

## PUBLIC INPUT

### Board of Education of Harford County Public Emails Received

*Please note the comments have been recorded as they were received and were not edited for grammatical or typographical errors. Disparaging comments, personal attacks, and inflammatory remarks about specific schools or personnel have been omitted.*

Harford County is a great place to live, work and learn because I believe it has grown to accept individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences with open arms. The County offers a small town feel with various shopping amenities and diverse eateries. As a mental health counselor working in the County, I feel my services are beginning to be utilized, because the stigma of mental health and substance abuse are beginning to be more deliberately addressed and publicized within the County.

In my opinion, I expect that the new Superintendent should exhibit the following qualities: be willing to listen to various stakeholders; be approachable by all community groups; be receptive towards all forms of feedback ; demand intense review of all situations of racial issues, bullying and other issues that might arise; be an independent thinker; be honest and forthright, and have the ability to develop programs for at risk kids; live in the district; and have experience in both teaching and administration.

I believe the major challenges the new Superintendent will face will be appropriately addressing past racial injustices and race issues within the school system and adequately addressing grievances so that the community can heal. Often times these events are left out of local newspapers or other mediums but people that are affected do talk and have the right to be heard.

I would like the Board to include in the candidate interview questions:

- Why are you applying for the job and why are you the right fit for our school district?
  - How will you address racial intolerances?
  - What are your views on racial intolerance?
  - How will you address the serious lack of diversity within the school system?
  - How will you ensure that all children are truly equally educated and have access to the various teaching components: technology, AP classes opportunities, diverse teachers, and updated textbooks?
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Qualities that I want in a Superintendent:

- Experience in the same position with achievements that can be objectively measured
  - Goal oriented person who can demonstrate objectively measurable results
  - Good problem solver/ability to communicate with many different kinds of people
  - Would prefer someone from outside our school system that can come in and evaluate with "fresh eyes"
  - Forward thinker/progressive ideas
  - Responsive to parents/community input
  - Experience dealing with & improving the bullying/racism/class issues that are prevalent in our school system. (someone with implicit bias training would be good)
  - Believes in science (and climate change)
  - Does not want to privatize schools (believes excellent public education is best for society as a whole)
  - Not someone on the extreme religious right (do not want prayer in school/religion should be taught in the home not school)
  - I would like a superintendent that does NOT want teachers to be armed in the classroom.
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List three to four things that show your county is the best place to live, learn, and work

- I have worked for HCPS for 12 years and have found the staff really cares about the students. Many eagerly do what they can to see students achieve.
- Harford County has a premier public library system.
- Opportunities exist to partner with local businesses, including Aberdeen Proving Ground.

List four to five qualities/characteristics you would like to see in the new superintendent;

- Be able to have positive working relationships with other county officials, including the ability to negotiate and compromise
- Be able to ask the "hard questions" and follow through on what is truly best for the students and staff
- Be able to articulate long term goals relating to keeping our school system relevant and follow through with implementation
- Be able to recognize the importance of the staff to the success of the organization

List one to two major challenges the new superintendent will face;

- Teacher Pay — over the past decade, teachers have faced multiple years where steps were not allocated and cost of living raises were not received. Many teachers still face being on a lower pay step than their years of experience demand (I am currently 3 steps behind).
- Library Funding —Six years ago, school library budgets were severely cut. Funding needs to be restored so our school libraries can continue to remain relevant for our students. Items in the collection need to be updated for currency and accuracy.

List two to three questions you would like the Board to include in candidate interviews?

- What do you see as the role of a school library and a school library media specialist in the school ecosystem?
- What are your 3 biggest priorities for allocating funding for the school system?

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List 3 to 4 things that show your county as the best place to live, learn, and work.

- Proximity to urban centers (Baltimore, DC, Philadelphia, New York), small towns (Havre de Grace, Darlington) and rural areas. There is much to learn from each and our children benefit from visiting and participating in the life of these different centers.
- Access to centers of knowledge, such as Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland. We can consult with the best experts in education, mental health, learning differences, racism, underprivileged populations, etc. We can challenge students while being mindful of the differences among us.
- Proximity to nature: the bay, state parks, mountains, ocean. Our children can have direct experience with nature and how to conserve it as we face security threats, such as global warming and its effects on worldwide populations.
- Proximity to DC should give us the perspective that we're citizens of the world and need to work together for the good of people everywhere. Our political decisions affect many. Students can easily visit embassies and can be exposed to issues related to international affairs.
- Many in Maryland work for the government. Instill in children the value of public service.
- List 4 to 5 qualities/characteristics you would like to see in the new superintendent.
- Open mindedness and a willingness to constantly learn.
- Base decisions on the best information available and use decision making approaches to remove bias. Seek information and not merely opinion.
- Political savvy to contend with the various interest groups and agendas.
- Integrity

List 1 to 2 major challenges the new superintendent will face.

