

Board of Education Candidate Responses

Question 1: *Some believe that Howard County schools are overcrowded. However, data seems to reflect a balancing issue. Would you consider school redistricting to best utilize the existing facilities we have in our county?*

Cutroneo: Yes, I believe redistricting is most necessary but it is not going to solve the balancing issue, we need more infrastructure to support growth. Currently over 700 elementary school students call a relocatable trailer their homeroom. They spend most of their days not in their school, but in temporary classrooms. This does not include all of the related arts and specials that are held in trailers. This year we will add 24 more portable classrooms. Even with added relocatable classrooms, some schools will still be over capacity. The empty seats throughout the county cannot possibly accommodate the numbers of students sitting in trailers, especially given pace of development. Portable classrooms are supposed to be temporary; however, they have become an expected part of a student's educational experience, sometimes lasting decades at schools. They are expensive to purchase, maintain and transport and in the end, they are demolished (which is also expensive). It is far more prudent to invest money into brick and mortar infrastructure than into temporary structures with suspect air quality and safety issue.

Glascok: The HCPSS must use redistricting to utilize the existing facilities in Howard County. Redistricting can be a difficult process for communities, one that can cause division and angst. To prevent this, and make the process as smooth as possible, it is imperative the Board of Education remain open with the public regarding the process and invite public comment at every stage of the process.

Mackey: No response

Mallo: Yes, redistricting must be used to balance our populations and fully utilize our existing facilities. This must be done in conjunction with continued expansion of our infrastructure and capital construction of high school #13 as well as an elementary school in the Turf Valley area. We cannot in good conscience ask for additional monies from the county and state if we do not first adequately use the open seats in the western part of the county where our schools are under-enrolled. Redistricting will allow for capacity balancing at current enrollment levels. As we add between 1,000-1,500 students a year to total enrollment, the school system will also need to continue to build new schools and work with the county to find suitable acreage in the growing population areas.

Miller: Yes. In general, maximizing our schools' capacity usage is efficient use of taxpayer dollars and helps each of our schools provide as comprehensive a selection of course offerings as possible. That said, variables such as transportation time and cost, requirements regarding qualifying for state construction money, and long-range student population projections should enter into redistricting decisions, along with the criteria in Board Policy 6010. There are other initiatives that could be helpful in balancing school populations, such as dual-enrollment programs like JumpStart, and career and technical education programs. Meanwhile, redistricting can reduce overcrowding in schools and, if done judiciously, could also help to equalize demographics and promote diversity while keeping feeder systems and communities reasonably intact. Though redistricting can be challenging, it should remain our primary way of addressing overcrowding for the foreseeable future.

Pandey: Some believe that Howard County schools are overcrowded. However, data seems to reflect a balancing issue. Would you consider school redistricting to best utilize the existing facilities we have in our county? Yes, I would. We do have some under-capacity schools to the south. Typically, more minority- and lower income students attend these schools. The test scores at these schools are also lower than in the higher-property-tax neighborhoods of Ellicott City, for example, so incentivizing test-score-obsessed parents and/or homeowners to redistrict their children is particularly challenging, especially when they feel that their property taxes entitle them neighborhood schools like CHS.

Taj: Though Dr. Martirano has taken temporary steps to address overcrowding, a long-term solution is needed and it will likely include redistricting. Success will depend on building solid relationships with the community.

In my opinion, the best course of action is to bring the community together early in the process. I'd like to see us proactively hold forums so that we can hear people's concerns before redistricting is at their doorstep. When people take part in developing a solution, they are more willing to own those decisions. Not everyone will get what they want, but the community's views will be represented in the final decision.

The Board should also learn about successful efforts from other parts of the country. For example, we might consider developing specialized academies in schools with excess capacity—e.g., around STEAM, the arts, or coding—to draw interested students from overcrowded schools.

Wu: In reality, many schools are overcrowded and a few schools are just below the allowed capacity. From the school data we have, even as we try to balance the student numbers, some schools will be still overcrowded because we don't have enough capacity to house the existing and ever growing student population. School redistricting should be used to utilize the existing facilities, but it should not be the only tool to address the school overcrowding issue. We need to build more schools where the students come from. We need plan our housing development

Question 2: *If Howard County schools operate under capacity as a result of the Board of Education's desire not to redistrict, are you willing to fund school construction without state funding?*

Cutroneo: The Board of Education should follow its own policies when it comes to redistricting. We simply must redistrict, it is an equity and health/safety issue.

