

Re-endorse Larry Fishtahler for the APS School Board

(Announcement of candidacy at the February meeting of the Arlington Democrats)

Once before you honored me with your endorsement.

Now I am working to earn your endorsement again because

I now have new experience our school board urgently needs, and

because of the seriousness of the issues we already have and ones we need to anticipate.

Last Friday I completed a long-term substitute assignment at Wakefield;

one of several post-COVID.

My campaign is just beginning, but I want tell you what it is about.

The COVID experience and the return to school have done significant damage to the confidence that our schools are providing the best education available.

That confidence has two aspects; “external” and “internal”.

The external relates especially to the parents of our students.

Although slowly improving somewhat – that confidence is not built back quickly.

I understand this. I have three decades of dedicated service to our schools including as Chair of the Advisory Council on Instruction, and as President of the County Council of PTAs.

The view from inside is very different.

The most valuable resources our schools have are our teachers and school-based staff.

It is here that confidence in the leadership of the central administration and the School Board itself continues to decline.

The improvement that parents see has happened because teachers particularly have taken on an increase in their workload and additional stresses.

Because of slow reactions, a failure to anticipate, a lack of understanding of classroom dynamics, and other mistakes, faculty feel acutely this lack of confidence.

We need to re-think, to reprioritize, and rebalance in order to resolve issues we have now, and anticipate what's next. We need to fundamentally re-imagine education.

We have real work to do to realigned our efforts to achieve the best for our students with the resources available – now and into the future.

My three decades of service from the external aspect is now coupled with my new experience from the internal aspect. Both of these are combined with my previous professional experience as a systems engineer working at the highest levels on NASA's development programs – [Space Station, and Climate Change Research].

In all of these I have gained valuable experience in creating the future.

Governance and policy making are not easy to do well. But it is indispensable to have an understanding of how it's going to show up in the classroom.

In closing I want to stress this. Knowing about our schools is one thing.

Given the information available anyone can get an AI-bot to say seemingly intelligent things about issues and solutions.

But what is missing, what is indispensable to a real understanding, is how it feels when you are in a classroom working with students.

It is this aspect that I can now bring to our school board.

At our March meeting you will have a full elaboration of this sketch, and I will make a pledge about my campaign, a pledge each candidate should make.

I am Larry Fishtahler, striving to earn your first-place vote by convincing you that I will make a truly valuable contribution to the school board's deliberations.