



FAIRFAX
EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION

3917 Old Lee Highway · Fairfax, Virginia 22030 · (703) 352-7300 · Fax (703) 359-2982 · www.fairfaxea.org

Kevin Hickerson, *President*
Nancy Perkins, *Executive Director*

About Fairfax Education Association

The history of the Fairfax Education Association (FEA) as a labor union is one of long and proud service to the students and educators of Fairfax County. For almost 100 years, FEA has served as the voice of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) employees with our state legislators, county supervisors, school board members, other county officials and the superintendent. Throughout its history, FEA has stayed true to the mission of service to our community and to demanding the highest standards of public education for the children of Fairfax County.

FEA currently represents FCPS employees, including teachers, instructional assistants, custodians, administrative assistants, cafeteria workers and bus drivers. We are affiliated with the Virginia Education Association (VEA) and the National Education Association (NEA).

We serve as the collective voice of our members. We believe that FCPS educators are advocates for students and FEA provides an avenue for advocacy through lobbying, committee work, professional development, events and rallies, collaboration with coalitions and direct communication with school and community leaders. Further, we believe that sound policies and procedures must be developed in collaboration with educators whose professional input is invaluable.

FEA believes that an educator's working conditions are our student's learning conditions. When professional educators receive the support and autonomy they deserve, student achievement improves. We are dedicated to putting students first by improving the quality of public education provided in FCPS.

**2019 FEA Government Relations Council
FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Candidate's Name Vinson Xavier Palathingal Magisterial District At- Large

Please Circle One: Incumbent Challenger **Open Seat**

Campaign Committee Name Vinson For School Board

Address 2123 McKay Street, Falls Church, VA 22043

Phone 703 568 8070 Website: <https://www.vinsonforschoolboard.com/>

Employer Amaram Technology Occupation Engineer

Campaign Manager Surabhi Khanal Phone 571 268 0921

Treasurer George Croft Phone 703 821 2841

Campaign address (if different from above)

P O Box 661, McLean, VA 22101

Email address Vinson@VinsonForSchoolBoard.Com

PLEASE RETURN QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE CHAIR OF THE
FEA GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COUNCIL.

Carrie Holmes, Chair
Fairfax Education Association – Government Relations Council
3917 Old Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 352-7300
grc@fairfaxea.org

2019 FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Why are you interested in serving on the Fairfax County School Board? What actions have you taken to support public education?

<https://www.vinsonforschoolboard.com/about-vinson-palathingal/>

Please refer to the link above for a detailed answer. I was always very active in the community, so far in Asian/Indian community. Now since kids have grown, I have more time, so decided to take larger main stream roles. I have 26 years of combined experience as a very involved father raising 2 boys through FCPS. I am involved in conducting educational projects in India for US State Department. Education and Schools are an area where I have significant knowledge and experience and I am sure I can make a difference.

During my children's school years, I have been a mentor to many students and has volunteered many hours in Fairfax County school programs. Such activities include being a yearlong instructor for 'Hands on Science' program at Haycock Elementary School, providing parental guidance to student teams in Science Olympiad at Longfellow Middle School and helping his son founding and successfully launching the Science Olympiad team at McLean High School.

2. What do you believe are the most critical issues facing public education in Fairfax County today and in the next four years?

<https://www.vinsonforschoolboard.com/academic-excellence/>

<https://www.vinsonforschoolboard.com/fiscal-prudence/>

<https://www.vinsonforschoolboard.com/family-preeminence/>

- Academic rigor is going down
- FCPS spending is out of control, that too without an independent audit authority
- Parental rights are being threatened
- Parental volunteering in the schools are dwindling

At the links above, I have explained in depth, what I observe as a citizen and my suggested approach to remedy each issue.

3. How will you communicate directly with FCPS employees and provide opportunities for their input into the decision-making process? How committed are you to doing this?

I am an excellent listener. Without understanding the issues directly from all the stakeholders involved, I won't be able to make FCPS situation better. I will be always available to talk to any FCPS employee to discuss issues they face. I will not just depend on the FCPS avenues to be in touch with teachers, employees and students. I plan to transform my campaign website and FB

page to become interactive tools to keep in touch with my constituents. I am extremely committed to this as I consider this as my primary responsibility as an At-Large school board member representing people.

4. Do you support the implementation of charter schools, vouchers, or education savings accounts in Fairfax County? Why or why not?

I am a strong believer in quality public education. I believe that is essential for the middle-class children to discover themselves and blossom. Myself and my children won't be who we are today without vibrant public education systems. Having said that, if public schools are failing a community for long periods of time where generations of children lose their opportunity for serious education, then we have to think innovatively. When a public school fails, the rich can always go to private schools and poor will be the big losers. It is totally unfair to them if that happens. In those scenarios where public school system is not able to provide education of reasonable quality, then I am open to considering other options. Education is the key, everything else is secondary consideration. If the public schools cannot provide it effectively, children still need to be educated somehow.

5. What will you propose to ensure an equitable, high quality education in Fairfax County for every child regardless of zip code?

Fairfax County has a significant percentage of recent immigrants and FCPS is full of their children. These are people who came with limited English proficiency and no perceived "privilege" of any sort. They are from all over the place starting from China, Korea, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Argentina among others. Asian Americans alone being over 20% in the county, I would think that all these immigrant groups combined constitute about 25 to 30% of the county population. Children from these immigrant communities are doing exceedingly well.

