Blog Answers from:

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Candidate for Board of Education

School Board Candidates

1) Are standardized tests an adequate measure of student performance on the most important skills students should develop in school? If so, how so? If not, why not?

I believe student progress must be assessed using a range of tools and standardized testing is one of those tools.

In the area of skills training, standardized testing (not necessarily "mark sense" tests, just "standardized") is particularly valuable in assessing when a student achieves the required level of competency. For example, in aviation, pilots must pass a standardized flight test which requires the performance of specific maneuvers. In the area of academic knowledge and critical thinking, standardized testing is more problematic.

Federal and state law require the use of certain standardized tests but there are a number of county level standardized tests over which the Board of Education has control. I have, however, listened to the comments of fellow Board Candidate Di Zou regarding the poor quality of our local standardized tests and I fully support revamping or eliminating those local standardized tests. If our local tests simply require regurgitation of facts, they are of no value to our students and, indeed, are a waste of our students' and teachers' valuable time.

2) What is a school system policy that needs changing? How would you change it?

> Threshold Question: How does a Board Member know that a school system policy needs changing?   Answer: You listen to the citizens. For example, ...

> Mrs. Nancy Parlette approached me last week while I was attending a back-to-school night at Clarksville Middle School. Mrs. Parlette expressed safety concerns regarding students who currently walk to school on a route that has no sidewalks. We discussed the safety aspects of the situation and she asked me what I would do if I were elected to the Board of Education. I told her I would draft and propose a sidewalks requirement for students who walk to school in Howard County. I also told her that it would be necessary to coordinate with other Howard County Government agencies in order to analyze the cost of such a policy.

About two years ago I was contacted for help by another parent at another school about a similar situation so I know there are a series of loopholes in *Policy 5111, Pupil Transportation,* that allows the central office to force students (including elementary school students) to walk to school pretty much regardless of the risks involved. That earlier experience resulted in the parents having to drive their young child to elementary school every morning because the central office failed to provide any help in getting sidewalks constructed on the route to school. Based on that experience, I know that financial considerations are given high priority by central office staff so, to be effective in protecting student safety, the Board of Education must provide clear and unambiguous direction via its policies.

The current loopholes in the *Pupil Transportation Policy* read as follows:

Policy No. 5111 — Section I. Policy Statement:

... The Board of Education's responsibility for students walking to and from school shall begin when the student enters upon, and end when the student exits from, school property.

Policy No. 5111 — Section III. Definitions:

S. Suitable Pathways and Walking Routes - Road shoulder, pathway, right-of-way, sidewalk or other surface which pupils can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles except:

1. Residential streets in a community with little or no transient traffic.
2. Roads/streets with speed limits of 30 miles per hour or less.

The current standard that determines whether transportation will be provided is:

Policy No. 5111 — Section IV. Standards:

D. When considering the need for and/or implementing school bus service, the staff shall consider:

1. Reasonable levels of safety.
2. Program efficiency.
3. Economy of operations.
4. Equity of service.
5. IEP or 504 plan requirements.

Providing a reasonable level of safety shall be the major staff consideration.

I approach all safety issues with the same initial question: What is the acceptable risk? I do not see safety as the elimination of all risk and, indeed, I cannot conceive of a situation where ALL risk could possibly be eliminated. On the other hand, once an analysis of risk is made, the decision maker (whether it be a parent, a principal, a Board of Education member, or the Maryland General Assembly) can make a judgment as to whether the level of risk is acceptable.

I, personally, believe any life threatening risk to our children should receive the highest attention. I don't hesitate to say that I will always place the safety of children way above standardized test scores. Accordingly, if elected to the Board of Education, I would propose *Policy No. 5111*, Sections I., III. S., & IV. D. be amended to read:

> Section I. Policy Statement:
>
> > ... The Board of Education's responsibility for students walking to and from school shall begin when the student enters upon a suitable walkway and shall continue so long as the student remains upon that walkway or on school property. Conversely, its responsibility shall end when the student exits the suitable walkway at the end of the school day.
>
> Section III. Definitions:
>
> > S. Suitable Walking Routes - Where pupils have a pathway, right-of-way, sidewalk or other surface upon which they can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles.
>
> Section IV. Standards:
>
> > D. When considering the need for and/or implementing school bus service, the staff shall consider:
> >
> > > 1. Acceptable risk.
> > > 2. Program efficiency.
> > > 3. Economy of operations.
> > > 4. Equity of service.
> > > 5. IEP or 504 plan requirements.
> >
> > > No plan that would place any pupil in a position of unacceptable risk shall be implemented.

