

**2007 FEA – GRC  
FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Candidate's Name Steve Hunt Magisterial District At-large

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Employer SAIC Occupation Senior Systems Analyst

Campaign Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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PLEASE RETURN QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE CHAIR OF THE FEA GOVERNMENT  
RELATIONS COMMITTEE. THE ADDRESS IS:

Kimberly Adams, Chair  
Fairfax Education Association – Government Relations Committee  
3917 Old Lee Highway  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
(703) 352-7300

## **2007 FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. What are the most critical issues facing public education in Fairfax County today?

Responding to the changing demographic environment to ensure that the children receive the fundamental skills in reading, math and writing that will enable them to take full advantage of the many opportunities in the FCPS system.

2. Given the Strategic Governance Policy of the School Board, how does this impact FEA communication with the School Board and with the Superintendent?

FEA, like all constituents or constituent organizations should have free access to their elected school board members. The discussions should be focused by the new goals and methods of indicating the level those goals are being achieved. FEA inputs would be beneficial in determining impediments within the system to achieving the goals, accuracy in the depiction of the indicators, and emerging issues that can be addressed by policy.

3. What are your positions on the following educational issues:

a. The current FCPS Budget being recommended by Superintendent Dale

In light of the financial situation this year, I believe that the budget is acceptable. I would have preferred to have seen some of the newly allocated funds go to a graduated IA pay scale that takes level of education into consideration.

b. Teacher Leadership Development Grants

I support the development of 11 month contracts for teachers to be able to accomplish the kind of program development and training during the summer that will enable starting the school year in an organized and prepared manner. I would prefer more visibility into how the grants are being used to ensure that they are being used for the intended purpose and that there is some accountability into the effectiveness of their use.

c. Teacher Directed Planning Time

I support some time being allocated for teachers to use to accomplish what they determine needs to accomplish. There is also benefit from the coordination and cross communication that is being done within and between departments. However, there should be a balance between the two uses of planning time.

d. Regulatory language that outlines a defined workday

I understand some of the concerns that are resulting in this idea. However, I do not see the benefit of this regulatory language. There is already a definition within the contract as to the length of the workday. Most salaried professionals do not work to the limit of their established work day and depart. Knowing the nature of the teaching profession, it would not be functional to regulate teachers within a set day. Once the normal practice continued to go beyond the regulated day, the regulation would be all but ignored. It would be much more effective to develop best business practices with the principals to drive optimal use of teacher time and acceptable limits on after-school demands.

e. Maintain retirees in the present health insurance pool

Fully support it.

f. Maintain the ERFC as a defined benefit retirement program

I have no plans to recommend that ERFC be changed to a defined contribution plan, but I would not reject the idea outright. I would not support shifting retirees or current employees to a defined contribution plan unless it was on a voluntary basis. Most organizations with defined benefits plans are being forced into defined contribution plans in order to maintain solvency. If threatened with a loss of solvency to the current program, it may have to be considered. For those already in the system, I plan to maintain my “promises made, promises kept” philosophy.

4. From the list below, indicate your top five priorities for the next four years. Indicate the items by placing a “1” next to your top priority, “2” next to your second, etc.

\_\_\_ Alternative Education Programs

\_\_\_ Beginning Teacher Induction/Mentoring

4\_\_\_ Building Improvements

\_\_\_ Class Size – Teacher/Pupil Ratio

\_\_\_ Computer Technology in the Classrooms

\_\_\_ Employee Benefits

\_\_\_ Employee Retirement

5\_\_\_ Employee Salaries

\_\_\_ ESOL Programs

1\_\_\_ Instructional Programs

\_\_\_ Non-School Based Professionals

\_\_\_ Resource Professionals

3\_\_\_ Special Education

2\_\_\_ Staff Development and Training

\_\_\_ Support Services (Counseling, Reading, psychologists, SBTS, Social Workers)

\_\_\_ Technological Support

\_\_\_ Teacher Leadership Development Grants

\_\_\_ Charter Schools

\_\_\_\_\_ Tuition Tax Credits

Please explain your rationale for your choices.

- 1 – Instructional programs are the key to what FCPS provides to the community. The effectiveness of the instructional programs will determine if FCPS can live up to its reputation.
- 2 – In order to be able to provide the effective instructional programs, the staff must be provided the development opportunities and training that fulfills their current needs.
- 3 – Special education is becoming a significant element of all of our schools and instruction. There is very limited guidance or training in how to fulfill the Individualized Education Plans. Classroom teachers and IAs are left to provide the accommodations and individualized teaching often practically on their own. The system has been able to survive based on the efforts of the classroom personnel, but as the number of special education students grow and their needs increase, the system will not be able to continue in this manner.
- 4 – There are many older buildings that are not adequate. Some have challenges in handling the new technology demands. Others have unhealthy conditions or run down appearances. These need to be addressed long before the renovation schedule gets around to these schools
- 5 – There are certain employee salary issues that I would like to address. I believe that the IA pay scale should be adjusted to provide additional pay for those IAs with college degrees or for those that work in a higher stress environment, e.g., autism programs. I would like to see pay incentives for the high demand, difficult to fill teaching positions, e.g., start at year 2 or 3 level.

