

1. Would you consider allowing schools to be developed on smaller parcels of land than they have been traditionally?

Absolutely. I've sat in many meetings with the MCPS departments of Long-Range Planning/Capital Planning and Facilities Management over the past 10 years. I've often been puzzled by MCPS' rigid adherence to a preconception about what each type of school (ES, MS, HS) has to be – site size, floor plan, amenities. Given the land-use and school capacity challenges of MoCo, the last thing we need is inflexibility.

Among the things I and others have frequently mentioned – the need to preserve more green space in our designs, and build vertically especially in the landlocked older areas of the county – which not coincidentally are seeing some of the biggest capacity pressures on schools because of neighborhood turnover and high-density residential along transit corridors. Instead of paving over acreage for parking lots, taking up space useable for other purposes MCPS values in school sites, use designs that put parking underground. Build an elementary school that's more than two stories tall to reduce the footprint. Look at truly urban school designs, taking advantage of local parks (or even nearby schools – sharing facilities) for physical education and other outdoor activities.

We do things like that now out of necessity – this is my fourth year teaching at Edison – immediately adjacent to Wheaton HS. Because of the ongoing construction, until this school year Wheaton was without any outdoor space- -for PE, for sports, for practices – and so I watched daily as students and athletes walked three blocks to share the outdoor space of Weller Road ES and Loiderman MS. I'm sure the students grumbled, but it worked out.

Even if MCPS looks to reclaim prior school properties and closed/repurposed schools, those rebuilds can use innovative design to take up less space, and allow for collocation of related community services and other county amenities. Strategically plan to get far more public good out of any possible school site.

2. Would you consider adjusting the current school district boundaries? If so why or why not.

MCPS hasn't conducted a comprehensive county-wide boundary analysis in decades. Instead, as we have transformed into a wholly different school system we've played whack-a-mole to deal with our capacity and facilities challenges. Through my work with MCCPTA, for years, we've been urging MCPS to look at non-CIP solutions to capacity challenges – like shifting boundaries, looking at adjacent schools that cross cluster boundaries, and strategically placing programs.

You wouldn't run a business that way – creating a business plan in 1992 and NEVER looking at it again as your customer base transformed and tripled in size. You would not ignore growth happening in places you never predicted, or pressures on your infrastructure that you didn't expect.

I strongly support the ongoing boundary analysis. Nothing but good can come from starting future decisionmaking on a foundation of comprehensive, objective, expert-derived data. One disappointment – the fact that WXY will not make any recommendations as part of their work. They are the experts, failing to ask them for recommendations at the end of a comprehensive analysis is a huge missed opportunity. Those who raised concerns about the prospect of recommendations as one deliverable from WXY seemed to forget that one thing you can do with recommendations is ignore them, but nothing bad can come from HAVING them.

I also believe that MCPS needs to operationalize a routine process of analyzing our boundaries. Never again get into our current defensive crouch where the mere mention of boundaries causes so much anxiety and fear that substantive, pragmatic conversations among some have become almost impossible. I think too that we have a process already in place that could serve that purpose. MoCo planning is currently charged with quadrennially reviewing school capacity, county growth and student generation as part of the Subdivision Staging Policy review. If we expanded the scope of work of that quadrennial review, with the MCPS Departments of Capital Planning and Facilities Management substantively partnering with the Planning Department, sharing and collecting data, using the same tools and technology, and constructively consulting, we would be regularly analyzing boundaries, capacity pressures, and the adequacy of our facilities. Committing to using the data resulting from that work every four years to see how, as a school system, we're doing and being willing to make small changes along the way instead of waiting until big and (according to some) disruptive changes are required, seems like common sense to me.