I would not be willing to fund school construction without the support of state funding.

Glascock: The HCPSS needs to utilize state funding for school construction.

Mackey: No response

Mallo: First, I believe re-districting absolutely must occur. At this time, I do not see a scenario in which I would advocate for school construction without state funding. That being said, if funding disagreements were to arise as they have recently at Talbott Springs Elementary School, where the state approved a renovation instead of a rebuild; we would need to address that differently. In the case of Talbott Springs, the return on investment for a renovation is not as great as that of a rebuild. During a renovation, the health concerns (*i.e.*; mold exposure and remediation), education instructional disruptions, and the number of seats under-capacity for enrollment, indicate that the school system should aggressively solicit state funds to rebuild. For situations like this, the Board should actively pursue a reconsideration and approval of state funding as well as exploring all our funding options with the priority being the educational mission of the school system.

Miller: No, not for the reason of avoiding redistricting, given the present school construction funding system and financial situation. Constructing schools without state funding would take too large an amount of money from other education-related needs and would thus be difficult to justify.

Pandey: Yes, I am, although I'm hopeful that we will be able to secure some State funding. We will need to look for additional funding sources, including grants and even corporate sponsors.

Taj: There seems to be little disagreement that redistricting will be necessary. That said, the Board's ability to influence school construction is limited given that the power of the purse sits with the County Executive and County Council. I doubt that school construction will be possible without state funding but would strongly advocate for accelerating the construction that has already been identified, notably high school numbers 13 and 14. These have taken far too long to move from concept to construction and our school system's current overcrowded state is in part the result of this inaction. As a Board member, one of my primary responsibilities will be to advocate for sufficient resources to enable all of the school system's 56,000 students to get the best education possible. I will pursue this charge with vigor.

Wu: As indicated in my first answer, I am against massive school redistricting which is disruptive and damaging to the students and the community. Massive school redistricting will shift the burden from the county council and the county government to the parents of students.

Question 3: *How can the Board of Education best support education while at the same time promote Howard County as a business destination?*

Cutroneo: The Board of Education must ensure that classrooms and the educational experience of students is prioritized when it comes to spending tax dollars. Reputation is key when it comes to attracting both business and residential growth. Overcrowded schools and classrooms not only dilutes the educational experience of students (falling test scores, graduation rates) it dilutes the power of the County to attract growth.

Glascock: The HCPSS is a primary economic engine of Howard County. For 38 years in the school system from classroom teacher to Assistant Superintendent, I witnessed the growth of the school system. A primary reason people move to Howard County is the high quality of the school system. Businesses want to locate in areas with high performing school systems.

Business growth and providing excellent education for students and their families is symbiotic.

Mackey: No response

Mallo: The Board can best promote Howard County as a business destination by (1) delivering high quality education that makes Howard County a desirable location in which to live and work; (2) investing in partnerships with the business community to create win-win scenarios with our students and local businesses; and (3) operating as effective stewards of public funding for education in Howard County.

Miller: Though the Board of Education's primary mission does not involve promoting the county as a business destination, doing so would potentially be a "win-win." Being that HCPSS is very highly respected, one of the reasons businesses looking for a location or relocation destination often consider our county is because employers' families would have access to a high-quality school system. Furthermore, those businesses can also benefit by the availability of well-educated local potential employees who were educated in a high-quality school system. Meanwhile, by bringing in more businesses, the tax base used to fund our school system expands. The most important thing that the Board of Education can do to promote Howard County as a business destination is to help ensure that we maintain a high-quality school system. The Board, as well as the school system and its employees, can participate in advertising the system as well as the county. It can also draw positive attention by operating effectively, such as being chosen as #29 on Forbes "America's Best Employers" list (<https://www.forbes.com/bestemployers/list/#tab:rank>). By supporting a high-quality school system, the Board of Education mutually benefits the education of our students as well as the county as a business destination.

Pandey: To me, the business success of Howard County or rather, its corporate charm and appeal goes hand-in-hand with our educational success. This relationship is ying-yang-like; top schools attract successful businesses and entrepreneurs, and vice versa.

