

61% of Fairfax County Public School Board 2023 Candidates Answered Our Climate Survey *Here's Who Responded and Who Didn't*

Democratic Primary Election: June 20

General Election is November 7

[Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions](#) (FACS) sent nine questions to the 27 candidates for the Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) Board. We received 17 responses. Our questions were about the [28 recommendations](#) made by the Joint Environmental Task Force (JET), formed in April 2019 by FCPS and the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, that were endorsed by the school board in July 2021.

Although FACS is a nonpartisan nonprofit that does not endorse candidates, we believe it's important to understand where they stand on issues related to climate change and environmental sustainability.

Here are our 9 yes or no questions:

1. Do you support producing 25% of total energy use from in-County renewable energy generation by 2030?
2. Do you support FCPS's commitment to achieving 50% carbon emissions reductions by 2030, as compared to the 2019 baseline?
3. Do you support all new FCPS and major renovation projects achieving Net Zero Energy (NZE) performance, unless staff advises the Board prior to the 30% design phase why a project cannot meet the NZE standard? (*The JET defines an NZE building as highly energy-efficient, producing onsite, or procuring offsite as necessary, carbon-free renewable energy in an amount sufficient to offset the annual energy use associated with operations.*)
4. Do you support transitioning the FCPS bus fleet to electric alternatives by 2035 and to increase necessary charging infrastructure as fleets grow?
5. Do you support FCPS undertaking a strong education program, in multiple languages, about waste and recycling?
6. Do you support recycling and composting in FCPS?
7. Do you support setting an aspirational goal for FCPS to be Zero Waste by 2030?
8. Do you support developing a comprehensive plan to offer one or more programs for FCPS high school students to encourage participation in a green career/economy?
9. Do you support FCPS counselors and career center staff being equipped with a standardized toolkit for talking with students about the range of green careers and the background necessary to enter those careers?

Candidates who responded YES to all questions:

Ryan McElveen, Democrat, At-Large

Additional comments: During my two terms as an at-large member of the Fairfax County School Board from 2012-2019, my record included: 1) Co-sponsoring the push to include planning for renewable energy in the FCPS Capital Improvement Plan 2) Advocating for a Board resolution calling for state and federal action on climate change 3) Joining with the "Solar on the Schools" student advocacy group to press for expanded solar power generation opportunities 4) Supporting the expansion of the FCPS "Get2Green" program for environmental stewardship, as well as embedding sustainability education in the curriculum 5) Championing the system-wide study that led to the expansion of farm-to-school cafeteria offerings, installation of school gardens throughout the county, and implementation of salad bars in all schools 6) Successfully leading the effort to substitute Styrofoam lunch trays with recyclable cardboard alternatives, as well as the effort to remove plastic straws from schools (except upon request for young elementary schoolers and children special needs) 8) Successfully advocating for the addition of "global citizen" to the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) "Portrait of the Graduate" framework, which is still in use today To help the county reach the JET goals, in addition to the projects and goals for which I've expressed support in this questionnaire, I will support: -Preserving green space and working to start a countywide tree planting campaign on school grounds to allow for more carbon capture -Co-locating county facilities in or on school property, as has been done in the Opportunity Neighborhoods program, to make services more accessible and require less transportation -Continuing to reduce the use of single use plastics, Styrofoam, and other non-biodegradable waste -Creating a countywide composting program in school cafeterias -Adding solar panels on every school and administrative building -Improving energy and water efficiency in schools -Expanding school gardens to every school -Electrifying and increasing the energy efficiency of county vehicle fleets -Building on efforts to both electrify and reduce the nation's largest school bus fleet by offering free Fairfax Connector bus passes for students -Improving safe routes to schools and reducing reliance on kiss-and-ride

