



The Public Schools Our Kids Deserve

I'm proud of our public schools in Anne Arundel County. My wife, Lauren, teaches fourth grade at Crofton Woods Elementary, our kids, Isabela and Morgan, get a great education in our local public schools, and I received a great education from AACPS - graduating from Arundel High School.

But as good as our schools are, they could be better - and our kids deserve no less.

Specifically, our kids deserve smaller class sizes, and they deserve the best educators - meaning we should do more to attract and retain high-quality teachers to Anne Arundel County.

But class sizes are not shrinking - they're growing, and here's why.

For too long, Anne Arundel County's growth has outpaced its infrastructure. Our current **Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO)**—intended to manage development—contains loopholes like the "Adjacency Clause" that allow developers to build even when local schools are at or over capacity.

This has led to classroom overcrowding and will lead to "micro-redistricting," where student boundaries are shifted every few years to mask overcrowding, disrupting families and communities.

And while we've made real progress on raising starting salaries to attract more new educators to Anne Arundel County public schools, we also need to do more to retain highly effective veteran teachers.

Solutions To Take AACPS From Good to Great

1. Reduce Class Sizes and Stop Overcrowding Schools

We can't just build a ton of new housing near crowded schools and figure things out after the fact. The impact of that approach is overcrowded schools and larger class sizes, which isn't fair to kids. We should build where public schools have the space to take on new students - or work with developers to build additional capacity.

- **Repeal the Adjacency Clause:** End the practice of allowing development near overcrowded schools simply because a neighboring school has space. We must stop "passing the buck" to the school system through constant redistricting.
- **Avoid "Split Articulation":** Students who attend the same elementary school should ideally go through to middle and high school together. "Split articulation" - where elementary school students are split between two different middle schools is mostly a failure of planning - and we can do better.

2. Retaining and Rewarding Veteran Educators

Every kid deserves a good teacher - and a good teacher makes all the difference. We've raised our salaries for new teachers from last in the state to fourth highest. That's great, and it's allowed us to fix an urgent teacher shortage. But we haven't raised salaries for veteran educators at the same rate, and that means many of the best teachers we have are leaving the profession.

- **Fix the "Step System":** Our teacher pay is highly competitive for starting teachers, but significantly less so for veteran teachers. We need to adjust the salary scale to ensure that a 20-year veteran of AACPS is compensated at a rate that reflects their expertise.
- **More Collaborative Time for Teachers:** Two things impact whether teachers stay on the job - their pay, and their working conditions. One thing I hear constantly is that teachers don't have enough planning time during the workday, even though that's a goal of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. I'll make this a priority when working with the Board of Education and funding our schools.

3. More Support Staff and Services for Students

Research is clear: kids do better in schools when they feel healthy, safe, and supported. And we know that the presence of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers makes schools safer and improves academic outcomes. We also know that the Community Schools model - providing health and social services in the school building - improves achievement. We should:

- **Fund More Special Education and Counseling Positions:** This means lower caseloads for special educators, social workers, and counselors. We cannot meet the requirements of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) if our staff are stretched too thin. The Board of Education is already moving in the right direction on this issue.
- **Provide Teacher Assistants (TAs) and Technical Support Assistants (TSAs) a Living Wage:** We must fill the vacancies in TAs, TSAs, and other Education Support Professionals. The only way to do this is to treat them as real professions and pay them a competitive salary. Filling these vacancies will have a huge impact on classroom instruction by ensuring that our teachers and students have the support they need.
- **Solve Crossing Guard Shortage:** Address the staffing crisis for crossing guards raising hourly wages. Currently, the county pays "time and a half" to police officers to cover crossing guard roles—it is more efficient and cost-effective to raise the base salary for the role.
- **Community School Expansion:** Lobby the state for increased funding to expand the "Community School" model, which integrates health and social services directly into the school building to support high-needs areas. Community Schools are highly effective and I've only heard positive feedback from families whose schools have adopted the Community School model. Let's grow it.

4. Supporting our Libraries and Higher Ed

Learning doesn't stop when you leave the school building, or when you graduate 12th grade. We should make sure kids - and adults! - have plenty of options for lifelong learning.

- **Protect Libraries:** Maintain our world-class library system by supporting unionized librarians and staff.
- **Community College Support:** Increase pay for adjunct and faculty unions at AACC to ensure our local path to higher education remains strong and well-staffed, and continue and expand access for high school students who want to take classes at community college. Our world-class community college is one of our county's best assets!