As a general approach to making the existing Board Policies more effective in providing direction to the central office staff, I would start with a global search

for the word "except" and then analyze whether a block delete of the remainder of that policy subsection would put some teeth into the Board's Policy. Too many "excepts" subverts the authority of the Board.

3) Rank order in value of importance what you want a student to have when they leave the school system (1 being the highest importance and 8 being the lowest. If an item is one the school system should not provide give it a zero.):

    #1 — f) critical thinking skills
    #2 — c) communication skills
    #3 — a) ability to recall facts they were taught
    #4 — b) have an appreciation for the great books and thinkers throughout history
    #5 — d) research skills
    #6 — h) ability to assess the credibility of sources of information
    #7 — e) respect for authority
    #8 — g) an understanding that actions have consequences

4) Rank order which of the following most effectively promotes learning (1 being the highest importance and 10 being the lowest. If an item doesn't promote learning give it a zero.):

    #1 — I) student presentations
    #2 — f) foreign language trips overseas
    #3 — g) mentorship/internship opportunities in potential fields of employment
    #4 — d) clubs and non-athletic after-school extracurriculars
    #5 — b) music instruction
    #6 — e) sports
    #7 — h) practice standardized tests
    #8 — a) field trips (there are a few exceptions but travel time is wasteful)
    #9 — j) assigned seats
    #10 — c) a dress code

5) Which of the following should be allowed on school grounds? (select as many or a few as you want)

    "School grounds" are public property and there is nothing in the following list that can be prohibited AT ALL TIMES on public property. See, generally, *HCPSS Policy No. 11111: Use of School Facilities by Non-school Groups.*

    On the other hand, DURING SCHOOL HOURS there should be no religious services (i.e. "prayer meetings") allowed as it would violate the establishment of religion clause of the U.S. Constitution. In addition, DURING SCHOOL HOURS, the principal of each school should have authority to specify a

reasonable dress code that MIGHT address attire such as "low riding jeans" and "girls tops with spaghetti string shoulder straps."

a) prayer meetings — Although prayer meetings should be permitted only after regular school hours, any student should be allowed to pray at any time during the school day so long as he/she is not disruptive. The decision regarding what constitutes "disruptive" should be made by the school principal subject to fast track oversight by the Superintendent.

b) handing out of condoms — Only after regular school hours.

c) a gay/lesbian/bisexual student group — No school sponsored club should be allowed to restrict membership based on sexual orientation. On the other hand, a straight/gay/lesbian alliance that is open to all regardless of sexual orientation is appropriate for school sponsorship.

d) low riding jeans — This decision should be delegated to the school principal.

e) girls tops with spaghetti string shoulder straps — This decision should be delegated to the school principal.

f) student run civic or political club — Civic & political activities may occur during school hours so long as they are not disruptive. The decision regarding what constitutes "disruptive" should be made by the school principal subject to fast track oversight by the Superintendent.

g) teaching of evolution — The teaching of evolution is an absolutely essential part of the science curriculum.

h) distribution of non-school or non-governmental literature (i.e. literature from the Boy Scouts, church groups, etc.) — Non-school or non-governmental literature should be place in an envelope marked "For the Parent" and the parents should decide what items, if any, to show their children. Or, in the alternative, all non-school or non-governmental literature could be required to have "Not School Approved" stamped on each piece of literature. The important thing is that non-school community groups need some way to inexpensively let families know what kind of youth programs are available in Howard County.

6) Do you support or oppose including the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance (including the phrase "under God") as part of the official school day?