The most obvious reasons for their success are high expectations from families and extreme hard work. But there is one additional thing that is very common to these high achieving immigrant groups. Even when they are not rich, they send their children to supplemental private education in addition to FCPS, by spending 1000s of dollars every year. These centers use direct instruction methods at the elementary level in contrast to inquiry-based learning FCPS currently uses. Such methods for teaching arithmetic and phonics-based reading instructions with adequate drill will benefit ALL students. Apparently, that is working for immigrants! Then why not we incorporate some of the same techniques and methods into FCPS, so that ALL of our children can benefit.

It is time to think out of the box. First, make educational "OPPORTUNITIES" same for all students, then we will automatically bring "EQUITY" in results.

6. How will you support educator involvement in the development of employee performance evaluation systems?

I come from a family of educators. From what I have seen, teachers become teachers not primarily for a job, but due to their passion for the profession. I would hire the best and the brightest, and then will give them a lot of freedom to develop the educational plan as they see fit. By giving them freedom to be creative and innovative, we are going to get the best results

out of them. With that approach, their involvement will be key to developing the yard sticks to evaluate their performance. Standards that are not applicable to the situations we are in will become bottlenecks in the path of real education. The results coming out of the class rooms, not just the test results, but the display of young minds learning new things and putting what they learned to good use for the society, will be the best indicator for an educator's performance.

7. What are your positions on the following educational issues?

a. Professional autonomy

Full support. Hire the best and the brightest and then give them the freedom to be the best.

b. Teacher-directed planning time

Full support. Hire the best and the brightest and then give them the freedom to be the best.

c. Teacher evaluation tied to student performance/test scores

Not a good idea. In a situation where teacher is not allowed to pick and choose his/her pupils, it is simply not fair to link their evaluation to pupil performance/test scores.

d. Grading policies

I believe in academic rigor and in strict grading policy. The idea of reducing the grading standards so that everyone can feel good will ultimately make our students further weak and incompetent. We need to have real competent youth to stand tall with the students from other nations.

e. Special Education

All children are god's children and our public education system should reflect that value. We have to set reasonable expectations still making sure that we have a viable special education program.

8. What are your positions on the following retirement issues:

a. Retiree involvement in decisions impacting them

I believe in transparent decision making. We have to make sure that our retirement program is competitive to that of comparable jurisdictions. And, before we make any decision on retirees, they have to be involved in the process.

b. Maintaining the ERFC as a defined benefit retirement program

I need more in depth analysis of the program before commenting on this.

c. Fully funding the actuarial recommendation for ERFC
I need more in depth analysis of the recommendations before commenting on this.

d. Reconsidering the changes to ERFC made in 2017
I will always remain open to any suggestion. The facts, viability and remaining competitive with the neighboring jurisdictions will be my guiding principles while considering or before suggesting any changes.

9. Instructional Assistants and other support personnel are an integral component to student success, yet they are paid considerably less than a living wage. How will you address this issue?

Instructional Assistants provide critical help for student success and they should be paid a living wage. I completely understand that the lack of resources is the reason for such pay issues. However, I believe that there is significant waste in the system due to administrative overhead. Educators having to deal with significant bureaucratic burden is a complaint I hear frequently about FCPS. I will work towards streamlining the processes and reducing administrivia to reduce spending and use that saving to adequately compensate our Instructional Assistants.

10. Do you believe that all full-time Fairfax County public employees and FCPS employees should be able to live in the communities in which they serve?

Absolutely yes. I believe in our schools belonging to our communities. Teachers and other staff living in the same communities is very helpful to have such community schools. In such schools, parents feel safe and children grow up with a community spirit and belongingness. It may not be always possible to have all our employees living close by. Still, we have to do as much as we can to try to accomplish that.

11. How will you support the development of and adherence to regulations and other policies in support of transgender and non-binary staff and students?

From what I see, the biggest issue transgender and other discriminated groups face is bullying and harassment. I will ensure that such behavior is not tolerated anywhere in FCPS by enforcing the rules and strict disciplinary measures against bullying. That alone will help ensure that all such groups get equal treatment in the system. Such protection along with reasonable accommodations of specific needs of different groups will make sure ALL feel safe and secure in our schools.

12. What will you do to attract and retain a diverse workforce that represents the best and brightest professionals in FCPS?

Hiring the best and brightest will always be my goal. I believe they exist in all groups and subgroups of our population. Decent and competitive pay, least possible administrative and bureaucratic burden, professional autonomy and independence to remain creative and innovative will be my selling points to attract the best and the brightest to FCPS.

13. Is there anything in your record or past statements and positions that is inconsistent with your above positions?

None.

14. Do you have affiliations with organizations or groups that lobby, take public positions or make public statements, recruit employees, or raise or contribute money or services in relation to education or labor unions? If so, please list the organization or group and explain your affiliation.

None.

Campaign Evaluation Additional Information Needed by FEA-GRC

Please submit with the questionnaire.

1. What is your projected fundraising goal? 50,000
2. What is your fundraising total to date? 38,000
3. What is your estimated win number? 100,000 votes
4. How many doors do you plan to reach? 10,000

How many doors knocked to date? 1000

5. What endorsements have you received?
See the link here: <https://www.vinsonforschoolboard.com/endorsements/>

6. How do you believe the Fairfax Education Association can help you?

I believe FEA endorsement of my candidacy will give me a big boost.

