

Cindy Vaillancourt:

1. Why are you running?

I chose not to run for re-election in 2018 because I felt after several years of extraordinary events and effort, we had put the HCPSS/BOE on a good path toward the future. However, after watching the events of the last year, including the fy2020 Budget process, and the 2019 Redistricting Process, I cannot stand by and watch the continuing dysfunction among Board Members, deteriorating relationships with the State and Local Legislators, ongoing budget crisis, and another round of redistricting looming in the next couple of years. Additionally, the process of electing 5 Board Members by councilmanic districts means there could be as many as 5 brand new Board Members. The Board elected in 2020 will by necessity be redistricting in 2022 for the opening of HS#13, will be determining whether to renew or replace the Superintendent when his contract expires in 2022, and will be tasked with responding to the ongoing budget crisis. I am confident that my demonstrated track record of working collaboratively and respectfully with all stakeholders during contentious times will help bring everyone together to focus on workable solutions.

2. Explain why you are qualified to hold this position.

I served on the HoCo BOE from 2010 until 2018. I was the Chairman for my last two years. I was a member of both the Audit and the Legislative Committee. My personal tenacity led to successful legislative initiatives, and I successfully brought coalitions of stakeholders together to work collaboratively to accomplish unprecedented change when a previous administration was taking the system down a path that was not supported by much of the community. My knowledge base earned over 20 years of conscientious advocacy on behalf of special education; providing adequate facilities; and persuading the Administration and fellow Board Members to consider major changes including to provide alternative programming and school calendars. In my previous professional role as a project manager for a real estate development and construction company I developed complex budgets and financial analysis, and secured approvals from government entities, banks, private funding, contracts and contractors. As the parent of a child with special needs, I spent 20 years living the Special Education experience - and helping other parents navigate through it.

3. Have you ever testified before County or State Boards or done Public Volunteer Work?

I have testified multiple times in front of the BOE, the County Council, the County Executive, the State Legislature - both Delegation and Senate, The State Board of Education, The State Board of Public Works and the Governor, and have met repeatedly with Federal Legislators on Education Issues, even before and after I was an

elected member of the HoCo BOE. Most of those testimonies and appearances are archived on video. I was a frequent volunteer at all of my children's schools, and other HCPSS schools as well. My various contributions to community volunteer efforts include Grassroots, the local homeless shelter, and various gift, clothing, and food drives. I have been a children's sports coach, and volunteered to provide custom ceramics opportunities for the residents of Grassroots. I have been active in the community both inside and outside of the Board of Education.

4. With regard to school redistricting, what do you believe are the three top priorities, in order, that should be considered as reasons to redistrict, or goals of redistricting? How would you suggest those goals be met?

I believe in neighborhood schools with reasonable and logical attendance areas that are respectful to established communities, and our residents, especially our most vulnerable citizens and children. I do not believe children should be removed from their stable school environments in order to achieve artificial or arbitrary demographic targets. The 1st reason for redistricting is for capacity utilization. It is a given that attendance areas must be altered when new schools are opened or major additions are completed. The 2nd impetus for redistricting should be when capacity utilization becomes egregiously unbalanced - provided there is available capacity that can be reasonably accessed to alleviate crowding. The 3rd reason attendance areas could be adjusted is when programmatic changes are made to some or all of the schools that impact the use patterns and capacities of schools. The goals of redistricting should be to create reasonable and logical attendance areas that maximize the utilization of our facilities. It is appropriate and desirable to consider demographic balance when making adjustments for capacity and utilization.

5. Do you believe that residents should be able to rely on students attending their neighborhood schools? Why or why not?

Yes. I believe that citizens ought to be able to rely on a relatively stable system of attendance areas that are not altered lightly, or without demonstrated need based on capacity or programmatic issues. When new schools or additions are opened, it is necessary to alter existing attendance areas. The changes to attendance areas should be respectful, include meaningful public input opportunities, and result in new attendance areas that residents can rely on for stability until there is another significant change that requires additional changes. Families make life decisions around where they live, where they work, and where they send their children to school, often making significant sacrifices to provide those choices and stability - and they have the right to expect the government to maintain stable, predictable environments which do not unreasonably or arbitrarily interfere or alter their communities and their children's schools.