Kyle McDaniel, Democrat, At-Large

Although I am not an incumbent, I have followed the School Board's involvement with various climate initiatives, to include the recent adoption of the JET recommendations. I fully support the goals contained within the report, and I believe we should put in place concrete steps to achieve those goals. It would be my desire to see specific steps, timelines, and metrics adopted that are then used as part of the FCPS leadership's annual performance evaluation. Additionally, we must look at these steps through a lens of equity to ensure that all FCPS regions are moving forward with carbon neutrality in a just fashion. This means starting in underserved areas of the County to: electrify bus fleets, build solar panels, etc. It is also worth noting that to date, the various initiatives to achieve carbon neutrality have resulted in an annual savings of nearly \$10m, which is funding reinvested back into the classrooms. This is a win win scenario. Finally, as an entrepreneur in the aviation industry, I have committed my company to doing what we can to mitigate aviation's impact on the environment through a first-of-its-kind program where customers purchase carbon offset credits as they fly our training aircraft. Although the technology is not yet available for carbon neutral aircraft in the training environment, purchasing the offsets is a small way of doing what we can.

Ilryong Moon, Democrat, At-Large

Additional comments: I supported the formation of JET in 2019 when I was on the school board. I supported solar roofs, electric bus purchases, energy efficiency measures in our building operations, our building renovation and new construction to meet green standards and encouraging more recycling.

Lawrence Webb, Democrat, At-Large

Additional comments: During my time as a member of the Falls Church City School Board I was a leader in building a new high school that was environmentally sustainable. I am proud today to say that Meridian High School is a LEED Gold certified building. The building is also being used as a teaching tool to support curriculum for students to help build sustainable thinkers. I have a record of using environmental sustainability in school renovation and construction and I hope to bring that knowledge to Fairfax County.

Hamid Munir, Democrat, At-Large

Additional comments: Clean air and water are essential to life and we need to commit to district practices focused on taking appropriate action in all ways available.

Magisterial District races:

Rachna Sizemore Heizer, Democrat, Braddock

I was proud to support the school board's vote to adopt the JET directives. I have asked Dr. Reid for the operational plan to carry out these directives as well as annual updates on results. We must also advocate for funding to support implementation of the JET directives. We are fortunate to have robust environmental stewardship in our curriculum, but we need earlier focus on climate change. A review of our science curriculum would be appropriate to ensure environmental stewardship, climate change and other evidenced based best practices is reflected in our curriculum at all grade levels as developmentally appropriate. I also support expanding career and technical education and work-based learning opportunities in environmental science and sustainability careers.

Robyn Lady, Democrat, Dranesville

Additional comments: I am very excited by the approval of the JET's directives and various recommendations guiding Fairfax County Public Schools to a zero waste and carbon neutral future. The main obstacle to reaching these goals by 2030 is going to be money. I hope that the budget will continue to support electric buses, solar panels on schools, and ensuring that all renovations and new construction will be net zero. This is important work and we must do everything we can to support the JET recommendations.

Marcia St. John-Cunning, Democrat, Franconia

My work as a community school coordinator in an elementary school has included supporting a learning garden at Mt. Vernon Woods Elementary. I also partnered with the Fairfax NAACP Environment and Climate Justice Committee and the Audubon Society to sponsor a first ever Environmental Family Fun Day in which MVWE students set-up a booth that included information on responsible recycling and games created from recycled materials. I also brought an after school enrichment program to MVWE in which students participated in a 5 week water-shed protection program at Huntley Meadows. All these

efforts are first step gateways for young students to begin learning about environmental and climate solutions stewardship.

Harry Jackson, Republican, Hunter Mill

Additional comments: The main barrier to FCPS not meeting its JET Goals is financial accountability and failure to manage its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) properly, in its acquisition program to select vendors, manage its workforce, and utilize Environmentally Responsible Materials. The current members of the FCPS School Board refuse to receive criticism from the public in this matter by stating as a condition to be a speaker during community participation at School Board meetings to refrain from discussing Capital Improvement Program matters.

School Board members are responsible for overseeing facility issues to ensure effective organizational planning and resources such as financial, facilities, and human are available to achieve energy efficiency and carbon emission reduction goals are achieved. Green facility management is possible and should be a goal.

