice, equity assurance, and more at 76 schools and for over 8,000 employees—it appears to be insufficiently staffed. If we want to pay equity more than lip service, then it must be an investment in personnel and training in our immediate future budgets.

6. What do you believe Board of Education Members can do to help students achieve their fullest potential at all levels? Please include in your answer what you believe should be done to close any achievement gaps, be specific. (Character limit 1500)

As BOE members, we can help student achieve their fullest potential by

- Having a robust social emotional learning curriculum for all grade levels to foster positive relationships among children, reduce bullying, and build high functioning collaborative and cooperative classroom communities
- Fully supporting and building a culture of restorative justice
- Examining our course offerings to ensure that students have appropriate and productive choices to be either career or college ready upon graduation
- Examining our Career and Technical Education offerings to ensure that once a student enters a program that they have the access and opportunity to complete it
- Having educators set high expectations for student achievement and effort for all students
- Raising awareness of implicit bias by educators and administrators and taking active steps to reduce the effects of implicit bias
- Increase the number of staff working in the following areas:
 - Special education
 - BSAP, HSAP, and International Liaisons
 - Reading specialists
 - Differentiated staff
 - Literacy coaches (RSTs)
 - Math coaches (MSTs and MISTs)
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion personnel
 - Mental health personnel
- Developing policies that are both good and effective
- Aligning our budget with our priorities and our belief in equitable educational opportunities.

7. What are three things you feel should be Board priorities in the next one to three years?
(Character limit 1500)

Given that schools are closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, our next three years will need to be focused on the long-term impact from this pandemic. For example, I already know the following concerns will be critical to address:

1. Students already experience a summer slide, where students fall backward in learning from where they were at the end of the school year. Typically, they lose between one and two months of progress after a 10-week break. With the coronavirus pandemic, our students are likely to have an even greater learning deficit. We will need to address this aggressively. Whether it is changing the length of the school year or having summer school or developing new models of instruction—it will be incumbent on the board to be flexible and open to innovation to prevent an insurmountable deficit in student learning.
2. With the economic downturn that is accompanying the pandemic, it is likely that we will experience catastrophic economic impacts as a county and by extension, with the school system. We will need to adjust economic expectations and budgets to deal with the new reality of less available revenue. We will need to better align our revenue with our priorities.
3. Today, we need an immediate investment in technology and professional development for distance learning. We need to develop alternative delivery models that are flexible and responsive. It must be one that combines technology and print materials. The school system must invest in sufficient technology for any student and staff member needing it. There are already warnings that the coronavirus could see a resurgence in the Fall of 2020. We need take steps now that allow us to develop an infrastructure that can support us in future crises. This will continue to be a priority over the next couple of years.

8. Choose a 2020 local Howard County State Bill and evaluate it. (Character limit 1200)

Ho-Co 2-20/HB826

This bill stipulates that advertisements of homes in Howard County may not include the school assignment. There are exemptions for written communications. The merits of this bill are clear when we look at the 2019 redistricting effort and see that many residents were unaware that their home purchases did not guarantee them attendance at specific schools. While just a portion of the communication between buyers and sellers, advertising is often the first and most memorable component of real estate home sales. This bill takes a step towards communicating with buyers the truth of the situation that school assignment is not guaranteed to attend a specific school regardless of how much you paid for your house. I believe this bill effectively balanced freedom of speech protections with truth in advertising requirements and recommended its support.

9. How would you as a Board Member, oversee, review and instruct the Superintendent? Give a specific example of each, where the Board of Education and Superintendent have fallen short, and done well. (Character limit 1500)

As a Board Member, it is critical that you work as part of a team that oversees, reviews, and instructs the Superintendent. Every decision the Board makes must be done with the approval of a majority of members. To act in isolation is counterproductive to effective governance. As such, I communicate regularly with fellow Board members to build consensus and to work collaboratively. I will continue to do so if re-elected.

The Board and the Superintendent fell short when the past Boards did not direct the Superintendent to fully fund healthcare costs to the full amount of the actuarial projected healthcare claims. This resulted in the accumulation of a nearly \$50M health and dental fund deficit within two years. This decision and the associated deficit still dramatically impacts the ability of the BOE to direct investment in areas that require focus.

The Board of Education and the Superintendent have done well together when we this year directed the Superintendent to develop a plan to pay down the healthcare deficit. Over the course of many months, the Superintendent developed a plan, the Board agreed to it, and then directed the administration to work with the County Executive to ensure that both parties could support it. Through this second set of instructions, the County Executive counter-offered a revised plan, which was then adopted. This type of collaboration with the Superintendent, the BOE, and the County Executive to address a serious financial problem is what I believe the citizens of Howard County expect.

10. With regard to school redistricting, what do you believe are the three top priorities, in order, that should be considered as reasons to redistrict, or be goals of redistricting? How would you suggest those goals be met? What do you believe was done right and done wrong in the most recent redistricting? (Character limit 1500)

Absent action by the Board, the next school year would have over 21,000 students in schools above 110% capacity – and over 10,000 students in schools above 120% capacity. It affected elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the county. At the same time, the under-utilization of some of our schools threatened our ability to secure state school construction funding. The Board voted 7-0 to begin the redistricting process in 2019. None of us wanted to redistrict, all of us knew it needed to be done.