6. How do you feel the HCPSS should deal with overcapacity school issues? (1,200 characters)

First, HCPSS needs to lobby forcefully for a return of the HCPSS land acquisition funding in the budget so the school system can plan and execute site selection/purchase in furtherance of the HCPSS long term capital plans. As it currently stands the HCPSS cannot advance the long term plan in any meaningful way since it cannot complete the purchase of a site. Second, In the long term, HCPSS needs to secure the funding to execute its long term plan for additional school construction and additions to existing buildings. Third, HCPSS can provide a number of 9 week on, 3 week off calendar schools (elementary and middle) which provide tremendous educational benefits as well as increasing available capacity by 25% without building or adding any additional square footage - by running the 9/3 calendar on 4 tracks where only 3 are in the building at a time. Those are just some options that the HCPSS could and should seriously consider.

7. Do you believe developers should contribute more to fund schools? Do you believe developers should have to wait longer to build in overcapacity areas? How do you suggest.

Yes. The County has passed many laws and rules/regulations that might have been effective if they had been implemented with fidelity, without being amended and waived etc over the years. The County can and should implement a fair impact fee, and then collect it. I used to work as a developer. Of course they will fight it and they will likely see some impact on the bottom line - but if the projects cease being profitable, they would stop building. And they don't. It is only fair that Howard County would have similar fees as those in the surrounding counties.

8. What does equitable provision of education by the HCPSS, mean to you? How do you suggest that be implemented?

To me, equity is each student getting what he or she needs in order to develop into their best selves so they can live a happy, productive, and successful life. It is not everyone getting the same. There should be a basic uniform level of materials and staffing etc that all classrooms can count on. Then each teacher should have the additional resources necessary to address the unique needs of the students in his or her class.

9. What do you believe Board of Education Members can do to achieve the highest level of achievement for all? Please include in your answer what you believe should be done to close any achievement gaps, be specific. Please also include in your answer, applicable related positions on homework and GT programs.

The issues surrounding achievement gaps go beyond what the school system and the teachers in the classroom can actually address completely. Anecdotally, we have elementary schools who have highly transient populations and have observed that they receive students who are below grade level, and the successfully raise them to at or above grade level just in time for them to move to a new school. With a constant supply of new students who come in at below grade level, while those who have been caught up and beyond by HCPSS teachers leave - our "numbers" are not going to change unless we find a way to capture that rolling improvement. But that is just part of the issue. Unless the HCPSS/BOE and Howard County commit to restoring the staffing, case loads, material of instruction, and all the ancillary services all of our children need to thrive - none of our students are likely to reach their full potential.

10. Do you believe the Board of Education race should remain non-partisan on the ballot? If so, how is your campaign remaining non-partisan?

Absolutely. It is critical imho that the BOE remain non-partisan in theory AND in practice. The overt partisanship that has seeped into the BOE of late has been devastating to the cohesiveness of the Board, and has led to what looks to close observers like Board of Education Members marching to the tune of other Partisan elected officials instead of maintaining the independence of the Board of Education --- and its mission to advocate for the children, no matter who is in any office. I have been a consistent and committed non-partisan Independent, and will continue to be so.

11. If elected, what are the top three goals you would want to work upon in your first year in office?

Immediately begin to establish a completely different time line for the 2022 redistricting, making it begin almost immediately, with the Board of Education playing the major role from the beginning. I would put the question of whether to offer 9/3 calendars to select schools to the rest of the board so that initiative could be ready to incorporate into the 2022 attendance area adjustments. BTW, I would also ask the rest of the BOE to direct Dr Martirano to get to work on adjusting the transportation issues so that High Schools could start no earlier than 8:15, which a previous Board finally voted to adopt, but then it was overturned when the budget issues made it all but impossible. As part of all of these efforts, I would be working to reestablish respectful and effective working relationships between the board and our funding authorities- other elected officials.

12. Do you believe the Superintendent's requested budget is too high, too low or just right? If too low, how much should it be, and what other county budget items should be cut to fund it? If too high what should be cut from the request?

I believe it is the obligation of the Superintendent to provide to the Board of Education a proposed budget that meets the needs of the programs that are to be implemented. I see some items that can be pulled and deferred. I believe they should make whatever

cuts they are certain about now, but should send the budget that accurately reflect HPCSS current needs.

