



2026 Allegany County Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

CANDIDATE : Steven Jay Moon

OFFICE SOUGHT : Allegany County Board of Education Member

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*I confirm that the responses provided here are my official positions in seeking local office and I understand that **Allegany County Education Association** reserves the right to share my responses with members and interested parties.*

CANDIDATE SIGNATURE: Steven Moon

DATE SUBMITTED: 07/23/2026

Candidates: *To be considered for a recommendation, you must indicate your response to each of the questions. You may use more space than is provided to elaborate on your answers and provide clarification, explanation, and other context, but please be certain to clearly indicate the questions(s) to which you refer. Please return your completed and signed questionnaire to **Allegany County Education Association**.*

Education Funding and Local Budgets:

1. What are your top three budget priorities for the public school system?

- Maintain current schools, programs, and employees
 - Enact policies & set budget priorities that align with MD Blueprint
- Teacher and staff compensation and retention
 - Competitive pay and benefits to recruit and retain quality educators and ESPs.
- Career readiness and technology
 - Investments in career/technical pathways, apprenticeships, and responsible classroom technology that prepares students for local labor needs while limiting distraction.

2. How you would utilize your budget authority to address shortfalls facing our schools if the state or federal government reduces their commitment(s)?

Start with the loss of funding to understand what school system service is being impacted. Think deeper about the consequences to the broader community if that service were to stop. Work with Superintendent and other Board Members to identify nonessential discretionary spending. In general, I would prioritize core instructional and student-support services, freeze discretionary spending, and seek reallocation toward interventions that directly impact graduation and attendance.

I would support keeping as many jobs for ACPS employees, especially teachers. Any loss of employment is very serious and is not to be taken lightly. While I appreciate the work that administration does, I often see the most redundancy in the layers of administration, rather than in the classroom.

School closures/consolidation may become necessary, depending on enrollment. This is nothing new to this area, and has a direct impact on the community. I attended Beall for a year, only to go to Mountain Ridge for the rest of high school. This directly affected my dad, who was the band director at Westmar High. My dad was reassigned to be an orchestra teacher that traveled to many schools. It was certainly a shift in day-to-day responsibility, but most importantly, he stayed employed.

If funding resulted in a loss of critical services or programming that could not be made up by the Board of Education, I would advocate for additional funding from the County Commissioners to cover those shortfalls. Given the county's history of Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funding, I am not optimistic that they would come to the table, but the county must understand that education is one of the most critical responsibilities of local government with the highest impact on our community and its future.

3. In many schools, educators are dealing with high class sizes and caseloads. How will you help address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention in order to ensure we can increase staffing to reduce class sizes and caseloads?

The Blueprint mandate for \$60,000 minimum teacher pay is a great start to educator recruitment. The \$10,000 bonus for NSB Certified teachers is a great mechanism for retention with the beneficial side-effect of professional development.

For determining appropriate allocation of instructors-per-classroom, I'd rely on forecasting based on population data to track how many students are expected per class, while also taking into consideration the number of IEP students. This information would drive the decisions around allocation of Teachers and Instructional Aids. I would aim to keep our average class sizes in-line with other counties across the state.

Getting the teacher/student ratio right for each school may require educators to switch or float between schools. A teacher's duties are not always tied to just to a single subject, so their overall role in the school would be considered prior to any shuffling.

I am also in favor of fiscally-responsible buyout programs that provide incentive for tenured employees to retire in order to hire on newer educators. Those earlier-in-their-career teachers are likely at a lower salary, which may leave room to hire a greater number of educators to back fill.

For retention of employees in general, we need to ensure there are opportunities for employees to voice concerns to the administration without fear of retribution. Research by the NIH shows that providing employee feedback channels decreases turnover and strengthens both recruitment and retention (Spencer). Much of that feedback can come through the union, but there should be direct involvement with the admin of each school to identify where teachers aren't getting enough support.

4. Do you commit to honoring the role of your elected body in upholding the policy and funding mandates associated with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Additional Comments:

5. Please discuss your philosophy related to charter schools. Do you believe they should be added in our county public school structure?

I can see the benefit of creating programs that focus on a smaller set of subjects, or different approach education than a traditional public school. While some students thrive in a traditional environment that provides broad education of many topics, other students benefit from a more focused curriculum.

If the mission of a charter school is to provide focused training on in-demand careers, it would be in line with the Career Preparedness pillar (Pillar 3) of MD Blueprint. However, our

county has the CCTE, which already covers much of that focused education in specific careers. Rather than creating a charter school, I would prefer to see growth of the CCTE.

If the mission of a charter school is to provide students access to a different set of educational methods (Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, etc.) or environments (Forest, Maker-space, etc.), I can also see benefits to that. Without experimenting on education methods, we risk becoming stale and ineffective. Innovation comes with experimentation.

For Allegany County, I'm not convinced that the addition of public charter schools could be implemented without negatively affecting the resources required for maintaining the existing schools.

If the mission of a charter school is to provide administrative flexibility and budget relief (e.g. for keeping a school location that would otherwise close) then I would be more likely to support it. Any charter school of this type would need to be implemented as a Community School in support of MD Blueprint Pillar 4. If a charter is proposed, it should demonstrate clear benefits, equitable access, and accountability.

As a supporter of separation of church and state, I see no place for publicly funded charter schools based on religious ideologies.

Public Funding for Private Schools

6. Do you support or oppose allocating public funding to non-public school students through voucher programs?

_____ Support

___X___ Oppose

Additional Comments:

I want my taxes going to public services, not private services. Vouchers reduce funds available for public schools that serve all students, including those with higher needs (FARMS, Special Education)

7. Do you support or oppose allowing non-public school students to participate in public school extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, etc.)?

_____ Support

___X___ Oppose

Additional Comments:

Sports teams are one of the biggest selling points of public schools! Since funding is based on number of students enrolled in public school, keeping kids in public school needs to be prioritized.

Collective Bargaining

8. Do you support or oppose school employees gaining the right to strike?

___X___ Support

_____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

9. What is your understanding of the nature of the relationship between the Board of Education, Superintendent, county government, and union as it relates to negotiations, budget development, and administration of schools? How do you see yourself utilizing the power of your office in working within this structure?

The board hires the superintendent. The superintendent negotiates with the union(s). The board ratifies the negotiation agreement. The superintendent hires the staff needed for the administration of schools.

The superintendent & staff builds the budget for the upcoming year using the previous year's budget as a starting point. It is up to the board to share their priorities with the superintendent, and those priorities may be reflected in the budget. It is the duty of the superintendent and staff to balance budget according to the priorities of the board, the result of contract negotiations, state and federal requirements, and the overall needs of the schools.

I will be an active participant in meetings with the superintendent to advocate for changes to the budget and facilitate dialogue between parties.

10. How do you balance honoring ratified contracts with public employees in the county, including educators, with other priorities, especially in tight fiscal times?

Contracts are legal obligations and must be honored. See my answer to Question 2.

11. Do you support or oppose public negotiations, where members of the public and educators are able to witness collective bargaining between our school system and union negotiating teams?

_____ Support ☒ Oppose

Additional Comments:

I support full transparency of the outcomes of those discussions, but not during the discussions. My fear of public meetings is around the spread of misinformation and opinions based on an incomplete picture of a complex system. We've all witnessed enraged online discourse spawned by a misunderstanding or incomplete/incorrect information. That discourse affects the public's perception of both the union and school system, and I think it benefits all involved parties to share the outcome after compromise has been met, and provide periodic updates if negotiations run long.

12. Do you commit to meeting with union leadership to talk about the needs facing our schools (including salary and staffing levels) and the revenue or other budget actions necessary to meet those needs?

☒ Yes _____ No

Additional Comments:

Racial and Social Justice:

13. To encourage critical thinking within our classrooms, we believe educators should have professional autonomy on how to implement curriculum to meet the needs of our students. Do you support or oppose this position?

☒ Support _____ Oppose

Additional Comments:

14. Do you support or oppose a curriculum that reflects the perspective and background of diverse learners? How would you respond to political pressure requesting changes to content and curriculum?

Additional Comments:

Changes to curriculum are often appropriate, but they should not happen for political reasons. Any change to policy-level decisions that affect curriculum would require analysis to identify and reject sources with political bias, conflict of interest, or ideological agendas. Changes should be evidence-based, transparent, and preserve academic integrity.

The recent court rulings in *Little v. Llano County* (Walsh) and *Mahmoud v. Taylor* (Katskee & Lupu) have fundamentally reshaped the legal boundaries for public education. In practice, these rulings have triggered a wave of changes in local school libraries, accelerating book removals and creating logistical hurdles for educators (Walsh).

In my opinion, we should trust our teachers and librarians to know the educational needs of their students. If there was any political pressure, I would rely on the Superintendent's recommendations, professional standards, and input from teachers of the affected subjects. I would certainly also listen and consider to any input provided by parents, but teacher input would be my main method for navigating changes to curriculum.

15. What specific policy goals and objectives will you pursue aimed at addressing racial and social justice, including support of diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students and providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

I have no specific policy goals at this time, but support programs that teach students about diversity of people, regions, and ideas. I believe each public school student should be given equal opportunity and access to use any resource provided by the school system to set the course for their future. After looking through data provided in SIPs, it appears there is a gap in attendance for different subgroups in our school population. While I have no specific solutions at this time, policies can be crafted to make targeted interventions that support those groups.

16. Immigration enforcement is a matter of federal jurisdiction. What is your position on how local law enforcement should interact with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement? And how will you work to ensure school grounds, bus stops, and other school spaces are safe havens against immigration enforcement actions?

Local law enforcement should support its local community first. That means providing protection to all students while they are at school. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer of our county. Any relinquishing of that power to Federal authorities is an abdication of responsibility.

When interactions with Federal agents are required, local law enforcement should work with the Superintendent to determine the risk to other students. If the risk to other students is big enough (i.e. if a student is potentially armed and/or violent) that is the only scenario where detaining a student on school grounds may be necessary. This should be a last resort, as the act of detaining students on school grounds negatively impacts the community by inspiring fear and decreasing student attendance, ultimately leading to poorer outcomes for the school.

Since these questions over federal/state/local jurisdictions are complex, the number one thing we can do is set clear policies at the local level which prioritize the safety of our students and support the learning process by preventing unwarranted intervention. The administration and teachers of each school must be trained on students' rights and reporting procedures. School building protocols can include locking down the school. Other locations such as bus stops and open facilities like playgrounds/stadiums are more difficult to protect and would require educating the community on their rights, especially those at risk for detainment. Communication with families must be sensitive and protective.

17. Stable, safe, and affordable housing is necessary for all students to be able to succeed in school and in the recruitment of educators, including education support professionals, to live in the communities they serve. How do you plan to address the housing crisis in the county?

As mentioned in previous answers, one method is ensuring teachers and ESPs are competitively compensated.

For unhoused students, we need to ensure our schools have methods of identifying these students and providing them with information about social programs that can find them a home. Community Schools play a critical role in this social service. This issue also demonstrates the need to maintain and strengthen our existing mental health support systems (School Counselors, Mental Health Specialists, Project YES & SEL Coaches)

Privatization and Support for Education Support Professionals

18. Are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

_____ Support

___X___ Oppose

Additional Comments:

In general, I think the quality of the service is better when an individual is a Board of Education Employee. There's a greater sense of ownership and more reliability/stability. The functions served by custodians, cafeteria, and maintenance staff are dependent upon and responsible for the operation of the school system.

I'm also skeptical of whether there is a sufficient supply of labor in the local economy for those services. I'm not sure that there are any companies that could meet the scale & reliability required by the school system.

19. Too many ESPs work second jobs and struggle to provide for their families, buy homes, save for their futures, and afford community or four-year college tuition for their children to learn a trade and plan a career. The looming threats of privatization by school districts, which would import even lower-paid workers from outside areas, risk the stability of schools and communities and further undermine the value of ESPs and their jobs.

ESPs across the state are organizing to build presence, strength, and power in a campaign focused on a bill of rights that defines the issues long nagging these dedicated employees

and now threatening not only the recruitment of new employees but the retention of dedicated veteran employees. You can read about the [ESP Bill of Rights here](#).

Do you support the ESP Bill of Rights?

☒ Support

☐ Oppose

Additional Comments:

20. Please share how you would use your office to help make the ESP Bill of Rights a reality in the county.

As with teachers, I am willing to meet with ESP representatives and support policies that improve pay, benefits, and working conditions.

Essay Questions

A. Why are you running for this position? What personal attributes, characteristics, and experiences make you the right candidate for this position?

I'm running for a number of reasons. First is my son, who will be attending school very soon. I want my son and his peers to have the best education that prepares them for the rapid societal changes that await them. Many of those rapid changes are related to technology, and I want to be on the board to help shape technology policy. I think there should be more strict rules on digital device usage for our youngest students. I think we need to be mindful of our technology use, while still providing enough exposure to educate all students with computer literacy. Ultimately, it is up to the teacher to determine whether a lesson is enhanced by a digital device in a student's hands, but the board can provide guidelines and guardrails that are backed by research.

I'm an analytical systems-thinker who sees education as vital component of a thriving community and society. Professionally I am a Software Engineer, so most of my days are spent monitoring systems and coming up with strategies/solutions when issues arise. I'm a product of the ACPS, and have a lot of pride in that! After following up High School with a Bachelors and Masters for Computer Science at FSU, I taught in the Computer Science department for three years. While there, I learned first-hand the importance of teachers to the community and the difficulties that come with teaching.

I have no other political experience, so I have a lot to learn, but I am always up for learning new skills. I can also provide a fresh set of eyes and experiences to the board.

B. What are the top three things you would like to accomplish in the next four years if you are elected to Board of Education?

- Sensible Technology Policy – limit distractions, fundamentals before computers
- Expand Career Training – build the jobs that our local economy needs
- Senior Projects – introduce student-led capstone projects required for graduation

Additional Information

Along with this completed questionnaire, please provide an up-to-date bio or resume as well as a current list of endorsements for this election cycle.

Bio/Resume

Attached as a separate document

List of Endorsements:

Resources

Spencer, D G. "Employee voice and employee retention." *Academy of Management journal*. Academy of Management vol. 29,3 (1986): 488-502.

Richard B. Katskee & Ira C. Lupu, *Mahmoud v. Taylor: Cause or Effect of Disruptions in Public Schools?*, 24 *First Amendment Law Review* 253-290 (2026)

Walsh, Mark. "Appeals Court Ruling Raises Bar for Challenging School Book Bans." *Education Week*, 28 May 2025, www.edweek.org/policy-politics/appeals-court-ruling-raises-bar-for-challenging-school-book-bans/2025/05