Taj: I don't see the business and educational communities as being in opposition. Rather, they are inextricably intertwined. The school system is the bedrock of our community and serves as a key economic driver for the county. It is not a coincidence that Howard County has one of the best school systems in the country while also having one of the highest per capita incomes. Businesses set up shop here because we have an educated workforce as a result of having an excellent school system. Many Howard County residents remain in the county well into adulthood and sometimes their whole lives. By offering an outstanding education, we are preparing the county's future citizens, workers, community advocates, and business leaders for success.

Wu: BOE should work hard to maintain our quality education such that we can attract families and employees to live or work in Howard County.

Having a top employee force can promote HoCo as an attractive business destination, for sure.

At the same, we want to keep our business tax at a competitive level. This requires the county not to overspend its money and then have to raise tax. Since our school system spends around 58% of the county budget, BOE should make sure our school system is managed well fiscally.

Question 4: *Do you believe that there is a shortage in career and technology education and how would you address this issue going forward?*

Cutroneo: I do believe there is a shortage in CTE; moreover I do not believe we do a fair job promoting it as a viable educational path. I would promote exploring more P3 opportunities to fund infrastructure as well as partnerships with the many technology businesses based in Howard County. I provided the idea to start an HVAC program as both a way to help students but also as a way to provide more manpower to help the school system more effectively maintain buildings and portables. An automotive program is another area we should pursue, our aging fleet of vehicles provides perfect training opportunities. This all takes funding, so public private partnerships should be a high priority.

Glascok: As former Assistant Superintendent of HCPSS, I redesigned an outdated vocational program into a 21st century career and technology program that included establishing career academies such as Academy of Finance, Biotechnology, and Computer Science. I also received funding to create a state-of-art Automotive Academy. Development and sustainability of programs is based upon student interest and enrollment.

Career programs can be expanded and revised to meet changing workplace employment needs.

Mackey: No response

Mallo: I believe that we have not sufficiently invested in career and technology education (CTE). As a system, we often use “the % of graduates attending college” as a metric for our success. This sends that message that CTE is not as important or essential. While I am happy with the addition of new CTE offerings in HVAC and Agricultural Science, I think we need a full evaluation of our offerings and the associated levels of participation. This is without doubt an area in which effective partnerships with the Howard County business community could produce high dividends for our students. I would favor a more engaged CTE advisory committee in partnership with the Howard County business community to ensure that our programs are relevant, and our students are able to transfer their education to gainful employment.

Miller: There is a shortage of career and technology educational opportunities presently provided by our school system. The concept of dual-enrollment (such as the JumpStart program) can be a good framework to expand career and technology education (CTE) opportunities. In addition to teaming with Howard Community College, HCPSS should explore teaming with apprenticeship programs and other trade and technical schools and include credit-bearing coursework and intern/apprentice options for our students, leading to certification and/or degrees. These programs could help students choose and prepare for CTE careers. Furthermore, by subsidizing programs such as is the case with JumpStart, and by offering programs in our own Applications and Research Laboratory, students can have access to coursework and training at no cost or at a reduced cost, helping to provide more equitable access to these careers. Consideration of building a CTE high school should occur, though placing these programs throughout the county should also be examined, as the latter could provide a limited option to redistricting as a means of best utilizing our facilities; transportation and other expenses should be studied in both cases.

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Pandey: Yes, I do. Research points at this shortage, as well as patterns and trends in visa types and allocations; most are in tech, prompting us to bring over folks from mostly China and India.

Taj: I think that there is a shortage and also an opportunity to expand post-secondary options for Howard County's students through Career Technology Education (CTE). First, I'd encourage the school system to do market research and survey business leaders locally and nationally to identify which skills are in demand now and which industries will need skilled workers in five or ten years. I'd also reach out to the community to determine whether a full CTE academy, perhaps at ARL or one integrated into one of the other schools, would best match the community's interests. Research suggests that career- and college-bound students both benefit from a strong CTE curriculum in the schools.

Wu: I believe there is a shortage in career and technology education. I would ask HCPSS to promote such career path to our students. We need provide such opportunities to our parents and students. At the same time, we must make sure our parents and students take advantage of such opportunities.