I personally have no problem reciting the Pledge of Allegiance although such a generalized pledge does not replace the oath of office which includes an express obligation to support the U.S. and Maryland Constitutions. However, even without the "under God," it is settled law that students cannot be forced to recite

the Pledge of Allegiance. *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnett*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943).

Currently, it is an open issue whether students can be forced to hear the recently added (1954) "under God" portion of the Pledge. Thus, while I have no problem with Board of Education members reciting the Pledge at the beginning of a public meeting, as a practical matter, I would vote to wait for an authoritative decision of the courts with regard to inclusion of the Pledge as part of the school day. It doesn't make sense for the Board of Education to expose Howard County taxpayers to the high cost of replicating ongoing constitutional litigation. Let the courts do their job and then comply with their rulings.

I believe pledges and oaths should be solemn statements of personal belief and commitment and, in my opinion, anytime a pledge or an oath is mandated, the integrity of that solemn statement is subverted. On the other hand, if a person is not willing to make an honest and sincere oath to protect our constitutional form of government, they should not be holding public office.

I took an oath to protect the U.S. Constitution when I received my commission in the U.S. Air Force. I took an oath to protect the U.S. and Maryland Constitutions when I was admitted to the Maryland bar. I hope to be given the opportunity to reaffirm that oath this December.

7) What is the scientific method?

In brief, "scientific method" means "take a guess and then test your guess." Following the scientific method will, over time, result in better and better guesses (a.k.a. "less wrong") as to what is likely to happen in a given situation. Science is about reason—not truth.

8) Excluding the current president who were America's five best presidents and who were America's five worst presidents? For each give up to five bullet point reasons why.

My ratings of America's presidents are always subject to change and I am always happy to have an animated discussion with anyone that wants to convince me that my ratings are "wrong." I find more pleasure in arguing about the relative merits of this president vs. that president than in claiming I have a definitive ranking. So...for the sake of argument:

5 Best Presidents (bullets may include non-Presidential accomplishments):

1. George Washington
   - presided over the Constitutional Convention.
   - started the cabinet system of government.
   - started the two term limit tradition.

- the man who chose to be the "first of many Presidents" when he could have been the "first and last President."
- but...how many slaves did he own?

2. Thomas Jefferson
- principle author of the Declaration of Independence.
- author of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom which formed the basis for the Establishment Clause.
- "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone." J. F. Kennedy addressing 49 Nobel Prize winners at a White House dinner in 1962.
- made the Louisiana Purchase.
- but...beyond owning slaves, what about Sally Hemings?

3. Abraham Lincoln
- the President that finally faced the slavery issue.
- Emancipation Proclamation.
- Thirteenth Amendment.
- Gettysburg Address.
- but...how could he live with over 600,000 Civil War dead?

4. Andrew Jackson
- Jacksonian democracy.
- Battle of New Orleans (1815)
- spoils system (no, it's not all bad)
- only President to retire the national debt
- but...what about "the Trail of Tears"?

5. Theodore Roosevelt
- trust buster & business regulator.
- commander of the "Rough Riders."
- pushed to complete the Panama Canal.
- Nobel Peace Prize (brokered 1906 Russo-Japanese Treaty).
- promoted the conservation movement.

Worst Presidents:

38. Calvin Coolidge — "The business of America is business", mismanagement of the economy & scandals set the stage for the Great Depression.

39. Warren G. Harding — Teapot Dome scandal, his Attorney General accepted bribes, etc.

40. Franklin Pierce — supported expansion of slavery in the west (Kansas-Nebraska Act 1854) and did nothing to stem the drifting of the nation toward the Civil War.

41. James Buchanan — his inaction as President helped lay the foundation for the Civil War.   Statement made by outgoing President Buchanan to incoming President Lincoln: "If you are as happy entering the presidency as I am in leaving it, then you are truly a happy man."

42. Millard Filmore — "God knows that I detest slavery, but it is an existing evil ... and we must endure it and give it such protection as is guaranteed by the Constitution." Signed the *Fugitive Slave Act* (1850).

9) What five books or thinkers most influenced your thinking? How did they do so?

I am a product of my environment and, as such, I have extreme difficulty isolating and assessing the precise impact of any single thing, any one person, any singular idea, or even any specific vegetable. I see everything linked to everything else and when I try to touch one thing or idea in isolation I find other things and ideas intruding.   I perceive my surroundings as being much like Santa's proverbial belly — "a bowl full of Jell-O." A poke here or there and it jiggles everywhere.

That said, I can confidently identify five of the major conceptual influences on me and prominent books and/or thinkers that I associate with those particular influences:

1. Religious/Ethical Influence: The Bible (old & new testaments) & comic books.

Fortunately, in my opinion, I was not exposed to television until I was in the 1st Grade when the only boy in my neighborhood with a television in his house always invited the rest of the neighborhood children over to watch Howdy Doody, Buster Brown and Superman.   Prior to that time, I attended Bible School and Sunday School and poured over numerous comic books. As best as I can tell, the ethical values that I was taught by my Bible School and Sunday School teachers is consonant with the ethical values portrayed by Hopalong Cassidy, Lash LaRue, Gene Autry, the Lone Ranger, Mickey Mouse, Mighty Mouse and Superman.

I optimistically believe/hope that the ethical values I hold would still be pretty much the same if, instead of the Bible, I had been exposed at a young age to any of the other major holy books such as the Talmud, the Koran, the Tao-te-ching, the Veda, the Analects, etc. I also suspect that comic books alone do a pretty good job of communicating the shared ethical values of our society.

If I'm wrong about this, I leave it to someone else to sort out as I hold tightly onto Matthew 22:21 "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

2. Rational Thought: Euclid, *SMSG Geometry*, Sir Isaac Newton, A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth & Logic*. When I feel I'm losing my way/mind I can always touch base with geometry and the hard edge of Newtonian physics. In my sophomore year of high school I was fortunate to take a geometry course taught by Mr. Morrison (an energetic former Coast Guard serviceman) using the School Mathematics Study Group (SMSG) Geometry text published by Yale Press.

Later, much later, I discovered a small book titled Language, Truth & Logic that allowed me to focus my attention on questions which were subject to rational study. I believe the basic approach is called logical positivism and, essentially, if you can't come up with an experiment that can test a particular statement, why waste your limited amount of time on it?

3. Skills & Survival: Wolfgang Langewiesche's *Stick and Rudder: An Explanation of the Art of Flying*, William Lowrance's *Of Acceptable Risk: Science and the Determination of Safety*.

A major portion of my life (about two decades) involved regular aviation activity. Aviation is an unforgiving pursuit and many, many hours of my aviation experience were taken by energetic discussions with other pilots regarding the nature of "what is safe?" I certainly had my opinions and, as for heavier than air flight, I belonged to the "angle of attack" school presented so ably by Wolfgang Langewiesche's *Stick and Rudder*. This placed me, when I was in the Air Force, in a small minority because USAF flight training doctrine centered around airspeed control. Wolfgang was my friend in lonely times.

Later in my aviation activites, I discovered a book whose introduction finally put into words what I had been thinking — *Of Acceptable Risk* by William Lowrance. Basically, something is safe IF the RISK is ACCEPTABLE. sounds pretty simple but it is not the approach taken by the great majority of people.

4. Politics & Banned Books: Is politics possible without "banned" books? *Brave New World*, *1984*, *Animal Farm*, *Grapes of Wrath*, de Todqueville's *Democracy in America*. I was forced to discover "banned books" in my 7th grade algebra class when my teacher, a Mr. Jenkins who did not own a television, caught me reading war books during class. Mr. Jenkins told me to talk to him after class and, at that point, he told me in no uncertain terms: "If you are going to read books in my class, you are going to read books I like." At which point, Mr. Jenkins gave me a handwritten list that included *Brave New World*, *1984*, *Animal Farm*, *Grapes of Wrath*. My reading habits haven't been the same since. Thank you, Mr. Jenkins.

5. Great Thinker: Donald Knuth. Dr. Knuth is not the greatest living genius by any means but he has had a big influence on me because I had the opportunity to be around him a little and, more importantly, the opportunity to support the work he has done to improve the typesetting of mathematics. For about five years I served on the Planning Committee (the functional equivalent of a board of directors) for the TeX Users Group ("TUG"). TUG's purpose was to freely distribute and support Dr. Knuth's public domain mathematical typesetting program which was named TeX. I am humbled by the intellectual firepower that Dr. Knuth brings to the study of computer algorithms and, at the same time, his vision of beauty for the publication of mathematical texts. It is comforting to know that genius really does exist and it can co-exist with noble purpose.

10) What five movies best encompass the American experience and how would you use them to teach a course on American history?

> The Board of Education should protect the freedom of individual history teachers to use creative classroom techniques and I see nothing wrong with using films as an adjunct to the an approved American history text. I don't, however, believe any HCPSS teacher should substitute a number of movies for an approved textbook for the required American history course.
>
> On the other hand, teachers should be encouraged to propose creative elective courses that enrich the state mandated curriculum. One such course might be: "America Through Film — a review of how film makers look at the American Experience."
>
> If given the opportunity to teach such a course, I would probably vary the films viewed each semester in order to keep the students (and myself!) interested in, and talking about, the class. I believe such a course does not depend on a perfect selection of films but, rather, upon the opportunity for students to critically reflect upon the visions of America presented by film.
>
> That said, I am proud to introduce the —

WORLD PREMIER SEMESTER
of
America Through Film

and presenting for the first time ever in the history of man, the dreams of giants projected onto the bigger-than-life silver screen, in CINERAMA, CINEMASCOPE & PANAVISION, and directed by theTitans of Hollywood and other World Famous Artistic Genius's and

<center>* * * STARRING * * *</center>

the most handsome the most glamorous, the most elegant, the most sexy thespians to grace stage or screen

BUT, these spectacular, spectaculars are playing for a limited engagement only, to only the most sophisticated audiences in Howard County...... hurry now to register for "AMERICA THROUGH FILM" to make sure you don't miss.....

1. *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992 Michael Mann)

> If Jimmy Carter could have watched this movie in 1979 he would have never given his "malaise" speech. In my opinion, there simply is not a better film for inducing the "proud to be an American" spirit. The opening scene evokes the mythic power of James Fenimore Cooper's Hawkeye (played by Daniel Day Lewis, a Londoner) and the pace continues with a pounding soundtrack until the final confrontation of Magua (played by Wes Studi, a Cherokee from Oklahoma) and Chingachgook (played by Russell Means, a Oklala/Lokota Sioux from South Dakota who is also an active member of the American Indian Movement).

> The historical context is the French & Indian War and Director Mann unobtrusively highlights the conditions that almost guarantee that less than 15 years hence the American Colonies will rebel and go their own way.

> As Hawkeye succinctly answers when asked how he could go to "Kantuck" rather than fight in the English/French war, "It's real simple, you just face North and then, real quick–like, turn left" — the *Reader's Digest* version of Frederick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis.

> James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel, "The Last of the Mohicans," is in the public domain and is available at a number of locations on the web such as – http://www.online-literature.com/cooperj/mohicans/

2. *The Birth of a Nation* (1915 D.W. Griffith)/*Citizen Kane* (1941 Orson Wells)

> Assuming *America Through Film* would be offered as a one semester course, I have selected *Birth of a Nation* for the fall semester and *Citizen Kane* for the spring semester. These two films are at the top of almost every critics list of great American cinema and, as such, guarantee the administration can't doubt the "academic value" of the course. I chose to alternate them over two semesters so I would have four other films that I can pick with minimal administrative "suggestions."

Beyond the school house politics — **Birth of a Nation** has always carried considerable controversy because it attempts to justify racial segregation. As such, the film is a touchstone for far ranging discussions about the aftermath of the Civil War — reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan, widespread lynching of blacks, carpetbagging Republicans, actors in blackface. A real potpourri of racial prejudice.

Beyond the racist content of the film is pioneering work in jump cuts and close-ups. Plus, the social context of the film's premier involves protests by the newly founded National Association of Colored People and criticism from a range of black historians such as W.E.B. DuBois.

There simply aren't too many issues relating to racial discrimination that aren't within a stone's throw of *Birth of a Nation*.

3. *Dr. Strangelove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964, Stanley Kubrick)

M.A.D. (mutually assured destruction) runs wild in Kubrick's master satire of the nuclear standoff between the Soviet Union and America. George Washington, in his Farewell Address, warned the nation about foreign entanglements and Dwight Eisenhower, in his Farewell Address, warned the nation about the military–industrial complex but it took Stanley Kubrick and Peter Sellers (as the indomitable Group Captain (G/C) Lionel Mandrake; President Merkin Muffley; and Dr. Strangelove) to make us laugh about the end of the world.

Was Harry Truman right to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima? At the end of World War II, were we right to bring the brilliant minds behind Hitler's terror weapons into the American military establishment? In a nuclear age, does Congress still have a role to play in the declaration of war?

4. *West Side Story* (1961 Robert Wise)

West Side Story is America's Romeo and Juliet. The Jets and the Sharks replace the Capulets and the Montagues and America's "melting pot" replaces Verona.

While West Side Story serves as a platform for taking a serious look at the problems that develop when two cultures collide in a pressure cooker, it is also a top quality (10 Academy Awards including Best Picture) romance of young lovers that provides some relief for a class that has just been through two pretty dreary B&W classics.

Time for the class to have the pleasure of watching and listening to Anita and Bernardo give two different perspectives on "America." Time to feel good for a while because next on the curriculum is the film I currently consider the best American movie ever made — and it ain't happy-talk.

5. *The Misfits* (1961 John Huston)

The Misfits is *The Last of the Mohicans* for adults. Hawkeye is replaced by Gay Langland (played by Clark Gable) an aging cowboy in modern day Nevada. Hawkeye's virginal Cora Munro (played by Madeline Stowe) is replaced by the worldly divorcee, Roslyn Taber (played by Marilyn Monroe). The west is not longer frontier and the people are no longer innocent. Director Huston and writer Arthur Miller set a landscape that is beautiful but with dark undertones. Wild mustangs provide a reminder of something missing— dreams misplaced by the misfits.

A glorious black and white movie coming out on the heels of the McCarthy years and written by a man who refused to give evidence before the House Un-American Activities Committee. A mature look at the American Dream that probably won't be fully appreciated by the students until they see it again in their early 30's.

11) What book on the approved reading list of the school system is one you would enjoy teaching? Develop three topics for papers related to the book you would assign to assess students critical thinking skills.

After Sandie French was courteous enough to distribute a copy of the "Approved Novels for English , Grades 9, 10, 11, 12" document via the howardpubliced yahoogroups email list, I browsed through the titles several times and I think I would enjoy teaching any of them. Still, I suppose I would most enjoy teaching one of the science fiction novels because I sense that many English teachers still look down their noses at "Sci-Fi" and I have that All-American habit of championing the underdog.

Thumbing through the "Approved Novels..." — I see the relatively recent *Ender's Game* as being a natural for young people so it wouldn't be enough of a challenge—better to just mention the book and ask for a showing of hands of those that have read it and would recommend it to others. I'd rather go for one of the classics that would be less likely to be naturally appreciated by the new generation. *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is a fun book but not, in my opinion, good science fiction (for excellent "end of time" sci-fi I recommend Michael Moorcock's *An Alien Heat* but it's not on the recommended list). *Jurassic Park* has the Michael Crichton eye for detail and action that makes for a best seller but, too much candy and not enough substance— good summer reading but not a feast. Orwell's *1984* certainly provides more than enough substance for a feast but it's too much of a crossover classic— too well respected

to need a champion. *A Canticle for Lebowitz* is certainly dark enough to scare the casual reader away but— much too respected by college level professors. *Slaughterhouse-Five* by the man who dares to declare the novel dead— tempting, real tempting. No, *Slaughterhouse* is just too big, too cross-over, too damn respectable. *Brave New World* has the same problem as *1984*, no champion needed. Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is technically sci-fi but, I am still trying to come to terms with it myself—a bit beyond my reach I'm afraid. I don't think I could do bug juice, oops, I meant to say "do Kafka justice."

Thus, by the process of elimination: Sir Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* — a remarkable example of the golden age of science fiction that, although written 8 years after Sir Clarke proposed geostationary earth orbiting satellites, *Childhood's End* is still old enough to have collected the dust that deters too many young readers.

Some possible (although a bit controversial) essay topics —

Theme 1. In part I of *Childhood's End*, an alien overlord species with superior technology and avowed good intentions becomes guardian to humanity. Explore how this "overlord protectors" theme of *Childhood's End* is similar to and/or different from the 2003 "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Theme 2. In part II of *Childhood's End* the author describes a not-so-distant future where humanity has no further need to labor. What do you think would happen to our society if the need for labor was eliminated? How does your prediction compare to that of Sir Clarke?

Theme 3. In part III of *Childhood's End* the author predicts a rather extraordinary "evolution" of the human race. Do you consider the "evolution" described in *Childhood's End* a matter of science or a matter of religion? What is the difference, if any, between the scientific concept of evolution and religion? What parts of the "evolution" described in *Childhood's End* is scientific and what parts are religious?

Childhood's End, a dusty, old 1950's book with more than a few hot-button issues.

12) Do you support an end to the surcharge of $1.00 per square foot on new construction that has been created by the Howard County State Delegation as an alternative to an increase to the County Transfer Tax to fund school construction? Why or why not?

No, I do not support an end to the surcharge on new construction because I believe the quality of Howard County Public Schools, especially in comparison to the severe problems facing the public schools of some of the surrounding jurisdictions, artificially inflates the price of new homes in Howard County. That

inflated price of new housing means larger profits for developers. More housing, however, means increases in the student age population and, thus, new schools. Thus, I believe new housing must bear the bulk of the increasingly expensive cost of new school construction. Transfer taxes, on the other hand, would logically be related to the urgent need to renovate and maintain our aging schools.

13) How do you think the school board should address technology purchases/upgrades to avoid problems such as what occurred with the Student Management System software?

Short term — "kludge" the existing system to keeping it limping along while regrouping and recruiting the expertise necessary to restart the specification and selection process. Student management software is critical to providing our students with the best possible opportunities after graduation.

The current Student Management System fiasco proves the board of education needs to have someone on the board that understands information technology. Our central office simply does not have the technology professionals in place to deal with the overly optimistic claims of software vendors. As someone who has been deeply involved in information technology since 1976, I have the in-depth experience necessary to help fellow board members understand what is needed and the significance of differences among the new student management system proposals that will have to be considered by the Board.

One process note—I believe it is time for our Board of Education to reach out to other government bodies who already have proven technological strengths (such as the Howard County Public Library System) and form a consortium to insure informed technology decisions and uniform approaches to hardware and software standards. Our HCPSS central office can no longer afford to ignore the existing technological expertise in the county government and within the community.

In addition, the Board of Education should immediately implement procurement system changes that would bring our local procurement policies into line with the statutorily mandated procedures for state agency procurement. The Court of Appeals held although "county [school] boards are generally regarded as State agencies because they are part of the State public education system, are subject to extensive supervision and control by the State Board of Education, and exercise a State function, from a budgetary and structural perspective, they are local in character" in *Chesapeake Charter, Inc. v. Anne Arundel County Bd. of Educ.*, 358 Md. 129, 139 (2000). That does not mean, however, that a failure to comply with those recognized, statewide practices is a wise path to follow.

14) Do you support attempts in the 2006 General Assembly to reform eminent domain? Why or Why not?

I support attempts to restrict, by statute, the use of eminent domain to public purposes only. I see no need to amend the Constitution to deal with this problem.

Statutory limitations on the use of eminent domain are sufficient and a good opportunity for the citizens to give their representatives some feedback.

15) Do you support state takeovers of schools if the state feels a school is failing? Why or why not?

Yes. Article VIII of the *Maryland Constitution* requires that the General Assembly "establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools; and shall provide by taxation, or otherwise, for their maintenance." In Maryland, the state has ultimate responsibility for the proper operation of the public schools system.