



QUESTIONS POSED TO
& ANSWERED BY HCPSS

African American Community Roundtable
Fall Education Forum

September 25, 2017 | 6PM | Long Reach HS

Q&A

Howard County Public School System Responses to Questions
Submitted During the African American Community Roundtable Fall Forum on September 25, 2017

My daughter's Algebra II teacher has asked the students and parents to reassess whether they belong in GT the first day of class. She encouraged students not to be afraid to switch now to lower grade or even Algebra I. I am curious to hear what the district thinks of these comments. **We encourage all staff to set high expectations and to value our students' desire to excel in all facets of their educational experience, but also to ensure that all students and families make academic decisions that will challenge them appropriately and help them succeed. We will continue to remind our educators of this expectation. If you have further concerns, please contact Dr. Kevin Gilbert at [Kevin Gilbert@hcpss.org](mailto:Kevin.Gilbert@hcpss.org) or 410-313-1542.**

Parents and teachers play a role in the education and growth of the child. What are teacher options when parents don't fulfill their role? **We ask that all educators seek to establish partnerships with the families we serve and have meaningful engagement with both, our students and their families. As a district, we will continue to create environments that not only promote this, but also look for ways to facilitate family involvement. We would love to hear of ideas from the community to foster additional parent engagement.**

Why hasn't the pupil teacher ratio been adjusted? **Our pupil teacher ratio is based on the number of actual educators we have available to instruct our 56,000 plus student body. Adjustments can only be made with increased staffing. We want the most impactful experience for our students and recognize the importance of lowering class sizes, which lends itself to more individualized instruction. For concerns related to this, please contact Mr. David Lerner at 410-313-1518.**

Recently, there was a threat made on social media against a high school promising violence. How can we be assured that the student found responsible has been appropriately disciplined? **HCPSS takes the safety and welfare of its students seriously. We investigate every threat to the students and educators in our district to the fullest extent of the law and cooperate with law enforcement. Students are disciplined accordingly based on our policy.**

Pick six of your management changes and indicate how each one will be an effective producer in educating Black kids/students of Howard County? **Central office has been organized in a manner that will best support our families and students. This will allow for more direct attention to the specific academic, social-emotional, and physical needs of our students, at the same time, assist in the elimination of barriers to success and opportunities. The immediate positions that come to mind are: The director of diversity, equity and inclusion which reports directly to the superintendent. The addition of three community superintendents along with three performance, equity, and community response officers, who all report directly to our chief of school management and instructional leadership and provide direct ground support. We now have an executive director of community, parent, and school outreach who serves as direct connection with our community and families. All of these positions, as well as others, work in tandem to make sure every child receives an equitable education, resources and support and succeed.**

What are some ways that we can improve our schools for our students? **The best way to have an effective learning environment is to make sure the climate of the school is one that is caring, nurturing, and supporting our students. To be successful, there must be a commitment to building trusting relationships between HCPSS, students, and families and having a meaningful partnership. Through our new leadership team, we will continue to make improvements.**

There has been noise about reliability of data when it comes to upcoming redistricting. Can you give us confidence in current predictions? **There was a lot of time and energy spent analyzing data and working through the initial process around redistricting. We acknowledged the early errors in the data, corrected them, and have received third party validation and verification by hiring an independent firm.**

The noise around redistricting has been unpleasant. How do you plan to reunite the community after November, and at the beginning of next school year? **We continue to ask people to be civil to one another, to work through the process, and to honor, respect, and value each other. We recognize the angst, tension, and uneasiness that redistricting has presented itself. We understand that issues that impact our children can have an emotional response. As a system, we will continue to encourage the practice of civility as the redistricting process continues.**

Why is there a 12-month interim superintendent time line when it appears that Dr. Martirano manifests the substantially rich quantities of an outstanding applicant? **The Board of Education of Howard County is obligated by law to follow policy when it comes to selecting a new superintendent.**