Furthermore, we should work with businesses to hire our graduates. We should build a reliable partnership between HCPSS and our business community both for the program direction and the hiring collaboration.

Question 5: *Howard County has long been lauded for its education system but there are concerns by many that an achievement and equity gap exist. Do you agree with these assessment? How would you work with the superintendent and the community to address these concerns whether real or perceived?*

Cutroneo: Data analysis has convinced me that we have 2 different school systems in Howard County. Socioeconomic factors have an incredible influence on the educational experience of students. Because we are a county of high achievement and income, it is easy to hide this reality by averaging across the county. Yes, our graduation rate is 92.5% (down a percentage point from last year), but what that doesn't tell you is that one of our high schools has a rate of 82%; another is at 84%. A quick look at the numbers of students enrolled in grade level, honors and AP classes per school also demonstrates the disparity of opportunity. Suspension rates, graduation rates, the percentage of students considered to have had a rigorous education all point towards an uncomfortable reality: the schools with higher numbers of students dependent on free and reduced meals, higher numbers of minority and English proficient limited students also have the highest numbers of dropouts, suspensions as well as fewer students enrolled in honors or above classes.

Clearly as a school system in the midst of a budget crisis, we are not equipped to provide the wrap around services that many of our students need. Partnering with the County to provide mental health supports, trauma informed care and social services is crucial; for example, in Calvert County, there is a behavior analyst assigned to each school, funded by the county health department. The practice of "tracking" students at an early age could be addressed with more implicit bias and restorative justice practices. I would also advocate for smaller class sizes K-3; the benefits of quality pre-K education are soon lost once a young student is thrust into a classroom environment in kindergarten where the current student:teacher ratio is 22:1 and some classes have 26 students.

Glascok: The achievement and equity gap exist in the HCPSS. The growth of English Language Learners is increasing by six percent annually. The number of students and families in poverty is also on the rise. As Assistant Superintendent, I addressed equity by creating the Office of International Office of Student Services, hired an Hispanic Achievement Specialist, increased funding for Black Student Achievement Program and systemized supports and academic interventions for students performing below grade level.

As a board member, I will advocate for the development and adoption of a policy on equity. This policy will explicitly define what educational equity is and will be in Howard County. The policy on equity will serve as a framework by which the equity is infused into the school system's education programs and operations. The development of the policy on equity would involve parents, families, businesses, and the community.

Mackey: No response

Mallo: There is an achievement gap and an equity gap. The equity gap not only occurs between students, but also between schools. My goal is to examine the policies, programs, and underlying procedures to identify discrepancies, gaps, and unintended consequences. For example, I recently brought it to the attention of the Board that the Athletics and Extra-curricular Eligibility policy may disproportionately affect our socio-economically disadvantaged students, African American, Latino, Special Education, and male students. I have already met with the Administration to suggest different solutions. As a board member, I will continue to identify problems, concerns, and issues and then follow with engagement and discussion with stakeholders, offer potential solutions, or remediation options. I will also continue to support reduced class sizes that are critical to providing services to those at the lower end of the achievement gap and those students lost in the middle.

I also believe that the Board needs to direct the Superintendent to allocate resources proportional to needs at schools. Schools with higher needs, based on achievement and equity gap measures, should be allotted a higher proportion of resources, including staffing, to focus on reducing critical deficiencies.

Miller: Yes, we unfortunately do have achievement and equity gaps. HCPSS probably cannot fully compensate for differences such as pre-school experiences; family prioritization of education; financial ability of families to provide activities such as camps, tutoring, private instruction, athletic participation, and enrichment classes; time parents spend with students; etc. But HCPSS should strive to compensate. Following are some ways

HCPSS could pursue reducing achievement and equity gaps:

- Provide more staffing, equipment, etc., when needed at schools with student populations that face extra challenges
- Prioritize one-on-one assistance for students struggling with basic skills; not accepting non-mastery (for more information, please go to my website, miller4boe.org, and click on “Insisting on Basic Skills Mastery”)
- Provide opportunities for enrichment by making available scholarships, funded by community organizations, foundation grants, individuals, businesses, and HCPSS, to be used for enrichment, tutoring, etc.
- Enable volunteer, service, and internship opportunities for high school students to provide enrichment, tutoring, etc. to younger or less experienced students
- Ensure to the extent possible that basic needs are met for all students (food, shelter, clothing)
- Ensure to the extent possible that educational needs are met for all students (computers/tablets, internet access, organization-related materials such as binders)
- Provide appropriate instruction and supports to special education students
- Provide quality training for staff members that will enhance their abilities to support students with challenges
- Ensure transportation is provided so outside-of-the-school-day activities are available to all
- Prioritize meeting the individual needs of each student.