I have an education and professional background in facility management from my time supporting the Missile Defense Agency Facilities Management Directorate in the early 2000s and over twenty years of professional acquisition experience. The other candidates may desire to meet JET goals but need more education in acquisition, program management, and facilities management; they need to learn how.

I have been a Senior Program Manager supporting the United States Air Force, the United States Navy, and the Department of Homeland Security. Here is the professional expertise I bring to the position and role from the education and training I have completed:

- Certified Acquisition Professional – Acquisition Program Manager Level III, Department of Homeland Security
- Certified Acquisition Professional - Contracting Officer's Technical Representative, Department of Homeland Security
- Master Black Belt Certification
- Six Sigma Black Belt Certification
- Project Management Professional, Project Management Institute
- Prince2 Foundation, APMG International
- ITIL version 3 Foundation, APMG International
- Program Management Office, Defense Acquisition University
- Intermediate Facilities Engineering, Defense Acquisition University
- Intermediate Systems Planning RDT&E, Defense Acquisition University
- Intermediate Acquisition Logistics, Defense Acquisition University
- Contingency Contracting, Defense Acquisition University
- Mission Performance Assessment, Defense Acquisition University
- Mission Strategy Execution, Defense Acquisition University
- Mission Support Planning, Defense Acquisition University

-Systems Sustainment Management Fundamentals, Defense Acquisition University

-Intermediate Systems Acquisition, Defense Acquisition University

-Acquisition Logistics Fundamentals, Defense Acquisition University

-Fundamentals of Earned Value Management, Defense Acquisition University

-Earned Value Management Basics, Defense Acquisition University

Fundamentals of Systems Acquisition Management, Defense Acquisition University

Green facility management is possible and is becoming increasingly important as businesses and organizations recognize the benefits of sustainability for both the environment and their bottom line. By implementing environmentally responsible practices, organizations can reduce their carbon footprint, improve their reputation, and attract customers who value sustainability.

Overall, green facility management is an essential step towards creating a more sustainable and equitable future and should be a priority for any organization that is committed to reducing its environmental impact and promoting social responsibility.

I support fiscal oversight and the use of program management best practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the school system's vehicle fleet, promoting alternative modes of transportation such as walking, biking, and public transit, and improving safety around schools by reducing traffic congestion and improving pedestrian and bike infrastructure. I am for increasing the use of electric and hybrid vehicles in the FCPS fleet, expanding bus routes and schedules, promoting safe walking and biking to school through education and infrastructure improvements, and partnering with local organizations and community groups to promote sustainable transportation options.

I grew up riding my bike to school, and I want the children to experience the same benefits as I. FCPS has not had a financial audit in over 20 years. With an annual budget of over \$3 billion annually, it is inexcusable NOT to have the infrastructure around schools, such as sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes, to make walking and biking safer and more accessible for students. The goal is to increase the number of students walking and biking to school, reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality around schools.

Melanie Meren, Democrat, Hunter Mill

Additional comments: Since being elected to the Fairfax School Board in 2019, I have done much: 1) Championed Net-Zero design standards for all-new buildings, and Net-Zero-ready for renovations, into adoption. 2) Voted to adopt contracts to use renewable energy, including installing solar on schools and increasing electric school buses in the fleet. 3) Ensuring cross-division alignment and implementation with environmental protection and sustainability goals - through the current holistic review of all transportation and facilities in which I'm participating. 4) Brought the planning and over \$6 million in budgeted funds forward to install safe and accessible outdoor classrooms to spec in all FCPS schools. This is important for students to learn the STEM content needed to go into green careers that will combat climate change, and to encourage environmental stewardship to conserve and protect the environment. 5) Advised several individual schools on creating sustainable practices and fostering environmental education programs and experiences, particularly to advance the school division's Get2Green curriculum. 6) As PTA Green Team chair of the Wolftrap ES before COVID (and before being elected to the School Board), I worked with students and staff to revamp the school recycling program, and bring Wolftrap students for the first time ever to the NoVA Outside School Environmental Action Showcase - a

premier regional event to foster learning about conservation in schools and in fields of study in K12 and future careers.