Nationally and in Howard County there is a more apparent focus on girls. Will there be an effort to be more supportive of boys? Show equity in support for them. **We will increase our efforts to address all disparities that exist within our district. This would include examining disparity data within gender. Equity involves removing any and all barriers that prevent individual student success, and Dr. Martirano has made that a priority for HCPSS.**

In addition to diversity, will training include need for teachers to expect excellence is possible for all ... not just for gifted and talented students? **Yes. We encourage our educators in HCPSS to set high expectations for all of our students, and will provide as much staff development as necessary to making this a reality for each and every student.**

What's the dropout rate for students of African American descent? **The overall HCPSS dropout rate is 7% and the dropout rate was 5.8% for African American students.**

What percentage of the 7% dropouts/students are African American Students? **Please see question 12.** African American males? **The dropout rate for African American males was 7%**

Raising awareness about diversity, equity, and inclusion is important. But how are you identifying issues of structural racialization and structural bias within the school system? **Every aspect of HCPSS will be assessed to determine if barriers exist that are denying access and opportunity to any segment of our student body. If a barrier exists, we will take a systematic approach to removing the barrier. The Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is working on developing standalone offerings that deals specifically with diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

How are you preparing teachers to teach equity and inclusion when they may not know or truly understand these issues? **We have a robust cultural proficiency program that ushers in awareness. The department of diversity, equity, and inclusion will be seeking complementary trainings that get to issues like bias, diversity, culturally responsive teaching, and any other offerings that will assist in this area. Another important piece is ensuring that everyone understands our definition of equity and inclusion.**

How do you plan to communicate "equity" to Howard County's tax payers if funds are allocated to more needy areas or needy children? How will you justify this? **We will be consistent in our message, highlight the areas where the greatest investment is needed through quantitative and qualitative data, and keep the focus on our students. Equity is about providing individuals the supports and resources they need to eliminate barriers that are impeding them from access and opportunity.**

Diversity Officer, What have you identified as the top three issues/challenges that you need to address? What will be your initial strategy? **The immediate three areas of focus will be building trusting relationships with students, families, community, and educators throughout Howard County; working with the chief academic officer and the executive director for curriculum and instruction to provide our students with a rich educational experience that is inclusive; and work with the chief human resource and leadership officer to diversify our workforce through recruitment and retention; and provide quality development and supports for meeting the needs of our diverse student body. The initial strategy will be to start with awareness, build capacity throughout HCPSS, partner with students, families and the community, and implement change with fidelity through individual and collective action.**

We discussed how teachers can be more empathetic and aware of how to help those students who need more support, but, how do we address the bias of other students, and the hate they show many- many times out of ignorance but also out of learned hate? **We will work with all of our schools to ensure there is a caring, nurturing, and supportive climate that builds trusting relationships, creating safe spaces to have courageous conversations, and valuing one another through the lens of humanity, dignity, mutual concern, and respect. We will work with our educators to ensure that they have these disciplines in the classroom to encourage empathy and an awareness of bias.**

What are your thoughts on bringing a comprehensive restorative justice program? **Dr. Martirano has a set goal to have restorative practices implemented throughout the district, and that the practices we employ ensure that we are having a positive impact on our students, staff, and families by cultivating strong relationships throughout our school communities. This requires grounding our practices in restorative justice; upholding the sanctity of the practice; and making sure there is a focus on community, accountability in training, and consistency of practice throughout the school system. The philosophy of restorative justice emphasizes repairing harm caused by conflict and wrongdoing. It provides an opportunity for everyone impacted by an incident to come together in a safe space to address their feelings and needs, and reach a resolution that repairs the harm and restores relationships. With restorative justice at its core, restorative practices build healthy relationships between students and school staff, as well as among adults within the school community. These practices support students' healthy social and emotional development; create safe spaces for difficult conversations, deep emotions and healing; shift focus from intervention to prevention of disciplinary infractions; and shift the paradigm from punitive to restorative disciplinary practices.**

How do we meet each child at their level and support outside and inside class to bring them to their maximum potential? **It is the responsibility of HCPSS to ensure academic success and social-emotional well-being for each student in an equitable and nurturing environment that closes opportunity gaps. To be truly effective at making this a reality, every educator in HCPSS must be committed to providing a caring, supporting, and nurturing learning environment of high expectations for every student. This environment has to value not only the students we serve, but the families that entrust the very best they have in our care.**

Suspension rates for African Americans, Latinos, and Special Education students is disproportional. How will this be addressed in a comprehensive way? **HCPSS continues to monitor the suspension data on a daily basis. School leaders have monthly reports that not only outline the incidents but also look at the number of referrals, why students are being referred to the office, and who is doing the referring. The numbers are not where we would like them to be; which is why we are being intentional about eliminating the disparities and disproportionality that exist. 68 out of 76 schools have instituted Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) and 30 schools have implemented restorative practices.**

Many students who are interested in participating in programs, such as, interns/mentorships, or courses at HCC, are unable to do so due to transportation. How is the school system working to expand these opportunities? **We currently provide bus service from OMHS and the ARL to HCC to support students participating in the partnership program. We have an expansive Workstudy and Enclave program designed to transport students with an IEP to work locations throughout the county. We also support the Community Connections Program and Project Search. Lastly, while some students have access to public transportation from our schools, we continue our advocacy for the RTA to establish bus stops at each of our high schools so that students have further transit options.**

Could the overcrowding of the high schools on the east side of the county be resolved by rezoning w/ existing schools? **The Board of Education is currently in the process of school boundary adjustments (a.k.a., redistricting). There are multiple options (Feasibility Study, Attendance Area Committee Recommendation #1, Attendance Area Committee Recommendation #2) to address high school overcrowding, including a comprehensive redistricting. That said, the Interim Superintendent released his recommendation, which includes the introduction of a dual enrollment program, called Jump Start. With the acceleration of HS #13, which is anticipated to open in 2022, the Interim Superintendent recommended no high school redistricting for SY 2018-2019. However, the final decision rests with the Board of Education which is working on its plan to adjust attendance areas. It is expected that by 2023, we will be over capacity at the high school level by over 2000 students and so Dr. Martirano is pleased that the county executive has agreed to advance the 13+ high schools by 2 years to address this critical need. To participate in the process, you can find the latest Board of Education meetings here: <http://www.hcpss.org/school-planning/redistricting-process/> If so, why isn't that being done? The Board of Education is responsible for deciding when or when not to redistrict. The prompts for redistricting is found in Policy 6010, Section IV.A. If not, is more facility investment/renovation planned for east schools? The capital budget for FY 2019 includes funding for planning the next high school, HS #13. The site has not been determined.**

Are we directly asking the HS population to share ideas and give input to help 100% of high school students' graduate? **High School graduation rates is a topic that is discussed through the School Improvement Process. Community Superintendents and Performance Officers regularly review this data and the strategies being implemented to ensure we reach 100% graduation rates. These discussions also occur at each school through the School Improvement Team process. Dr. Martirano made addressing the 7% population a priority and encourages the community to share their ideas.**

Has HCPSS undergone Active shooter scenarios in order to protect students and teachers? **The Howard County Public School System routinely conducts drills with students and teachers which include active shooter scenarios. These are performed in close cooperation with the Howard County Police Department and drills are reviewed by our security and emergency preparedness staff. HCPSS is currently evaluating a response program espoused by the Maryland Center for School Safety as part of our ongoing efforts to improve security and preparedness.**

Fed/state policy changes regarding employment for the disabled population take effect in 2018, what changes will be made/should be made in HCPSS to improve employability of our disabled students? **HCPSS recognizes the significant role disabled employees play in creating a diverse workforce. With that goal in mind, we maintain compliance with both federal and state laws and provide reasonable accommodations to disabled employees thereby allowing them to perform the essential functions of their jobs.**

Do you recruit retired professionals and other talented people that might consider education? **We look and consider all potential applicants including retired professionals and change in career applicants. The Maryland State Department of Education identifies critical shortage areas such as Science, World Language, and Math to name a few. In these critical shortage areas, we are able to hire someone provisionally, meaning they have a background in that area but are not currently a certified teacher. The content knowledge that a retired professional can bring is invaluable.**

We spoke about hiring teachers of color to reflect student population. How do you plan to support, provide equity and inclusion for them after hiring? ***This year's New Teacher Orientation was set within the context of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. And professional learning and leadership development activities during the year will continue to reinforce that.***

The Board Chairman's remarks in the opening session, charged all new teachers with prioritizing their most important role of serving all our students...making them feel welcomed, valued, and supported.

The Superintendent's keynote quickly established a warm rapport with our new teachers. Dr. Martirano shared his story of rising from poverty, and the significance teachers and education played in his life. He shared his Call to Action and emphasized its first desired outcome that states that equity and relationships are at the foundation of all decisions and actions.

The second day of NTO began with a keynote from Kevin Gilbert, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Kevin introduced himself to the group, shared his story, including his professional experiences and how his team is working to implement Dr. Martirano's vision for social justice, including roles for education, advocacy and community action, professional learning, restorative practices, circles and student voice. Kevin was followed by Shannon Keeny, Facilitator of Cultural Proficiency, sharing information about Student Voice, it's role in the classroom, and future ways new teachers can learn and be a part of HCPSS's commitment to it.

Colleen Morris, Howard County Education Association President, Erica A Strauss Chavarria and Matthew D. Vaughn Smith then followed sharing HCEA's commitment and collaboration for social justice, teacher quality, and a commitment to a collaborative relationship with HCPSS. This commitment highlighted common support of equitable access to experiences and resources that promote understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, racial bias, and teacher quality.

Day 3 began with a keynote by John Krownapple, Coordinator of Cultural Proficiency and Razia Kosi, Facilitator of Cultural Proficiency sharing their stories defining the work of Cultural Proficiency, the HCPSS commitment to it, the professional learning experiences and resources new teachers can access as well as the roles and responsibilities of all in the system to support it.

Day 4 of NTO, premiered a newly designed addition to this year's New Teacher Orientation, required for all new teachers, and connected to Framework in Action 1 (strongly suggested customized professional learning experienced for all new teachers). Day 4 of NTO focused on the Charlotte Danielson theme of Student Assumption of Responsibility, which when implemented effectively, defines Proficient Professional Practice. The participant outcomes for the day were to:

- ***Deepen understanding of the premise and philosophy of the Danielson Framework for Teaching***
- ***Apply understanding of specific components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to their practice***
- ***Become aware of general expectations and processes of the HCPSS Teacher Evaluation Process***

All of the resources used to support this day and the two addition professional learning days can be accessed in the Framework in Action I CANVAS learning community in which all new teacher are enrolled. The remaining two days of Framework in Action I will deepen teachers' knowledge of the HCPSS Framework for Teacher Evaluation with respect to Professional Practice. Teachers will apply their learnings in the classroom setting.

The Framework in Action Level II is a three-day seminar that develops participants' capacities to meet the needs of all learners as it focuses on the manner in which teachers do what they do. Seminar participants use Cultural Proficiency as a process to explore the common themes that permeate the 2013 Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, with an emphasis on Equity, Cultural Competence, High Expectations and Student Assumption of Responsibility. These common themes help define teacher performance at a high level. A component of the HCPSS Teacher Induction Program, this course is targeted for non-tenured teachers in their second year of employment in the system.

The theme of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is also woven through classroom observations conducted by Instructional Mentors (Non-Evaluative Observers) and Administrators and Curricular Program leaders (Evaluative Leaders). This is done so through the critical feedback and dialog around performance executed in Domains 2 and 3 as well as artifacts from planning and performance in Domains 1 and 4.

Additionally, teachers can select from a wide variety of Continuing Professional Development Courses that focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as well as our Masters and Doctoral Cohorts that have this content as it's bedrock.

Teachers can also select to participate in Levels 2, and 3 of Cultural Proficiency professional learning experiences (Framework in Action II is congruent with Cultural Proficiency 1).

Does Howard County still have a partnership with Morgan State University? **Howard County need to have a partnership with Morgan State and we are working to restore this partnership. We have several Morgan grads that are current teachers, administrators and central office employees. We are now utilizing Jason McCoy (Morgan graduate) to assist with this collaboration. In the spring, we will again be visiting and presenting to a seminar class of graduating education seniors. It is our goal to develop a professional development school (PDS) partnership with Morgan State similar to the partnership we have developed with Coppin State University.**

What is the 1-3 year plan to increase the number of diverse teachers and administrators in the HCPSS? **At the end of every hiring season, the teacher hiring team comes together to review the hiring data and strategize an intentional recruiting and hiring plan. We ask ourselves: What went well? What areas can we improve? We review the outreach and recruiting efforts that we conducted and look to see what can be improved. We examine our hiring data based on content areas, ethnicity, gender, level of experience and education. It is our goal and plan to consistently raise our minority hiring numbers from one hiring season to the next. In addition, the following new initiatives have contributed to the increase in the number of newly hired diverse teachers over the last two years; we are pleased that our hiring for the current school year has already shown an increase in the percentage of diverse hires:**

2016-2017

- **New electronic applicant screening process**
- **Increase in the number of Open (early) Contracts offered to candidates**
- **Collaborating with the BSAP organization to identify potential teaching candidates**
- **Increased training for HCPSS personnel who are recruiting and interviewing teachers**
- **Strategically assign recruiters**
- **Diversity marketing program**
- **Attended HBUC job fairs**

2017-2018

- **Get to know Howard County Program**
- **School visits and tours for diversified candidates**
- **Present to the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) students in HC and at the TAM Conference**
- **Establish a working relationship with the PRIDE organization at Howard Community College**

- Participate in the NAACP Conference
- Implement a new partnership with Coppin University
- Attend HBUC job fairs
- Increase the number of Open (early) Contracts offered to candidates

2018-2019

- Expand the Get to Know HOCO event
- Increase the number of HBCU job fairs we attend outside of the DMV
- Continue to increase the number of Open contracts offered to diverse candidates
- Implement a new PDS partnership with Morgan University

What is the HCPSS doing about classroom order and attentiveness? We achieve these through six mediums:

1. Student Voice: The Howard County Public School System values students' perspectives and viewpoints through student voice. Teachers provide opportunities to listen, learn, and lead with students to critically examine and provide input on different aspects of the classroom and school community. As a result of this process, teachers and students will work more collaborative to create a more inclusive and equitable environment. When the student voice process is implemented, there is an increase in engagement and positive relationships.

2. Technology: Research clearly shows that student achievement increases when children are more actively engaged in learning. There are a number of strategies and approaches taken by the Howard County Public School System in order to increase student engagement. To begin with, HCPSS is very intentional about incorporating technology and multimedia in lessons across content areas. Technology is an integral part of society and, therefore, HCPSS fosters a wide variety of opportunities for students to utilize technology and access multimedia throughout their education career. All schools are equipped with computer labs as well as laptop carts for students to use. The computers are used in a variety of ways to engage students. These range from typing stories, to communicating with classmates through discussion boards, to interacting with students and adults across the country and around the world. Additionally, staff members leverage multimedia to further engage students. The uses for technology are nearly endless and changes regularly.

3. First Instruction: The Howard County Public Schools System places a premium on quality first instruction. The term first instruction refers to the lessons delivered by the classroom teacher. The school system strongly believes that well developed lessons delivered in an effective manner by the classroom teacher increases student engagement. Quality first instruction reduces the need for students to receive interventions. Regularly HCPSS staff members are engaged in professional learning with the sole purpose of improving instruction. Professional learning targeting first instruction is delivered in a variety of ways and takes place throughout the school year. In our elementary schools, HCPSS has adopted Charlotte Danielson Framework as a guide to enhancing first instruction. Research has shown that when teachers are facilitators of learning and incorporate strategies to keep students actively engaged that learning increases and off task behaviors decreases.

4. Goal Setting: When students take an active role in their education, achievement increases. One effective way to enhance student buy-in is to involve children in goal setting. Schools throughout HCPSS utilize student goal setting to further ensure that students are actively engaged in their learning. Goal setting can take place in a variety of ways and may be used in all content areas. For example, in physical education class students may set goals to complete a challenge or an activity in a certain amount of time. In addition, in language arts or math students may set goals to reach a particular score on an assessment or an activity. Other examples of goal setting may not involve times or scores but focus on effort. Students can identify specific behaviors that they will improve upon, such as reading every night for 20 minutes or making sure they raise their hand if they do not understand. Students are more motivated to learn and take greater ownership of their learning when actively involved in goal setting.

5. PBIS: Students' motivation and engagement in learning is increased through the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This framework assists school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions through defining, teaching, and acknowledging behavioral expectations. By reinforcing positive behaviors and building classroom communities, schools find that teachers spend more time teaching, as class disruptions, office referrals and suspensions are reduced. All of the schools in the Howard County Public School System participate in the Maryland Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

6. Student Choice: Teachers are encouraged to provide students with choice and opportunities to provide input into the daily instructional activities and classroom procedures. This facilitates student leadership and ownership in the students' educational experience. Students assume responsibility of their learning environment and are more actively engaged during instruction.

What can individuals in the community do to help students graduate? Who do we contact to assist in tutoring, mentoring, etc? **Most, if not all, schools offer some afterschool, during school, or before school support to students in need. If additional support is desired, the Howard County Educators Association (HCEA) manages the list of tutors for our school system.**

My student attends a HCPSS middle school. I am deeply concerned about equity, especially in those schools that have high populations of students of color and students who benefit from free and reduced meals. At my school, the students (mostly white) who are in the GT classed get a very different quality of instruction than students taking AT Grade level classes. There is no equity for these students. This should be unacceptable. What steps will you take to eliminate these kinds of gaps in equity for our students? **Low expectations for any student group is unacceptable. All of our courses are design to align to rigorous course standards, even those that are not designated as GT or Honors. Program staff develop curriculum resources to support intended levels of rigor and staff receive training to support implementation. If there are concerns about a specific teacher, they should be directed to the school administration or you may contact the community superintendent.**

Have funds for the BSAP, particularly homework club, been restored? **Yes. All BSAP programs have been financially supported at the same levels as in previous years. The differences in dollars between budget lines is due to salary changes.**

Will HCPSS be increasing the number of joint HS/Associate degree opportunities for students? At present there is only a cybersecurity program. **Yes, the Interim Superintendent recently proposed his Jumpstart Initiative aimed to accomplish just that. Programs will be available to all students, not just those students in GT programs. Actually capacity for the expansion will be determined once the Board of Education has made its decision on redistricting.**

What programs are in place to make sure students of color are placed appropriately and supported as needed? **School staff participate in articulation processes that feature talent spotting for all students. The HCPSS has worked to eliminate traditional barriers to participation in advanced courses. This includes adjustments to the course catalog to eliminate unnecessary pre-requisites, adjustment to course sequences to include college-prep pathways for all students, and adjustments to the course placement process at middle and high schools to permit students and families to request to be placed into any course that they desire. Once placed, students work with school staff before, during, and after school to receive supports as needed.**

What types of initiatives or strategies are being implemented for an equitable distribution of teacher resources for children of color and lower socio-economic status? **Each year, program staff and administrative staff at central office conduct a thorough needs assessment for each school. Resources and staffing decisions are made to accommodate school needs based on the needs of the student body.**