Pandey: Efforts made to reduce “achievement gaps” are promising, yet more CAN and MUST be done in this area. We must ensure that low-income and special needs students, among others that are identified as at-risk (socially and otherwise) and/or underachieving have additional and sustained supports in place at school, as well as outside school--through a comprehensive post-secondary transition program for non-college-bound graduates, for instance; one that ensures that we graduate independent adults with skill sets that will yield monetary returns too. We must also add *Best Buddy* and other peer-empowering eyes-and-ears-enhancing and mentoring programs at every school, as well as structured literacy, financial and other kinds of literacy, and genuine family and community engagement (e.g., guaranteeing that at least one parent/caregiver liaison has voting privileges in hiring and budget decisions for “ELLs” and special needs’ students). Diversifying our workforce and curricular diversification are also essential. In many ways the gap in test scores across our schools is much like the “word gap” ([VocabCultBiasTCRecordPandey.pdf](#)). Multilingual messaging in front offices and throughout our schools

will send a clear message of inclusion. When we show that we care and can relate to every student, then we all succeed. We must begin by identifying the roots of the “achievement gap” and comb through the data carefully because we might find that, while blacks as a whole score fewer points than their Caucasian and Asian counterparts, black females actually perform quite similarly to the comparison/control groups. We must utilize more qualitative data and not just quantitative data. I would argue that most of the tests employed are culturally exclusive, as is the practice of “testing” per se (evidencing a competition-oriented culture of comparisons and contrast), which is why the use of non-intrusive (time-and otherwise), culturally inclusive alternative assessments, such as student portfolios is essential. Howard County’s diversity is one of the top reasons for our high residential ratings. We must begin by identifying the roots of the “achievement gap” and comb through the data carefully because we might find that, while blacks as a whole score fewer points than their Caucasian and Asian counterparts, black females actually perform quite similarly to the comparison/control groups. We must utilize more qualitative data and not just quantitative data. I would argue that most of the tests employed are culturally exclusive, as is the practice of “testing” per se (evidencing a competition-oriented culture of comparisons and contrast), which is why the use of non-intrusive (time-and otherwise), culturally inclusive alternative assessments, such as student portfolios is essential.

More could be done to reduce the achievement gap in HoCo schools. We must begin by diversifying our workforce. Curricular diversification is also in order. In many ways the gap in test scores is much like the “word gap” ([VocabCultBiasTCRecordPandey.pdf](#)). Diversity in our student and educator population refers to variations in learning and teaching, and much more than just the more-obvious and the subtle or more-nuanced differences in language practices and use (and associated organizational and thought patterns), cultural affiliations (that might account for culinary, musical, and dress choices and/or preferences), religious, gender-based, age, and generational variations. Multilingual messaging in front offices and throughout our schools will send a clear message of inclusion. When a teacher shows that she cares and can relate to every student, then s/he is more likely to want to learn. No matter how different our perspectives, we have to learn to listen to and respect differences. Diversity prompts us to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, and team builders, as research shows. Having worked closely with the U.S. Department of Education Secretary who proposed ESSA, I would ensure that we do everything to ensure that our “at-risk” students (including special needs and “ELL” students) also succeed at the same rate as our middle-and high-income Asian and Caucasian students. This would include active advocacy through support for bills and initiatives that would help our students, such as the *Reaching English Learners Act* (<https://langevin.house.gov/press-release/house-members-introduce-bill-combat-english-learner-achievement-gap>); working with the BOE and HCEA to ensure best practices for every student (e.g., bilingualized ESL classes so learning English is easier through the first language scaffolds—also the most effective catalysts for English acquisition), and by implementing the Seal of Biliteracy); as well as by applying for additional funds through the *Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program* and the new Student-Centered Funding Pilot which ensures “weighted per-pupil allocations for . . . disadvantaged students” (<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/scfp/studentcentered.html>).