Paul Thomas, Democrat, Hunter Mill

Additional comments: All of these are good and important goals. Some can be implemented quickly and easily (e.g., some of the career and education goals), while others are very complex and will take years (e.g., electrifying the fleet of 1,600 buses). We need to implement the easy stuff while working to make real progress on the harder items.

One other thing: I also support initiatives that expand safe walking and biking paths to school, which will help us reduce our reliance on buses and cars.

Mateo Dunne, Democrat, Mount Vernon

Additional comments: The JET goals are a starting point, but we can do better. I support the existing goals because they are better than nothing, but they are also unsatisfactory. I believe using the 2019 baseline is a mistake. I believe that every climate agreement and policy should utilize 1990 levels as the baseline from which to measure reductions. Emissions in 2019 were approximately 4 percent higher than in 1990 (source: EPA, "Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks"), so using 2019 levels represents the de facto acceptance of emissions at a higher level. I believe that the goals are not aggressive enough. I believe that FCPS should aim for "net zero" by 2030. Having worked in the energy sector for 15 years, I know that rapid gains are readily achievable, often at lower cost than expected. It only takes the political will to establish the goals, establish a clear plan with SMART milestones, and ensure their implementation. I believe that FCPS should hold the Superintendent accountable by developing SMART milestones to be incorporated into her performance standards, and instructing the Superintendent to hold regional superintendents accountable via the same method. Linking performance to milestone delivery will ensure that the school administrators have a vested interest in achieving these milestones. FCPS does not have a strong track record when it comes to meeting environmental commitments. The real expertise lies outside the four walls of Gatehouse and Willow Oaks where the FCPS bureaucracy resides. FCPS should utilize public-private partnerships and outside contractors to accelerate the realization of the net zero goals. Without specifying a preferred approach, FCPS should publish a request for information to solicit proposals from the private sector on how net zero could be achieved by 2030. For example, there are many companies that specialize in the installation and leasing of utility equipment, to include solar panels. Given the potential dollar value of this contract, FCPS would attract a wide range of ideas and bidders, which would offer FCPS the opportunity to partner with an outside company that will provide the necessary expertise and services at low or reduced cost to FCPS.

Harold Sims, Democrat, Mount Vernon

Additional comments: As the Mount Vernon Representative to the Fairfax County School Board, I am committed to supporting policies and regulations that serve students, teachers & staff, ensure safe schools, equity and inclusion.

Karl Frisch, Democrat, Providence

Additional comments: I have been proud to serve as one of two school board representatives on the Joint Environmental Task Force (JET) for most of my time on the board. During my tenure, I was honored to co-sponsor the historic vote approving the JET's various recommendations guiding our school division and county to a zerowaste and carbon-neutral future by 2030 and 2040, respectively. Additionally, I co-sponsored the board's first funding measures for our solar power initiatives and the electric transition of our enormous fleet of 1600 diesel school buses. A demonstration of my commitment to environmental justice, I took advantage of shifting school population growth to relocate a new school construction project that was initially slated for Blake Lane Park – the only green space available to the racially and economically diverse community in which it sits. The move helped save the park and will instead bring a new elementary school to a community with much greater need. Additionally, in my role on the JET, I offered a successful amendment to ensure that each of the group's resulting goals around energy conservation, transportation, waste management, and workforce development were pursued with an equity lens. As a result, our first electric buses serve marginalized communities, and our first solar energy projects are at diverse schools with high poverty rates. The school system has limited funding. Every year, we face difficult decisions around our climate and sustainability goals. Will we continue funding our electric school bus transition? Will we continue installing solar panels on our schools? Will we continue working to make all new and renovated schools net zero? Will we continue working toward zero waste? Advancing and increasing these investments are among my top priorities because our work on environmental initiatives already saves \$9 million annually – money we can reinvest in student success. As an aside, in my day job as a senior advisor to Accountable.US, I have worked on a variety of critical climate and environmental policy issues, including efforts to advance President Biden's America the Beautiful Initiative (30x30) and expose the industry-funded astroturf groups that oppose these and other commonsense efforts to preserve public lands, build climate resilience, and chart a sustainable future.