14. Do you feel class sizes are too high or too low? Why?

Class sizes are too high. Coupled with the severely cut supports, and general staffing at all levels, and the increase in case loads for classroom teachers for administration of IEPs and 504s, in addition to undiagnosed learning issues, behavior problems, and the social and emotional challenges so many of our children face, our educators are facing an untenable situation. When I act as a Judge at Simulated Congressional Hearings, I explain to the students that my job was to make sure their teachers had everything they needed to make sure they could provide their students with the best possible education and learning opportunities. HCPSS is failing our students by failing to provide their teachers and classroom with the adequate staffing, materials, and support needed to provide the students with the education and learning opportunities they deserve - and that starts with the excessive burden within the classroom.

15. How should performance be measured, of students, of teachers?

There are time tested, tried and true methods to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers. There is also a place for the review of test results, but that is no substitute for the hard work of professional evaluation, observation of class management and teaching practice, review of materials, and evaluation of the progress of the actual students within each individual teacher's class by the Principal. Students need to be similarly observed; evaluated on multiple skills and learning opportunities by their professional teachers. I do not believe standardized tests can replace the hard work of developing and executing engaging and effective lessons, by a teacher who knows each student well enough to observe how well they are absorbing the intended lessons, what adjustments need to be made in real time, and executes effective evaluation tools, whether written tests, oral presentations, or projects, all of which requires appropriate class sizes.

16. What do you believe should be done to attempt to improve physical safety in schools?

Physical safety in schools goes beyond preparation for and safeguarding against threats from violence like a school shooter. Our students and employees deserve to be safe every day from physical assaults from distraught students, whether it be student on student violence, student on adult violence, or adult on student violence. Of the myriad options for how to respond to violent situations, if HCPSS is serious about addressing the root causes for these issues, it must start with appropriate staffing and school/class size. There must be adequate numbers of staff, both teachers and support staff, who are properly trained to notice escalating situations, how to de-escalate behaviors, and have the time and opportunity to effectively apply those skills. We cannot continue to operate our schools as virtual cattle cars, and expect any of our professionals to be able

to apply their training and skills in effective ways. The other largely missing piece in our current environment of inadequate staffing and excessive numbers of students facing challenges is our lack of properly trained mental health practitioners who can be called in before violence occurs.

17. How would you as a Board Member oversee your only employee and review and instruct the Superintendent? Are you pleased with the current Superintendent? Would you vote to renew his contract? Why or why not? (1,200 characters)

I was the Board Chair at the time the Board elected in 2016 took bold steps to reassert its rights and obligations over its one employee, the Superintendent, after years of having Boards who abdicated this responsibility. The Board of Education needs to provide clear direction, and hold the Supt accountable for executing their agreed to policies and directives. Our Board demanded compliance with Board directives and that the Supt respect the authority of the BOE. We took direct action to compel compliance. The current Superintendent stepped into a mess, very quickly brought order, improved morale, got several million dollars released that was being withheld because of the previous administration, identified the scope of the system's financial problems, and took decisive actions to stop the excessive expenses. I was deeply disappointed in the recent redistricting, the utter failure of the HCPSS to communicate and educate around the intended plan, and what appeared to me to be an ineffective response to undue influence. However, there is much more to being the Supt than redistricting, and I cannot commit to a position on renewal at this time. It would be premature.

18. Do you believe the HCPSS is serving the needs of the Special Education community? If not, what needs to be changed?

Absolutely NOT. If my child were in an HCPSS school today I have no doubt he would not be receiving the services he received in the early 2000s that made it possible for him to now be a college graduate with a bright future. For our special needs students, interventions and supports delayed is development and growth denied. The gutting of the Special Ed department, the staffing, the ancillary services, and training of the support staff is unacceptable and inexcusable. Our efforts to rebuild after years of cuts have not been continued, and are clearly not a priority for the present BOE. I believe the lion's share of the issues that are plaguing our classrooms, our teachers, and our students stem from the HCPSS failure to appropriately staff our classrooms with qualified and properly trained special education teachers and support staff. All of the other initiatives for increases for staff to RESPOND to the issues that are CREATED by those first line, fundamental failures, are expenses for chasing and capturing a distraught horse after he got out of the barn because of negligence and bad planning. Our professional have told us what needs to happen. The BOE needs to listen.