Taj: HCPSS has made progress in reducing the achievement gap but work remains. We know this gap leads to higher dropout rates, lower post-education wages, increased poverty, un-/under-employment, and social/emotional risks. A number of data-driven interventions with proven success could help break this cycle.

These include:

1) **Pre-K** - based on 22 studies, children under five who participated in classroom-based early childhood education programs were less likely to be placed in special education, less likely to be held back a grade, and more likely to graduate from high school compared to peers who were not in such programs;

2) **educator diversification** - research shows that when students of color have a teacher of

color, attendance, academic achievement, enrollment in GT courses, and lower disciplinary action result. Teachers of color also tend to stay longer in high-needs schools, which brings more stability to the school;

- 3) **implicit bias training** - African American, Native American, Latinx, and special education children are disciplined at much higher rates than normal. Training will help correct these inequitable rates of suspension;
- 4) **engaged, reflective curriculum** - students do better when they are able to see themselves and their cultures in the curriculum. As a professor, I've seen firsthand how transformative this relatively simple effort can be in awakening a student's curiosity, engagement, and academic success.

Wu: I agree that HCPSS has a problem that some of students are not achieving the level of the success they can achieve. We need work with the superintendent, the school staff, families and the community together to address this issue. We will not succeed with the only focus on the school involvement. We should create an inspiring and motivational learning environment for our students which will eventually drive our students forward.

Question 6: *Previous Board of Education and administration decisions have left the school system with a health fund deficit. What recommendations will you propose to remedy this situation and prevent it from happening again?*

Cutroneo: We need a 5 year financial strategic plan with measurable goals and outcomes; there is little hope of paying down the deficit without a well thought out plan. The Board of Education also should be privy to real time analysis and frequent reports regarding actuals vs planned, instead of the last minute chaos that always seems to surround budget approval season. To this point, the next position I would advocate for is a BOE Budget Analyst. In order to make informed decisions, the BOE needs complete and accurate data and much time is spent by current board members asking questions and waiting for answers that may or may not come. I was part of efforts to uncover the financial shenanigans of the prior administration; make no mistake, I will not serve as a rubber stamp of the Superintendent's agenda. Programs and initiatives must be supported by a viable and responsible financial plan.

Glascok: Previous Board of Education and administration decisions have left the school system with a health fund deficit. What recommendations will you propose to remedy this situation and prevent it from happening again? In my tenure in the HCPSS, the school system never had a budget deficit. As Assistant Superintendent in the HCPSS, I managed \$360M budget and approximately 250 staff across five departments and 64 program areas. I implemented a performance-driven budget accountability system within each program area that measured impact and efficiency of strategies. The school system must become financially solvent. Board of Education members must collaborate with the Howard County Executive and the County Council in the development of long range budget planning.

The BOE, superintendent and staff must employ zero-based budget development process to identify efficiencies. The BOE should encourage staff to seek grants for program development and enhancement.

To keep the HCPSS financially solvent, the BOE must provide greater oversight on the development of the budget, monitor program expenditures and utilize internal and external auditing processes.

Mackey: No response

Mallo: First and foremost, we cannot simply give a pass to the Superintendent and be remiss in our fiduciary responsibility. The Board must commit to combing through not just the budget at a granular level, but also performing in-depth examinations of monthly operating budget reports. The Board should insist on instituting quantifiable metrics that budget area managers must meet and manage to in their spending. These metrics must also be used to determine the success or failure of programs and new initiatives. For example, over the past 4 years, there has been a 30% increase in headcount in non-teaching central office staff (Administrative, Management, and Technical Personnel [AMT] not represented under a bargaining agreement) – this type of overhead increase is not sustainable.

