

1. What do you feel is the most important issue facing HCPSS at the current time? What steps should the BOE take to address this issue?

I am deeply concerned that each of the past two budget cycles have been accompanied by increases to class sizes. I believe that stopping and reversing this trend must be a key priority for the upcoming Board. We know from research that the most effective means of delivering instruction are with small class sizes and deep student-teacher connections. The Board can and should commit to reducing class sizes, potentially at the elementary level initially and working our way up to middle and high schools. Staffing should be differentiated to reflect the specific needs of the community and the schools with an overall drawdown of student to teacher ratios.

In order to do this, we must stop treating each budget cycle as its own separate crisis. We need to develop a multi-year strategic plan to enable us to better align our budgeting priorities.

2. How do you think the BOE should implement Dr. Martirano's Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion (ensures academic success and social-emotional well-being for each student in an inclusive and nurturing environment that closes opportunity gaps) across the levels?

As the Superintendent oversees day to day operations of the schools and the Board is charged with governing, we can focus our governance in the following ways:

1. Require the Administration to provide data and information to the Board and to the public. By bringing this information, like the disproportionate discipline data, into the light and allowing public scrutiny, we can begin to develop strategies to resolve problems. For example, I recently brought it to the attention of the Board that our Athletics and Extra-Curricular Activities Eligibility Policy may be unfairly affecting vulnerable populations, but we do not know because the system is not tracking the data. As a member of the Board, I will continue to look for obstacles to equity and demand that we address them.
2. Develop policies that focus on ensuring equitable results, require measurable outcome data, and include public reports to the Board so that we know if our policies are meeting our goals. For example, right now based on existing policy, if a freshman special education student has all C's and one D during their first quarter grading period, they cannot participate in Allied Sports or Best Buddies for the entire Winter season. Is that exclusion really serving the interests of the student? As I have done for the last five years on over 30 HCPSS policies, I will continue my commitment in this area to do research and to examine the policies for inconsistencies and unintended consequences.
3. We need to direct spending at a high level to ensure that are areas of investment align with priorities and mission. For example, is our financial commitment to programs like BSAP, Hispanic Liaisons, and Saturday school sufficient to meet the needs of those students? Does funding for ESOL or Special Education students adequately meet their needs? Are our students who perform on-grade-level being given appropriately small class sizes to enhance their educational outcomes? Are we providing adequate financing and offerings of vocational education for those that are inclined to enroll in it? Once on the Board, I will ask the hard questions and demand that we invest in our vulnerable populations.

4. As a Board, we can direct our support for legislation that supports our diverse populations. This use of the bully-pulpit is important, and we should lead by example.

### 3. What is your approach regarding school safety plans?

School safety should not leave our schools feeling like a high security facility, locked down, and prison-like. Any measures that we take should be grounded in data and research and not knee-jerk reactions based on fear and creating a false sense of security.

We need only look as far as Santa Fe, Texas to know that hardened targets, increased armed officers, and an active-shooter plan did not stop or prevent the loss of 10 lives and catastrophic injuries to 10 more people. The increase of police presence in schools is by definition--an increase of law **enforcement** officers. These are people trained in enforcement, not necessarily in community building, de-escalation techniques, and cultural proficiency to address the needs and concerns of our diverse student body.

We are better served by addressing the social, emotional health of our students at their youngest ages and continuing to help them build skills for coping, learning to engage with their peers, learning how to build and maintain relationships, learning to be civil and civically minded, being good digital citizens, and participating in restorative justice programs. If we begin to provide more social services through the schools, then we can help our students to be less isolated and more engaged and connected.

When officers are assigned to schools with higher socioeconomic needs, there are greater occurrences of arrests. Let me give an illustration of what might happen using an experience my husband had in high school. He grew up in Northern Ohio, and one of the high school pastimes was throwing rolls of toilet paper in the trees at the houses of friends ('TP'ing' the house). One of the times his house was TP'ed, the friends went a step further and broke eggs on his car. A few days later, my husband and his brother saw the friend's car in a parking lot and decided to return the favor. They didn't notice the police car watching the whole thing. The police officer pulled my husband and his brother over – they were 17 and 16 at the time. My husband explained the situation, the officer shook his head and gave them a warning not to do anything like that again.