Sandra Anderson, Democrat, Springfield

Additional comments: Thank you so much for your time and the opportunity to answer the questions important to your organization. While teaching written communication skills to Engineering students at Kansas State University, my students and I worked hard to embrace conversations about sustainable building practices, like green building and LEED certification, and energy saving measures, like solar power and wind energy. I also taught a course that blended Construction Science and Hotel Restaurant Management students together. Without many overlapping content areas for the course, I developed a large culminating project that focused on green building practices and sustainable hospitality industry approaches. The results were enriching both for me as their instructor, but also for the students who saw how they could work together toward the same goals despite the differences in their fields. I have not had a chance to utilize this experience in my current roles around FCPS as a parent and Parent Teacher Organization leader, but I look forward to reengaging with those conversations in this new position and working toward innovative and creative solutions to our shared problems.

Seema Dixit, Democrat, Sully District

Additional comments: As a strong advocate of achieving Net Zero Carbon Pollution, I will fully support efforts to direct the superintendent to develop SMART Goals for FCPS school board's JET directives. It should be part of FCPS Superintendent's annual performance evaluation. We need to hold the leaders accountable to implement the plans. There are many other things that can be done at local school levels, we need to put our effort for zero waste and biodegradable alternatives. I'm excited to read this article,

it's a step in the right direction and hopefully we will be fully electric in the next decade.

<https://electricschoolbusinitiative.org/electric-school-bus-series-electrifying-partnership-fairfax-countyvirginia>. As a school board member, I will commit to zero waste and carbon neutrality initiatives in FCPS due to the following reasons: As we use all that mother nature provides to us, we have a responsibility to take care of our environment and preserve it for future generations. Climate change causes damage to infrastructure, loss of agriculture, and increased cost of energy. We don't want to live in a world where some parts of the world are inhabitable. Increased air pollution can lead to respiratory problems, and other health issues. Climate change disproportionately affects marginalized communities and worsens existing social and economic inequalities.

A candidate who responded NO to one question:

Saundra Davis, Republican, At-Large: yes to all but “NO” to #4. Do you support transitioning the FCPS bus fleet to electric alternatives by 2035 and to increase necessary charging infrastructure as fleets grow?

Additional comments: At this point, the main focus of the school board should be on academics. As an independent, I support FCPS doing all that it can to get to net zero energy and enhance its use of renewables. It's common sense. But I am concerned that the goals are so aggressive that the market will not be able to help us meet them, and we will need to pay close attention to the timelines and our ability to meet them. Some schools are not able to wait to be remodeled or built. Also, the budget is obligated to so many other expenses and priorities, I want to be sure that funds diverted to the buses are not going to harm our ability to, for example, keep up with other commitments like the cost of living adjustments for teachers.

Candidates who did not respond:

Geoffrey Akey, Republican, Hunter Mill

Ricardy Anderson, Democrat, Mason

Cassandra Aucoin, Republican, At-Large

Christin Ball, Republican, Mason

Christine Garton, Independent, Dranesville

Cynthia Lang, Independent, Sully

James Lewis, Democrat, At-Large

Linda Pellegrino, Republican, At-Large

Anthony Sabio, Republican, Providence

Mark Tenney, Democrat, Franconia

Debra Tisler, Republican, Providence

About FACS

Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions unites people of faith to develop local solutions to the climate crisis. We pursue four purposes in our work:

- sound an ethical and spiritual call to address climate change;
- encourage moral climate policies from a nonpartisan perspective;
- enable congregations to do good works that protect our planet and its people;
- empower congregations to become champions of change.

We work primarily on the local level, and occasionally on the state level, where we can have the greatest impact.

We work with people of faith. Faithful voices are valuable in the conversation on climate change, and faith-based action draws on a deep well of love for each other and the planet we share.

Our network includes Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, Mainline Protestant, Hindu, Unitarian Universalist, Society of Friends, and other traditions. Our work is done in Northern Virginia, with a primary policy focus on Fairfax County, the most populous jurisdiction in Virginia.