Miller: It is important to differentiate the deficit issue from the health care issue. The deficit was primarily caused by insufficient funding of the health care fund by previous school system leadership; money that should have gone into the fund was used instead for other initiatives in the operating budget. The present challenge is restoring the fund to where it should have been if it was responsibly funded, and I do not believe that our educators should be asked to bear this unfortunate burden any more than other taxpayers. That said, the annual increase of our educators' health care claims averages about 3%; not much more than the increase in cost of

living. Continued efforts to contain costs and elicit savings should continue to keep these costs manageable. Furthermore, our educators' health care plans are similar to those in other local jurisdictions, and it is important that we remain competitive in what we offer, especially given the challenges of finding highly-qualified educators in the present environment. Therefore, though it is distressing that this situation was permitted to occur, I believe this solution should involve a two-pronged approach. First, our county government should use available funds to help reduce the deficit, in combination with our school system prioritizing funds for use toward the elimination of the deficit. Second, the health and dental fund should be maintained in a responsible way, enabling educators' health care plans to continue to be competitive with those of other local jurisdictions.

Pandey: In my view, there is no simple nor single solution to this "problem." I would propose returning to the days when the State (legislature) paid teacher's retirement and health benefits, instead of the School Board (e.g., in the 80s). In the event that the payout contract for the former Superintendent is irreversible, possible measures we could explore include the following:

- Teachers could be invited to pay more into the plan
- Deductibles or copays could be increased (with teachers' knowledge and consent, of course), and/or
- Health care and dental insurance providers could be urged to agree to a fixed amount for a set number of years (like multi-year contracts) and/or or to minimize increases in health care premiums for teachers and other School Board employees.

The Board might consider conducting a utilization study to determine which health and/or dental services are most utilized, and based on the findings, make some budget re-allocations that are proportionate to the needs and/or utilization practices. In short, the Board could transition to paying more for the most utilized services and less for less- or minimally utilized services, for instance. Taking a close look at the budget might also yield some cost savings, and last but not the least, we must ensure that the Board has flexibility to transfer funds from one budget category to another. We should also work on multi-year budgets, so that projected funding (goals) can be reached ahead of schedule through multiple funding sources.

Taj: As noted above, the Howard County Public School System is a key economic driver for the county. The county needs to fund it as such, and should strongly advocate for the state to share in the burden in order to close the health fund deficit and balance the school system's budget going forward.

It is inadvisable to look at the health fund deficit in a vacuum given what's going on at the national level. The U.S. has a shortage of teachers as the country experienced a 35% reduction in the teacher pipeline from 2009 to 2014. The county and state need to do more to keep teachers teaching and to find ways to incent individuals to join the educator ranks. Reducing educator benefits may reduce budget outlays in the short-term while ending up costing the county in the long-term if the teacher shortage worsens and recruiting teachers becomes more difficult.

Wu: If I am elected into BOE, I will never be a rubber stamp as before which left us the current \$50 million budget deficit. The board should keep their fiducial responsibility for HCPSS and the community.

We need improve the budgeting and spending process such that line item transfer should be strictly controlled and specifically approved by the board. The school should not start a new initiative without sustainable income to support such program.

We need better and frequent audit and risk management system for HCPSS such that problems can be found earlier before it becomes catastrophic.

Question 7: *Is the current budgeting process between Howard County and HCPSS working well, or does it need improvement? What improvement would you pursue?*

Cutroneo: As I stated above, there should be real time data analysis of actuals vs. planned that includes measurable performance outcomes for each and every department. Program managers should be ready to support their departments with data. I also believe there should be more realistic collaboration with the school system. How are we always so far off between what the school system needs and what the County can provide? Now that we are getting a better understanding of how much it actually costs to run the school system and provide the educational experience that county residents want and expect, we should have honest conversations with the County NOW. The yearly contention is a distraction and in my opinion, wholly unnecessary.

Glascock: During the prior HCPSS administration the budget process was fractured. Under the current superintendent and BOE, the process has improved.

Developing collaborative relationships between the Howard County Executive, HC Council, and the HCPSS is paramount for an effective budgeting process. Long-range budget planning, open communication, and community engagement will improve the HCPSS budget development process.

Mackey: No response

Mallo: The budget process needs improvement. Initially, the HCPSS needs to develop and share a comprehensive multi-year strategic plan that drives the annual operating budget. The BOE and County Administration need to know what the school system expects for out year costs on any new initiative. The BOE and County Administration need to have reasonable faith in HCPSS projections of enrollment growth and costs of services. To achieve that, the Board must exhibit the ability to analyze, examine, and study the fiscal issues, not simply ask for more money. I will bring my background in economics and data analytics to dig deep into the financial information to do just that.

