

Name as it appears on the ballot: Sunil Dasgupta

Where you live (municipality/area): Aspen Hill

Date of birth (we keep track of age without asking for updates): June 16, 1968

Do you have children who attend or have attended Montgomery County Public Schools? Which schools and when? Three. Currently at Rockville High School, Loiederman Middle School, Barnsley Elementary School. (NOTE: Is it possible not to publish this information on a public website?).

Current occupation and employer (may also list up to two previous jobs you've held); if retired, list your last job and employer: Professor, and Director of the Program in Political Science at UMBC at Universities at Shady Grove.

Political or education advocacy experience (public elected offices held and when, as well as unsuccessful campaigns for office and which years; can include PTA or similar experience; do not include political party positions):

For the last 11 years, I have advocated for improving K-12 education at my job at the Universities at Shady Grove, where we work at the forefront of democratized higher education. I have researched and written about schools and worked to strengthen the 2+2+2 pipeline between MCPS, Montgomery College, and the Universities at Shady Grove. I have been concerned about the performance gap that disproportionately affects our many low-income, first-generation college, and first-generation immigrant students.

First time political candidate.

Volunteer positions and participation include PTA President and Vice-President, Earle B Wood Middle School, 2017-19; Rockville Cluster Coordinator, MCCPTA Board Member, MCCPTA Health and Safety/Wellness Committee Chair 2017-2020; Founder and convener of Annual Mental Health and Wellness Forum for families, students, and staff, 2018, 2019, 2020. Member of the Schools Technical Advisory Team for the Planning Board's Subdivision Staging Policy, 2019-2020.

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Campaign contact information:

- **email:** friends4sunil@gmail.com
- **website:** sunildasgupta.com
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/SunilforSchoolBoard/>
- **other:** <https://twitter.com/sunildasgupta4>

1 – Why are you running for this office? (75 words max)

~~Education does not arrive magically to our students. We face unprecedented challenges with teacher retention and balancing resource allocation. I want to hire more teachers and staff, reduce class size, rebuild the home/school partnership, and invest in the health, safety, and wellness. Where is the money? We have to make sure the state and county will fully fund schools, and I hope to rebalance capital and operating budgets to stretch the money we have. Education does not arrive magically to our students. We face unprecedented challenges with teacher retention and balancing resource allocation. I want to hire more teachers and staff, reduce class size, rebuild the home/school partnership, and invest in the health, safety, and wellness. Where is the money? The state and county will increase funding to meet the goals of the Kirwan Commission, and I hope to rebalance capital and operating budgets to find more money.~~

2 – What qualities or experience do you have to serve on the school board? (100 words max)

I am a first-generation immigrant and parent of 3 MCPS students. I have 20 years of classroom teaching and policy research experience, 11 teaching MCPS graduates. I have worked with budgets, financial reports, and data. I have been a PTA leader and founded the annual Mental Health and Wellness Forum for students, staff, and families. I have served on various school-related MCPS and county committees including on health, safety, use of screens, and the Planning Board's Subdivision Staging Policy and I have written publicly on education issues and testified before the Board of Education, County Council, and other forums.

3 – What is the most important issue in this race and what specific plans do you have to address it? (100 words max)

While school boundaries may be the runaway issue, our focus should absolutely be on closing the performance gap while enabling students who are doing well to do even better. There is no one silver bullet, but hiring more staff is step one toward reducing staff ratios; retaining and training teachers better; improving rigor and content in the curriculum; targeting resources to those who need it most; rebuilding the home and school partnership; and enabling investments in health, safety, and wellness. To do all of this, we need a strong BOE to secure resources, reprioritize, and rebalance capital and operating budgets.

4 – What is your opinion of the current countywide boundary analysis? (75 words max)

The current boundary analysis should be allowed to proceed as planned and we should look at the data produced from the analysis to inform changes in the future. The contracting firm should offer recommendations for change and MCPS should release the software tool the firm is developing as well as the underlying data collected as part of the analysis. Lastly, BOE and MCPS should take the lead in the public discussion, not contractors.

5 – Do you believe school boundaries should be redrawn? Why or why not? (100 words)

~~I have studied and written articles investigating this complex issue. After decades of massive demographic and population change—and 100 overcrowded and 99 under-enrolled schools—boundary changes are inevitable. We can guarantee predictability and adjacency of school assignments by developing a regular, transparent, and fair process of systemwide review and adjustments. Four basic principles: create an office to develop the planning and public~~

~~engagement expertise, do it regularly, do it systemwide rather than piecemeal, and do it in a predictable way to ensure student-cohort stability. I have written more here: <https://bit.ly/2SMdVv7>~~

I have studied and written articles investigating this complex issue. After decades of massive demographic and population change—and 100 overcrowded and 99 under-enrolled schools-- boundary changes are inevitable. We can either plan for it or be forced into it. We can balance utilization, stability, proximity, and diversity by developing a regular, transparent, and fair process of systemwide review and adjustments. Four basic principles: create an office to develop the planning and public engagement expertise, do it regularly, do it systemwide to allow cascading adjustments, and do it in a predictable way to ensure student-cohort stability. See more here: <https://bit.ly/2SMdVv7>

6 – What is one issue the current school board has handled poorly? What would you have done? (75 words max)

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~~On the boundary issue, the Board has been reactive on the boundary issue rather than taking and lost control of the public discussion as elected officials. MCPS has -sStudent enrollment and demography data is already on MCPS servers. The data on school proximity is a GIS layering exercise. Rather than completing this work and releasing the data and the software tool, they allowed the data collection itself to become controversial, -and contracted out the responsibility for public engagement, and. The Board has since changed the contractor's scope of work under pressure. and added to the confusion. I would have done the data and GIS work, made them publicly available, and led public discussion.~~

7 – How well has Jack Smith done as superintendent? Give specific examples (100 words max)

Under Dr. Smith, MCPS has produced evidence of the performance gap and its contributing causes, supported systemwide boundary analysis, and pushed for universal screening for magnet programs, and automatic enrollment of qualified minority students into rigorous courses. But some answers remain elusive. On performance gap, how do we target students who need it most? On boundary change, what is the path forward knowing that it is both necessary and controversial? On labor relations, how do we encourage collaboration? On school design, how do we adjust to changing land-use? Dr. Smith cannot answer these questions alone. The BOE should provide leadership.

8 – What are the most important issues related to student safety? How would you address them? (75 words max)

Address physical security by reducing portable use, adding entrance vestibules and cameras that work and are monitored. Long-term, use educational approaches, not more police officers inside schools. More counselors, restorative practices, teacher diversity, and lower

teacher/staff ratios so students have a trusted adult in the building. Rebuild the home and school partnership. Introduce age-appropriate brain science coursework to train students in the life sciences, but also to empower students to manage stress and anxiety better.

9 – MCPS currently has an achievement gap for students of different races and socioeconomic backgrounds. How would you address it? (75 words max)

We should reduce class size/staff ratios by hiring more teachers, staff, and counselors; improve staff and curriculum diversity; and train staff better. Lower class size allows teachers to develop stronger relationships with students and families, and these relationships serve as the ~~basis~~ for foundation on which students to connect to learning. We need to keep staff and programs in schools currently facing pressures of under-enrollment, expand hiring to encourage diversity, and consider the possibility of higher pay.

10 – Do you support raising the salary for school board members? Why or why not? If yes, how much? (50 words max)

Governing a \$2.8 billion organization without any staff requires long hours and having a little bit more money can ease the burdens of service. I support increasing salaries but staying below the salary of state delegates. The real question is whether the school board should remain a part time position.