5. What programs would you change or eliminate? What criteria are you going to employ to ensure comprehensive evaluation of programs that is accurate and defensible?

Part of the problem is the concept of working within “programs.” What is needed is effective instructional practices that teachers can draw upon as needed for the demands of their classroom. I have supported staffing at the schools that matches the particular demographic challenges of that particular school as opposed to having a “program” at a school. Programs usually come with increased administrative staffing, time spent in training and increased administrative burden on teachers with limited improvement in instruction because the teacher is often left to determine how to actually implement or apply the “program.” Since there is limited change to the actual classroom, there is often limited visible change to the results, a new program is applied and the cycle continues.

I would like to see the teacher coach / assessor role be supported with a more data driven approach. There needs to be a student focused assessment toolset provided for teachers to be able to determine individual student level of skill and knowledge mastery that can guide both individual student instructional focus and provide the teacher with instruction effectiveness feedback. The assessment coach should be able to use this along with classroom observations to give specific guidance as to the resources and methods a teacher should use address the needs of their students.

I have consistently evaluated the data provided with assessments to ensure that the data supported the staff conclusions and recommendations. I intend to continue to review and analyze the data to ensure that staff recommendations make sense. I have been disappointed by the degree to which programs have been assessed and by the “indicators” that the staff has produced to determine if the school system is moving toward the new School Board goals. I intend to continue to push the Board to establish indicators that provide data that is focused on how well the system is achieving the goals, not just that there is a program in place to address a goal. I will also continue to request the kinds of data that should be used for that purpose. The criteria is that an indicator should be measurable and comparable (even if it is somewhat qualitative) from year to year and by school or by program, e.g., GT centers. A comprehensive evaluation should also include teacher evaluations of the program, measures to determine if it achieved its intended academic goals and comparisons to comparable student groups outside of the program.

6. How can the value that Instructional Assistants add to the educational programs of FCPS be better reflected in their salaries?

I have asked for the development of an IA graduated salary scale that includes a different scale for those IAs with college degrees. I would also like to see a discussion on expanding the IA salary so that the long term IAs that have developed extensive knowledge and skills salaries would receive a higher salary.

7. How can we achieve a compensation structure that allows educators to live in the district in which they work?

In light of the recent exponential increases in housing costs, this cannot be addressed with just pay increases. Recent pay increases have brought the starting pay to over \$42,000. While this would not allow a teacher to live alone in Fairfax County, few first year salaries would (two starting teacher sharing a rent would come very close to the Fairfax County medium household income).

To address this issue, solutions beyond straight compensation will have to be developed. For example, I would like to see the school system work with the Board of Supervisors to develop a program that reserves

certain housing for teachers, firemen and police officers for their first 4-5 years of employment to be rented at reasonable rates.

8. As a School Board member, what role should the School Employee Benefits Advisory Council play regarding adopting changes in insurance carriers, programs, and benefit levels?

They should have a significant role of advising the Board along with other inputs from personnel oriented sources to provide the preferences, requirements and ramifications of changes to those programs.

9. The Fairfax Education Association and the School Employee Benefits Advisory Council wrote the school board regarding the burdens of the Deferred Health Option. Would you support the position of the employee groups?

Yes, in fact, I did not support the removal of the promised benefit of coming back for the health care benefits at anytime, for any reason that lead to this program. I did not support the level of cost or the annual requirement to pay into the option. I viewed this as the breaking of a promise to our retirees. I viewed the resulting Deferred Health Option program as prohibitive.

10. What should be done by Fairfax County Public Schools to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population?

There needs to be a reliable indicator of student capabilities at the elementary school level and students must not be allowed to progress until they have met the requirements for the skills that will be needed in the next grade level. The instructional resources and curriculum must respond to changing needs of the changing demographics. All LEP students must be accelerated in learning English so that they can take full advantage of the instruction. There needs to be an attitude shift from viewing the challenging populations as justifications for poor academic performance to a challenge that will be attacked with high expectations, high goals instilled in the students, effective instructional resources and support, and true assessment of achievement.

11. A significant percentage of your current employees, many of whom are minorities, live at or below the poverty level. What actions would you take to correct this problem?

I would be interested in the details and would be open to discussions related to this issue. There are not enough details to provide specific actions.

12. What could be done to attract individuals to leadership roles that are more reflective of the ethnic diversity within the district?

The leadership of our schools and school departments is a critical element to the success of the entire division. Consequently, FCPS should hire the best individual for the particular position. There must be an equal opportunity for all employees to develop the skills and abilities necessary for leadership positions and equal opportunity to apply for leadership positions. Those individuals that have demonstrated strong leadership skills should be recruited for the intern programs that are in place.

13. The district is going to implement a Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Do you believe it should be administered to all schools? Also, given the data, what should be done with the results?