I will also suggest an increased partnership with the business community on the Operating Budget Review Committee (OBRC) of the Board of Education. The members of the business community currently on the OBRC are disproportionately under-represented compared with the education community. As a result, there tends to be more of a focus on what else we would like to fund as opposed to what areas may be able to achieve cost savings or may require reductions.

Miller: Overall, improvements are needed. I believe we should start looking at the following year's budget, at least at a programmatic level, much earlier than is the present practice, so decisions can be made without being under as much pressure. I would also like to see the budget document organized in such a way that it would be more clearly understandable to the Board members as well as to interested community members. For example, if staff have been moved from one program to another, this, along with the accompanying funds, should be easier to follow. I would also like to see an increase in explanations of how funding is used in various programs. I would like program managers to speak with the Board throughout the year, and in addition to asking them if they have what they need, I think it would also be useful to ask what would be at the top of their wish lists, realizing that budget restrictions may prevent fruition. I think this could be helpful in long-range planning as well as in helping us visualize what improvement can look like. Meanwhile, I would want to involve our internal auditor when overseeing the execution of the present budget and getting feedback about the possibilities of increasing efficiency and effectiveness. Also, since our Operating Budget Review Committee is now a year-round entity, I would like to get their input on a regular basis, as well as involving them when more specific feedback could be helpful.

Pandey: Like everything, the current budgeting process--and the budget for HCPSS--could be enhanced. The exact percentage of funds from the County that HCPSS receives is unclear. Some sources mention that it's under 55% while others say that the percentage is closer to 58%. I would propose increasing our education funding, as we cannot and must not cut corners where education is concerned, particularly if we aim for equity in resources and in instructional quality (through the availability of some dual language programs starting in the early years, more Board-Certified Behavior Analysts, and smaller and more manageable classes, for instance). In addition to an increase in County-funded funding for education, I would propose increased collaboration between elected officials and the BOE, on the one hand and I would recommend working closely with the Chamber of Commerce and Howard County-based businesses to ensure all-around impact and success.

Sahara, my 12-year-old, a proud HCPSS student and my junior campaign advisor (the others being Jorge Tirigall and Sarika Kapadia) recorded a short video that outlines my qualifications and vision for our schools:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8sy6-aYrfQ&feature=em-share_video_user

Milwaukee Public Radio/WUWM's *Lake Effects* Anchor Amy Kiley interviewed Dr. Pandey about best practices in reading and more for underperforming schools in the home of America's "charter" schools, namely, Milwaukee:

<http://wuwm.com/post/expert-considering-students-home-language-could-help-school-performance#stream/0>

<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/edutalk/2015/01/29/nabe-english-language-learners-misidentified-in-a-multi-lingual-world>

Anita's Podcasts on the "WORD gap" & early quality assessments, including preschool assessments like CLASS™ :

<http://ecla.buzzsprout.com/>

Recorded at Erikson Institute's Early Childhood Leadership Academy in Chicago, IL:
Part 1 identifies the 2 most frequently used assessments of instructional quality and zones in on CLASS™

Part 2: focuses on some limitations of CLASS™

Part 3: focuses on how to ensure culturally inclusive ECE assessment
The first podcast in this series was a follow up to a feature article by Anita Pandey that was published by Columbia University's *Teacher's College Record* on Aug. 25, titled:
Beyond Black 'n White: Addressing Cultural Bias in Word Gap Studies

Taj: The budget is our value statement. The school system must align its priorities with its resources. Based on the strategic priorities it develops—which should have at its core the best education possible for all of Howard County's students—each department in the school system should have actionable plans with quantifiable measures and a clear understanding of the associated personnel and non-personnel costs.

Wu: The budgeting process definitely needs improvement. For each budgeting cycle, before the school proposes its budget to the county government, the county government and the school should have an honest discussion on much money can be allocated to HCPSS. Based on that discussion, the school proposes a feasible budget to the county government and county council.

Right now, the school system and the county government are treating the school budget as a kicking ball in the public face. This process causes a huge distraction to the real problems:

- 1) What is a reasonable and fair share that the county government can fund our education system based on our county's revenue;
- 2) What is a good mechanism to fund the education system when the county revenue is fluctuating from one year to another.