Now – imagine the same situation with 17 and 16-year-old black males. The officer would have been well within his rights to arrest them for vandalism – the kids were clearly in the wrong. I'm sure the officer wouldn't see his behavior as racist – he would just be enforcing the law.

The issue is that the same behavior is often viewed differently depending on the race or gender of the individuals. In school, one student may be viewed as 'high energy' and 'comical', while another acting similarly may be viewed as 'out of control' and 'disrespectful'. In both cases, there may be behavior that needs to be corrected – but one student gets warnings and the benefit of doubt, while the other gets formal punishments. Discipline and law enforcement are integrally linked and are part of the unseen package of school safety. As such, they need to be handled with thoughtful deliberation, based on research of effective methods, and be conducted openly and transparently so that all concerned can feel that their voice is heard.

### 4. What are your priorities regarding setting the school calendar?

I believe the mission of the school calendar is to have the most contiguous, consecutive full days of instruction possible so that goal of educating our students is at the forefront. We need to recognize that half days have our most vulnerable populations out of school and losing instructional time. On half days of school, we do not have Prek/RECC programs. Parents often cannot take off work on half days with students subsequently staying home because of logistics concerns in childcare coverage. It is sometimes easier for a student to stay home the whole day than for a parent to arrange coverage and transportation for a half day.

It is my belief that we also need to lobby for the revocation of Governor Hogan's Executive Order regarding starting after Labor Day and ending by the 15<sup>th</sup> of June. Many schools systems throughout the nation begin instruction in early August. As a comparison, my sister's students in Nashville receive a month more of instruction for AP classes before the associated AP exam than our children enrolled in the same courses in Howard County. That is valuable instruction time being lost to tourism dollars.

5. How will you address redistricting and improving the balance of socioeconomic diversity across all schools?

I fully support redistricting, particularly to balance socioeconomic diversity across all schools. In the summer of 2016, I sat on the policy to review and revise the Attendance Areas Policy (Policy 6010). I lead the charge in the group to include real comprehensive measures of socioeconomic diversity as metrics. Previously, the school system only used Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) enrollment data and standardized test scores to assess the impact on socioeconomic rankings. With other community support, I was able to get the following additional factors included:

- a. The racial/ethnic composition of the student population.
- b. The socioeconomic composition of the school population as measured by participation in the federal FARMS program.
- c. Academic performance of students in both the sending and receiving schools as measured by current standardized testing results in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics.
- d. The level of English learners as measured by enrollment in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program.
- e. Number of students moved, taking into account the correlation between the number of students moved, the outcomes of other standards achieved in POLICY 6010 5 of 7 Section IV.B. and the length of time those results are expected to be maintained.
- f. Other reliable demographic indicators, when applicable.

After the conclusion of the policy review process, I had the opportunity to attend a conference at the US Department of Education on School Diversity in Action, along with the HCPSS Coordinator for Cultural Proficiency. This conference highlighted some of the successes found in other school districts across the nation trying to systemically address the issue of diversity and inclusion. One of the most effective ways

to promote diverse and inclusive schools is through school attendance areas. I then suggested that we alter the policy to include

- a. The socioeconomic composition of the school population as measured by percentage of households at or under the poverty line.
- b. The socioeconomic composition of the school population as measured by the level of adult educational attainment.
- c. The socioeconomic composition of the school population as measured by the percentage of single-family households.
- d. The socioeconomic composition of the school population as measured by home ownership.

All this information is available at the census block level and could avoid data which possible legally protected under FERPA.

As such, it is my hope that through strategic multi-year redistricting, we can alleviate overcrowding in the Northeast, fill under-capacity schools in the West, and make reasonable socioeconomic diversity balancing.