Absolutely, this survey should be available to all teachers and provided with an anonymous manner of response. The raw data should be public and broken down by school. The data should be analyzed from a perspective of what can be done to improve the working environment and not from a perspective of how to prove that everything is wonderful in FCPS.

14. Principals are leaving Fairfax at an astounding rate. Over 100 principals have left in the past 5 years with an anticipated need for 150 in the next 5 years. What programs are being developed to insure the new hires are effective, compassionate and maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning?

The school environment surveys need to be developed to capture these elements of the schools leadership. Teacher retention at schools should be reviewed annually along with a truly anonymous departure survey to determine if there is a leadership problem at a school. The indicators for the Student Achievement Goals should be developed that can be used to determine the effectiveness of instruction by school.

15. What can we do to retain teachers past the 1-5 year time frame, after the system has paid for their training and education?

Ensuring that the school environment is one in which teachers look forward to coming to work is critical to retention. The development of student skill and ability requirements that must be met so that they are capable of developing the skills at the next grade level should be established as the measure of effectiveness as opposed to the passing rate. This will establish a better learning environment and reduce the classroom problems caused by students that have become disengaged due to falling farther and farther behind.

The other aspect of this issue is that the current generation of young people have demonstrated that they do not intend to stay in the same career for 25-30 years, but plan to change careers numerous times over the course of their working lives. The school system must adapt to this new dynamic and look for ways to provide new challenges to people to keep them within the systems or to enable people changing careers to come into teaching or to come back to teaching.

16. In reviewing the work of the incumbent School Board, what would you list as the major Strengths/accomplishments – This Board has:

- Worked together fairly well as a team focused on student needs.
- Hired a good Superintendent and has maintained a good relationship with the Superintendent
- Maintained a fairly good working relationship with the Board of Supervisors
- Worked hard to develop a good set of long term goals for FCPS
- Negotiated an increase in CIP allocation
- Made efforts to improve the use of advisory committees
- Brought in outside consultants to review population estimates and transportation

Weaknesses/failures – This Board has:

- Accepted a poor set of indicators for determination of the achievement of the new goals
- Not been discerning enough regarding recommendations from the staff
  - Allowing the removal of the option to return to health benefits and implantation of a prohibitive retention option program
  - Passing a near meaningless IA pay scale improvement
  - Limiting boundary change review areas to ones that limit the outcome to the predetermined staff desired result

- Accepting conflicting answers and data
- Been too accepting of staff high level answers that do not truly answer the questions
- Established a relationship with the Superintendent that is not inquisitive enough
- Not held the staff to a requirement of demonstrated method of development and measured success for new programs
- Been, at times, too quick to defend the system

17. What initiatives would you like to see the Superintendent implement over the course of the next four (4) years?

- Further development of the 11 month contract with associated pay increases to allow for paid time for staff development, curriculum planning and preparation, team building and training.
- Significantly improved assessment process for schools and programs that allow for comparisons between program sites (e.g., GT centers) with a focus on improvement and not retribution.
- Improved assessment tools for teachers to determine a student's level of achievement in a non-intrusive manner. Greater use of assessments at the beginning of the year and throughout the year to guide instruction (predominately at the elementary level)
- Improved IA pay scale
- Improve IEP implementation to include common standards of communicating requirements, adequate resources to execute the IEP, teacher training in implementing accommodations and assessment methods to determine the effectiveness of the IEP and its execution.
- Development of School Board goal indicators that provide real determination of the level of achieving or meeting the goals. Technology supported methods to capture these indicators to minimize the impact on teacher time.

18. How do you see the Fairfax Education Association involved in the development and implementation of those initiatives?

FEA provides a conduit of communication across the spectrum of employees in FCPS. This is invaluable in providing the Board advice on the benefits, ramifications, consequences and negative elements of the decisions before the Board. FEA should be one of the sources of information from which the Board draws input on which to make decisions. The FEA is also a resource to help provide guidance in developing acceptable solutions to operational and academic issues.

**Campaign Evaluation**  
**Additional Information Needed by FEA-GRC**

Please submit (with questionnaire) responses by the candidate or the candidate's campaign to all the questions listed below.

1. What is the potential overall cost of the campaign?  
\$30,000-60,000

2. How much money is still needed for the campaign?  
\$23,000 - \$53,000

3. How is the campaign organized? Please examine the following areas:

a. How is staff organized?

Volunteers providing staff efforts

b. What groups are supporting the candidate?

Fairfax County Republican Committee

Possibly:

- SLEEP
- SCMS coalition

c. How is the candidate using his/her time?

- Day Job
- School Board Activities
- Campaigning at community events
- Fund raisers and coffees
- Strategic planning
- Answering surveys and questions

4. Give and estimate of the opponents or potential opponents' campaign considering the following areas:

- a. Funding? I do not know.
- b. Groups supporting opponent? I do not know.
- c. What is your opponent's platform/strategy in this campaign? I do not know.

Name of Candidate: Stephen M. Hunt District: At-large

I attest that I have answered these questions truthfully and to the best of my ability.

Candidates Signature: Stephen M. Hunt Date: June 16, 2007