- Schools have become the place where many social ills come together and the demands on schools have become unrealistic. Besides top notch education based on the nurturing and recompense of excellent teachers, schools need to be inclusive and supportive of all students. One alienated student is one too many.
- The budget and how to allocate it.
- How to support teachers to provide the best education and social support for every student.

List 2 to 3 questions you would like the Board to include in candidate interviews.

- What resources would s/he use to address racism, bullying and complex situations when there are behavioral issues.
  - Has s/he considered educational models, such as those from Northern European countries where children have more time for recess, which in turn helps learning?
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List three to four things that show your county is the best place to live, learn, and work;

- HCPS serves students from a wide variety of demographics. The diversity of my school in particular is an amazing thing to see.
- Harford County provides a true suburban experience and is a short drive from both rural and urban areas.
- I left HCPS a few years ago and returned because I discovered that the neighboring school system was an awful place to work. I have worked in HCPS for 11 of my 21 year career in education and plan to retire from here.

List four to five qualities/characteristics you would like to see in the new superintendent;

Someone who:

- believes teachers and school based employees are the backbone of our system, NOT the Central Office.
- can articulate a vision for our system and focus on that vision, rather than having multiple ideas and concepts being thrown into the schools at once.
- understands the challenges that some of our populations face and is willing to create programs to help those at-risk students.
- is not from HCPS and has no ties to the current administration. We need a fresh voice and a fresh leader.
- someone who seeks to build teacher leaders and disenfranchise the "good old boy network" when it comes to promotions and hiring from within.

List one to two major challenges the new superintendent will face:

- Top problem will be the budget and funding teacher pay.
- Second will be the public's negative perception of teachers in Harford County.

List two to three questions you would like the Board to include in candidate interviews.

- What ideas do you have for balancing the budget that do not include the removal of classroom teachers via attrition?
  - What do you consider to be the most pressing issue facing educators today and how would you seek to ease or rectify this problem in HCPS?
  - Standardized testing is taking over the entire school year in Maryland. Are you willing to advocate for a reduction in testing at the state level in order to support and show achievement in HCPS?
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The next school superintendent should have some of the following qualities.

- Record working with community
  - Understand wealth inequality, race inequality with compassionate qualities.
  - Competent as well as culturally competent.
  - Works well with others.
  - Has proven track record in achieving results while listening to others.
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I believe it is critical to find someone who:

- is culturally competent
  - understands the impact of wealth inequity and race inequity in our schools & our society -is compassionate
  - is competent
  - works well with others
  - has a proven track record of achieving results in what they set out to do
  - will listen to the input of the community around them -can point to instances which demonstrate all these abilities and characteristics
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Three to four things that show your county is the best place to live:

- The accessibility to major attractions and cities.
- The affordability compared to Baltimore County,
- The updated school buildings and technology
- The support and feedback from administrators to promote professional

Four to five qualities/characteristics you would like to see in the new superintendent

- Charismatic- Charismatic leader is needed because they seem to be able to network with local business partners and get things that are needed for students.
- Innovative- Staying complacent is not what HCPS needs. Especially since we are at the bottom in the state in regards to teacher retention and salary scales.
- Lead by example- Have a body of work that shows that you are for students and their best interest. Be visible within schools and school system.
- Maryland Based- Have an understanding of the area and what works for this area. We are different from major school systems and have more of a family feel than others in the area.

One to two major challenges the new superintendent will face:

- Salary Scales- Teachers are leaving at alarming rates. Finding ways to address teacher retention and increase living wages should be top of the list. We are top 5 as far as income within the state but bottom 5 in salary scales.
- Diversity in recruitment- Making it a priority and not just something that sounds good. Coming up with a plan to attract and support teachers of color, male teachers in order to come up with a staff that most closely represents the students they serve.

