

I am Barbara Kanninen, and I am running for Arlington County School Board because I believe that together we can make Arlington Public Schools the best that they can be.

We're facing complicated issues that span many dimensions—from budgeting and meeting capacity needs to optimizing classroom instruction—and I bring an equally expansive set of experiences to the table. I have volunteered in schools and worked with children in Arlington and DC for over 20 years. I have served on School Board and County Board advisory committees, and I'm a professional economist, children's book author, and long-time Democratic activist. These experiences have given me a deep familiarity with data analysis, hundreds of hours with kids and teachers in classrooms, and a history of working at the community level on grassroots organizing and engagement.

Here are my priorities for our schools:

- **Promote critical thinking over standardized testing.**
I understand the importance of accountability and standards, and I love data, but I believe our kids spend too much time in class prepping for and taking tests. Teachers have told me they feel this way too. We need to take a hard look at the testing schedule and process to see which tests are essential to classroom learning and which aren't.
- **Tackle overcrowding with strong leadership and constructive community engagement.**
We're behind the curve in terms of providing seats for all of our students, but we need to be smart as we work to catch up with our growth. We need to create a long-term plan that considers our instructional needs and programs first. We need to work closely and collaboratively with the County Board and citizen committees to ensure that we bring a whole-community mindset to the issue, and we need to maintain flexibility so that we can adapt, over time, to our changing population and needs.
- **Give teachers the respect and support they deserve by providing sufficient resources and encouraging two-way communication.**
To create an environment in which every child can excel, teachers need support and resources. They also need the flexibility to adjust their teaching approach and pacing to their students' needs, avenues for providing feedback to school principals and county administrators, and the flexibility to define their own planning and professional development.
- **Support children with mentors.**
An adult mentor is a developmental asset that contributes to kids' problem solving, self-esteem, and achievement. I'd like every student in Arlington to be able to walk into their school building every morning and know that there is at least one adult there who knows them on a personal level, whom they can go to with problems, and who believes in them, exactly as they are.
- **Continue investing in the arts and strengthen STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) programs with more hands-on learning in all grades.**

We should strengthen STEM skills and knowledge through, for example, more hands-on science programs in all elementary schools and more accessible, flexible, and affordable STEM programs across all schools, including the Arlington Career Center. At the same time, students still need opportunities to think and express themselves creatively. It's important to give students at all levels access to a variety of art forms.

- **Be budget-minded by prioritizing funding for teachers and classroom learning.**

As an economist, I work with numbers and data every day. In this time of tight budgets, we need to be both disciplined and principled when we make spending decisions. My number-one principle is the need to focus on the day-to-day classroom experience and the importance of teacher-student relationships. This means my budget priorities will be teachers and the resources they need. To balance those needs, I will look skeptically at other expenditures—such as consultant fees, new technologies, and the test-prep schedule—to assess whether they truly improve classroom learning.

Our schools are important to all of us, whether we are parents, teachers, homeowners, or citizens who want to live in a community that values education. Collectively, we have the energy, the brains, and the will to do great things for our kids and our community. I'm excited about the possibilities, and I would be honored to have your vote.

You can vote on either Thursday, May 15th from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. at Drew Model School (3500 23rd Street South) or Saturday, May 17th from 11:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. at Washington-Lee High School (1301 North Stafford Street).