

School Board Candidates Questionnaire on Environmental Issues

Name: **Mary Kadera**

1. Achieving the County goals for renewable energy and carbon neutrality:

Fairfax County Public Schools recently committed to achieving [carbon neutrality for its operations by 2040](#). Should Arlington Public Schools make a similar commitment and what strategies and policies would you pursue to reduce carbon emissions in APS?

I would like to see APS commit to carbon neutrality within a set time frame for two reasons. First, I believe it makes good business sense for our schools to do so by reducing operating costs in the long run. Second, and more important, we can't run a system designed to prepare students for full and productive adult lives (public education) in a manner that compromises the full and productive future we hope they will have. Thus, we have to do everything we can to safeguard the environment for our children and all future generations.

I moved with my family from Alexandria to Arlington in 2016, partly because of the excellent reputation of Arlington's schools and partly because I have long been impressed with the County's environmentally progressive positions. (I have been a local Sierra Club volunteer since 2003.) I have been pleased to see developments within APS like the construction of the carbon net-zero Discovery Elementary and recent solar installations at five APS schools.

I believe it's important for APS to make a commitment to carbon neutrality and to align this effort to the County's Community Energy Plan. More specifically, I believe that APS can and should:

- Ensure that all new construction and renovation meets or exceeds LEED Gold certification

- Accelerate the installation of solar panels on as many APS sites as possible
- Commit to purchasing or leasing only all-electric vehicles for the APS fleet (cars, vans, buses)
- Collaborate closely with the County on ways to make transportation to and from school more energy- and cost-efficient. In particular, I'd like to see a concerted effort to reduce the school bus fleet by shifting middle and high school students to ride Metro and ART buses.

2. Incorporating nature into development and protecting green spaces:

Numerous studies demonstrate the importance of access to nature on the mental and physical well-being of children. With the pandemic, the need for increasing connections to nature is extremely critical. How can APS create an environment that incorporates nature into the school environment and curriculum and what policies would you promote to ensure that all of Arlington's students have easy access to nature?

Right now, our students lack sufficient access to the outdoors as part of their school experience. Trips to places like the Outdoor Lab are great, but that provides very limited exposure. Arlington is blessed with many wonderful local and regional parks, some of these directly adjacent to school properties. I believe that APS should explore the following:

- Setting goals and standards re: outdoor learning
- Reviewing its Program of Studies with an eye towards ensuring that students are learning in the natural world through direct experience (not just via books and media)
- Working closely with the County to develop creative approaches to education, recreation and community services. One example I particularly like is the Science

and Math Institute public high school in Tacoma, Washington. This high school is located within Point Defiance Park, and SaMI's 500 students take classes at the marine center, zoo, and aquarium as part of their normal schedule. Additionally, SaMI makes permanent use of "portable" classrooms (what APS calls "relocatables") for additional classroom and laboratory space.

- 3. Achieving zero waste:** Arlington County passed a Zero Waste Resolution in 2015 and will begin a residential curbside food scraps collections program in early September. What opportunities does APS have to reduce its waste overall and maximize recycling and composting of waste to help the County achieve its goals and what benefits will this provide for Arlington students?

While I was the PTA president at McKinley Elementary, parent volunteers launched a Food Bus program at our school. This program was a great way for the school to reduce food waste and redirect unused food to families in the community who needed it. I would like to incentivize more schools in APS to join this effort.

This type of program doesn't solve the problem of food scraps, however. I would like to research whether and how other school districts are managing comprehensive composting efforts in order to understand if APS can do the same. (See, for example, what DC Public Schools are doing here.)

Additionally, I'd like to see more widespread use of bins like these that make it easier for



students and schools staff to dispose of waste appropriately: