

Nancy Van Doren
Candidate Statement
County Council of PTAs

Arlington Public Schools are at a critical juncture. We face the challenge of continuing to improve educational outcomes for all our students while working with the County to find space for over 700 new students each year. We need experience and proven leadership to meet this challenge. I am that leader.

My vision is that all students will leave APS as thriving, healthy, productive citizens equipped to compete successfully in our global, multi-lingual, multicultural world. We must commit ourselves to this today and make the educational improvements necessary to meet the needs of every student in every classroom across Arlington.

Student must leave Arlington Public Schools college and career ready. We must support our great teachers, strengthen our instructional programs, and close the achievement gap. Our students must be able to read on grade level by the beginning of 4th grade. Our teachers, together with parents, are critical to student success. My focus on teachers is the reason I have the support of the Arlington Education Association's political action committee. I serve on the Parent Advisory Committee for the Career Center to ensure all students have a career path and to integrate our programs with area colleges and universities. I chaired the Arlington Special Education Committee and lead the effort to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of services for students with special needs that has resulted in a blue print to improve these services. This will result in better outcomes for all students. I believe students should begin studying a second language in elementary school. I have also been serving on the School Board's Family and Community Engagement Working Group that will issue its report later this month so we can strengthen these very necessary partnerships.

We must create sufficient room for our growing student population by maximizing the use of existing facilities, collaborating with the County to use existing space, and building new facilities where needed. We need to be good stewards of the environment, building and renovating carefully, going up whenever possible, and coordinating with other community needs. This must be done in concert with the County. We must create a long range plan, embedded in the County's Comprehensive Plan, to guide us for the next 20-30 years.

We must ensure that our students get to school safely, whether they choose to walk, bike, drive, or take the bus. Again, this requires integrated planning and cooperation with the County to ensure walk and bike routes are safe. Bus service should be available to students who want to ride the bus and we should support efforts to minimize traffic around the schools. I have been serving for the past 18 months on the Multi-Modal Transportation and Student Safety Special Committee to make this happen. I served as a leader on this committee to recommend that walk zones be reduced and to return bus serve to students at Kenmore and Jefferson Middle Schools along the Columbia Pike corridor.

APS must work to strengthen and expand its collaboration with Arlington County to meet these challenges. Together, we must plan and allocate our common resources to serve all our residents. We need to dovetail an APS long-range plan with the County's Comprehensive Plan. That way, we will have the proper infrastructure, including schools, to support our expanding community. Both planning processes must be done jointly. I believe strongly that "When our Schools Work, Arlington Works."

My husband and I live in Ashton Heights with our four children, who attended Long Branch Elementary, Jefferson Middle, and Washington-Lee High Schools. I served as the Jefferson Middle School PTA President and worked with the County to renovate Jefferson and its playing fields. I am a co-founder of the Arlington Latino Network and am fluent in Spanish. I advocate for parents across the County to ensure that all students have what they need to succeed. I have extensive business, management and international experience and have worked for ten years as an education advocate and volunteer in Arlington. I have run after-school programs and chaired county-level advisory committees. I have worked to improve services for students with disabilities, learned APS curriculum areas, and worked with teachers and staff at all levels.

I will make a strong contribution to the School Board with my hands-on APS experience, proven leadership skills, and background in business and management. Please read more about my candidacy at www.NancyVanDoren.org and vote at the Democratic Caucuses May 15 7-9 at Drew Model School and May 17 from 11-7 at Washington Lee High School.