Two to three questions you would like the Board to include in candidate interviews.

- What type of leadership style best describes you.
  - What is your vision for the district within the next 4 years. What would be your first initiative that you would take in office to accomplish that goal?
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I think the candidate should be committed to equity. I have big concerns with how the schools in the District vary so widely in test scores and student achievement.. It is especially obvious when a person in looking to buy a home in Harford County, with a quick Zillow search people immediately are turned away from certain areas due to the school scores. Or, the many, many conversations I had with people who here, all of whom advised to stay away from Edgewood schools. So, if a family can afford it, they can move to an area of the county where their children will receive a "good" education. It is a horrible situation and it shouldn't be like this.

There is also the issue or racial equity, and students of color being treated more harshly. At the Board of Education meeting tonight several people quoted statistics of students of color being three times more likely to be suspended. And of course the recent issues this school year with students using racial slurs against other students. This is a huge issue and needs to be addressed. Both the faculty, staff and students need to embrace and value diversity, steps need to be taken. It needs to be in the forefront.

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If the school board wants to limit true community input, this writing contest is the way to do it. Instead of removing barriers for community input, they erect them.

Not every citizen would be comfortable writing answers to such constructed questions. These questions are appropriate for an applicant to be a superintendent, who one would expect and even demand to be literate and a strong communicator, but it is inappropriate for citizens that have a concern. What this process infers is that citizens who have English as a second language or who are uncomfortable with written communication need not bother the school board.

A more equitable process that would include the maximum community input would exclude constructed questions in favor of just stating their concern.

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I am a Harford County Public school teacher and wish to add my voice to the search for our new superintendent. HCPS is in sore need of compassionate leadership that blends fiscal responsibility, what is best for students and building a loyal, talented staff of qualified professionals. We need a superintendent that actually likes teachers and requires his or her staff to behave as though they do as well. We need to be trained rather than shown the door. We need to be built up rather than criticized. Leaders who celebrate success and help the teacher identify opportunities for growth should be commended and applauded. This will require a superintendent who leads by example and can motivate his/her staff to do the same.

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Harford County is a wonderful community full of caring parents and students. Citizens are well educated and many care deeply about the world both in and outside of Harford County. We offer access to a wonderful STEM community in APG and other businesses. We offer access to both the culture of the city and the appeal of rural living. [On any given weekend you can go to Philly, DC, or Baltimore for the day or spend time hiking or sailing to get away from the pressures of the work week.](#) We have a terrific library system and you don't have to leave Harford County to experience arts and entertainment at our Harford Community College.

I would like to see a superintendent who has a decent "bedside manner." Someone politically savvy and willing to work with others in the county to find ways to be more efficient with the budget. I always felt she was very defensive and condescending in her interactions with teachers, parents, the school board, and the county government officials. She didn't seem the most politically savvy and didn't seem willing to work with others in the county to find ways to be more efficient with the budget.

My family wants a superintendent that has strong negotiation skills and has experience working with elected officials to get all the school system needs, but is willing to listen to opposing viewpoints. We want a superintendent that sees value in trying new things and has had experience in an area outside of the Baltimore/Harford County area. Though we do want someone with outside experience, the person has to understand that change comes slowly in Harford County. We do have many imports here because of APG, but many people are from generations of the Harford County born and bred and still mourn that Chili's is where a cow used to graze. We hope that person can be adept in straddling the needs of both types of Harford County students.

Obviously, the superintendent needs to value students and that means valuing teachers and putting the salaries of teachers as a top priority. I don't really know anyone that teaches in Harford County that doesn't complain about the salary. Many don't leave because they are so close retirement. The biggest challenges our superintendent will face - how to attract and maintain the top teaching talent.

I would ask the superintendent what he or she will do to make sure the students who are performing above grade level continue to receive challenges through high school. When over half the sophomore class takes AP World History that is not for the gifted. Also, how will the superintendent make sure gifted students are identified in all socioeconomic groups within Harford County.

I also want to know how the Superintendent will work with local law enforcement to bring updates, even if costly, to safety and security features that are crucial to keeping our students and staff safe.

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List four to five qualities/characteristics you would like to see in the new superintendent:

- I would like the new superintendent to be a person who is aware of the current scientific consensus on the best ways to educate children. And I would ask the board to reject any candidate who is not at least aware that there is a considerable body of research in this area with some very clear findings.
- I would like the new superintendent to have prior experience as a superintendent. Our school district is quite big and complicated. I'm concerned about it being a person's first experience as a superintendent.

List two to three questions you would like the Board to include in candidate interviews"

- Can you describe an educational practice that is done in another school system or country that you would like to see implemented at HCPS?
- What do you think should be the focus of kindergarten and pre-K education?

I would suggest that the Board ask the candidates; Are they familiar with education foundations — their purpose, the benefit of a foundation to the students and teachers, the relationship between the school system and foundation and how, working together, they can maximize overall effectiveness?

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Challenges the new superintendent will face:

- Working within the confines of a "constrained" budget
- Teacher retention
- Bullying
- Unfunded mandates

Qualities and characteristics that I would like to see in the new superintendent

- Natural born leader
- Leads by example.
- Willingness to think outside the box and don't necessarily accept the status quo. Open minded and receptive to new ideas.
- Builds bridges with contemporaries in an effort to reach common goals.
- A good negotiator who can discuss problems and establish workable solutions with all affected stakeholders.
- Can quickly adapt to changing conditions.
- Not afraid to tackle problems head on or make the tough decisions.
- A true professional.
- Displays a creative and "can-do" approach to problem solving.
- The word "can't" cannot and should not be the first option (unless of course the proposal is illegal).
- Uncanny ability to get to the heart of the problem.
- On those occasions when the superintendent has to persuade counterparts to rethink their goals and strategies, they do so with honesty and integrity.

3. Cooperative spirit.

- Establishes excellent working relationships and has a sustaining influence with those they come in contact with.
- Their approach always stimulates cooperation and participation and results in the fair evaluation and consideration of all viewpoints.
- Reflects a composure and stability that will have a positive influence on HCPS.

4. Outstanding communicator.

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
- Has to be one who is willing to LISTEN.
- Depicts a true compassion for enhancing the educational experience for students.
- The enhancement of their education has to be the top priority.

Potential questions for interviews.

- Describe three characteristics that truly define you as a person that postures you to be a leading candidate for this Superintendent position.
- You receive a call from a concerned parent that their child is being a victim of bullying. The parent has indicated that they have attempted to reach resolution through the respective school's chain of command with no success. This situation is having an adverse impact on the child's health and ability to learn. How would you approach this challenging situation?
- You have just reviewed the budget for the first time. You see that it reflects no pay increases for teachers, yet you are currently experiencing a retention problem. What creative budgeting strategies would you employ to address this critical funding shortfall?
- What is your single greatest achievement in the area of education?
- Why did you apply for this position and what are your long term goals? Where would you like to be in five years?

As we move forward with the transition under new leadership, I also think it is important to clearly define functional areas of responsibility and who reports to who within the organizational structure.

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List three to four things that show your county is the best place to live, learn, and work;

I do not live here. I do love the people in this county. I broke down recently and I cannot even count the number of people what wanted to help me (I was waiting for my husband.) I was really amazed because I do not think I would had the same response in Hunt Valley.

List four to five qualities/characteristics you would like to see in the new superintendent;

- a good listener, creative problem solver ( "out of the box" thinker) personable, positive approachable, good communication skills and is an advocate for students.
- strategic planner who is able to communicate the mission and vision of the school system
- has been a Principal in a school so he/she has the perspective of what schools really need, understands how to run a building and has **tangible** proof that they have moved their own school forward
- some folks have talked about the "Harford County way" and this does not help us to change and be forward thinking
- understand the importance of professional development in building capacity for all employees

List one to two major challenges the new superintendent will face; and

- building trust and reestablishing relationships within and inside our organization ( county council, school based admin, central office admin, teacher unions, and interest groups ( ex- swim, together we will, drama)
- budget

List two to three questions you would like the Board to include in candidate interviews.

- How will you build trust and reestablishing relationships within and inside our organization
  - There are many administrators who are very talented and have great ideas to move the school system forward. How will you capitalize on these talents and gather their input?
  - In my opinion our school system is very lean in central office and in the individual schools. This impacts the way we can more our school system forward. How will you approach developing a budget that will offer competitive pay for all but at the same time save positions throughout the school system?
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As a resident of Harford County, I would like to give input concerning the Superintendent search to replace outgoing Supt Canavan.

In attending Board of Education meetings for the last few months, some of the issues or qualities I would like to see in a new Supt are:

- A Supt who understands that teachers in the county need to concentrate on teaching, not piling on additional duties that are administrative in nature.
- A Supt who values counselors and psychologists in the schools over administrators such as instructional facilitators.
- A Supt who supports cultural diversity in schools and restorative practices, by giving more resources, staff and money to give training to HCPS staff and students. So that all students regardless of the color of their skin or sexual orientation feel valued. It was concerning to me that suicide prevention training was only given to HOPS leadership team members and not all staff whom have interaction with students.



- Also with the increase of students of color in the school system, I hope it would continue to be important to the new Supt to hire teachers of color, especially in the elementary schools in grades 3-5.
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I would like the Board to make sure that the new leader has experience with running an actual school for at least 3-5 years. A candidate for this position should have first had experience of what it is like to run a school since their job will entail managing numerous school operations on a daily basis. Without this experience, they will be too far removed from understanding how their decisions will directly impact the everyday operations of a school. This will trickle down and eventually impact the teachers and students as well. Not including this experience as a requirement would be irresponsible of the Board and a huge disservice to the parents, students, and teachers in Harford County.

As a county that has struggled with teacher retention, it would be wise for candidates within the system to receive more consideration than those that are from outside of the system. What message are we sending by reaching outside of our own pool of qualified candidates? We have lost eligible candidates from HCPS to outside counties due to them being overlooked and the desire to hire from outside of the system previously. Plus, looking at the history of hiring outsiders, it is evident that we do not have a successful run with them and end up paying off their contract when they leave or they have created chaos in the system due to their inability or unfamiliarity with the needs of this system.

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List three to four things that show your county is the best place to live, learn, and work:

- Family oriented community
- Conservative values
- Pace of life *is* better than other places in the state

List four to five qualities/characteristics you would like to see in the new superintendent:

- Strong communication skills with ability to engage students, parents and teachers
- Experienced as an educator, not just an administrator
- Strong management skills; fiscally responsible
- Accountable; will also hold others accountable, including poor teachers or poor students
- Supportive of teachers in the classroom
- Conservative values - please don't bring someone from out of the area whose values do not reflect our community
- Someone who will put children's education first over state/national politics
- Someone who is not politically correct and will not come here with a progressive agenda.
- We should educate our kids, not indoctrinate them at school.

List one to two major challenges the new superintendent will face:

- Common Core - it *is* awful and **I** would like to see Harford County drop this program
- School Safety - we need more security in our schools. Period. I would support armed teachers and armed officers in the schools.

List two to three questions you would like the Board to include in candidate interviews.

- What is your philosophy on education as it relates to governance. Should the federal government or state/local leaders determine curriculum?
- What steps would you take to ensure a safe educational environment for children?
- What is your philosophy on discipline in the schools? For example, should students be suspended for violating school policies or do you believe in keeping kids in the classroom no matter what?

- What is more important for students to learn? Reading/Writing/STEM or social justice issues?
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List three to four things that show your county is the best place to live, learn, and work

- big enough to be varied, small enough to be manageable
- deep talent pool if utilized correctly

List four to five qualities/characteristics you would like to see in the new superintendent

- Financially savvy — understand budgets, forecasting
- thick skinned — not bend to the ever changing breeze of public opinion but utilize short and long term planning and goals.
- willingness to chart a course and steer the ship understand how to manage people — empower department heads with authority, support and know how to hold employees accountable for tasks that must be completed; ability to ferret out duplicate positions and create more efficient central office structure.
- ability to communicate what needs to be done for the students and inform MSDE when they are impeding county's ability to educate students.

List one to two major challenges the new superintendent will face:

- Budget - the current method for developing and controlling the budget process must change everywhere from the spend-it-on-anything-to-spend-it-down mentality; there are closets full of unused "things" that were purchased just to use money instead of return it to the pot
- Teacher retention - should not feel like glorified babysitters; must be able to have control of their classrooms — send disruptive students out; stop changing the curriculum — spend more time on in-depth learning — continuous and constant change impedes teachers' abilities to enhance lessons and differentiate learning

List two to three questions you would like the Board to include in candidate interviews.

- How have you adjusted budgets in the past? What methods have you used to identify inefficient spending and organizational structure?
  - What top (three) assets already available in the county that you could use to improve the state of the school system.
-