The process and goals of redistricting are outlined in our Policy 6010. The policy outlines three major goals to be balanced:

- Maintain utilization of schools within the 90%-110% target utilization range.
- Keep neighborhoods together with strong feeds from one school to another.
- Consider student demographics and avoid the concentration of poverty (along with multiple other factors) at individual schools.

The policy included 14 separate factors within those three areas. I fully support considering all 14 factors and attempting with each and every move to optimize for as many of the 14 factors as possible. Balance is the key as the 14 separate factors can be in direct conflict with each other. For example, solving only for capacity utilization yields unacceptably splintered communities with bus rides of over an hour each way for some students.

I worked collaboratively with fellow Board members to build consensus for change. In every polygon assignment I weighed each of the 14 factors and asked, "Does this improve the existing situation". It is in this spirit that I embraced the vision of Jim Rouse--one of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the end, by balancing student enrollment and demographics, we are a better steward of the taxpayer dollars and resources.

The resulting plan was a compromise – I doubt that any Board member, myself included, is entirely satisfied with the new attendance areas. I voted in the majority of the 5-2 vote as I believe doing nothing (what a 'no' vote would have accomplished) was unconscionable, particularly for those students at overcapacity schools. Ultimately, we made hard decisions that we believed would provide some necessary relief and sympathize deeply with those children who will have a hard time with the changes.

11. Do you believe the HCPSS is serving the needs of the Special Education community? If not, what needs to be changed? Do you believe there is enough funding for Special Education in the current HCPSS budget? Why? (Character limit 1200)

HCPSS needs to continue to build capacity to serve the Special Education Community. As the student population who receive special education services grows, so too does our need for qualified staff. As the needs of the students receiving special education change and become more complex and robust, so too does our need to hire additional highly trained, qualified staff. The current budget is insufficient. This is demonstrated by overspending in out-of-county placements budget category for special needs students. If we were sufficiently staffed and able to meet the needs of the majority these students in-house, then I would believe we have budgeted enough funding. The fact that the Superintendent advocated for the additional hiring of more than 200 special education personnel indicates that the current administration believes we need to do more. I believe them and our parents in the community who have indicated the level of increased need.

12. In what areas of public education do you refuse to compromise, due to strong beliefs? How would you make changes in these areas? Give examples of how you collaborated and compromised with colleagues who disagreed with you. (Character limit 1200)

I am unwilling to compromise on my belief that every child deserves access to a quality education.

I will help develop policies and procedures that contribute to all children receiving a quality education. Specifically, I will work towards:

- Policies and practices that overcome educator and administrator bias
- Reductions of disproportionate suspensions and discipline for Black, Male, and Special Education Students
- Reduce the achievement gap, not by pushing the ceiling down, but by bringing up the floor. This must include:
 - Additional Achievement Liaisons (BSAP, HSAP, International)
 - Increased diversified hiring and retention
 - Anti-bias training
- Support and fund the acquisition of educational technology so that when we are faced with a national emergency (like we are seeing currently with the coronavirus pandemic), we can have viable distance learning options.
- Continue to support our provision of food and mental health services in an emergency, like we are experiencing now.

During redistricting, I regularly met with BOE members to incorporate feedback from them and the community. The collaboration and compromise that I lead with Dr. Wu is ultimately what allowed for boundary areas to be adjusted, students moved, and resources to be more efficiently, effectively, and equitably used. Absent this collaboration, the school board would have failed in meeting its responsibilities.

13. Give examples in your personal or professional life that demonstrate your willingness to hold people accountable and include transparency for the community. (Character limit 1200)

My role on the Board of Education is largely an exercise in accountability. For every report, budget, and policy that are presented to us, I use my ability to ask questions, to research, and to complete analysis to make informed decisions. I ask questions of the administration as a form of accountability.

I believe that as a Board member, I must also hold myself accountable to the position. My personal accountability is that I commit time to the job to do the research, to do analysis, to take optional meetings, to do professional development on personal time, to continue to learn about education and specific issues within Howard County. I believe this is also a commitment to transparency as I try to share with my colleagues and the community the work I have done.

14. For incumbents, what do you feel is your legacy you have left so far on the HCPSS? For other candidates, what do you want your legacy to be and why are you the best choice to create it? (Character limit 1200)

I believe my legacy is the commitment to make tough decisions for the betterment of all students and to have based those decisions on research, knowledge, and thoughtful deliberation. The legacy is also one of advocacy for equity in education and educational opportunities.

While on the BOE, I was proud to lead the effort to reach a compromise solution that successfully implemented a school boundary adjustment that will benefit all Howard County students beginning in the 2020-2021 school year. Like all public policy compromises the outcome did not give any constituency exactly what it wanted. However, I am proud that the final approved plan benefits all students by providing relief to many of the 21,000 students who were slated to be at schools that would have been above 110% capacity next year and better using resources and educators to provide more educational equity and opportunities.