

Centennial Lane Elementary School (CLES) PTA
3825 Centennial Lane
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

Dear Candidate,

We represent the Centennial Lane Elementary School (CLES) PTA. In order to help educate our PTA and community members on the issues that directly impact CLES, we are asking you to tell us your views on issues that impact the voters in our district. All Board of Education, County Executive, County Council (District 1), State Delegate (District 9A) and State Senatorial (District 9) candidates will receive this inquiry, and all responses will be posted on the CLES web site www.clespta.org. We are providing you a copy of the history of these issues which will also be provided to our community.

Responses are due by Wednesday, October 25th. Please send your responses to the following PTA Executive Board members via e-mail Terri Chiu tachiu@comcast.net and Lisa Regnante growing-pains@comcast.net. We appreciate your time and effort in answering our concerns.

Sincerely,

The CLES PTA

QUESTIONS From CLES PTA

BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATES:

Issue #1 New Housing Developments: Potential Impact on Centennial School District from Doughoregan Manor and Turf Valley properties

- If the Turf Valley school site is not viable, how do you plan to accommodate students from these new housing developments into the County school system?

Board Candidate Allen Dyer's Response:

If significant numbers of new students are added to the Howard County Public Schools System, there must be some combination of new schools and/or portable classrooms added to the system in order to maintain existing class sizes. If there are inadequate facilities and the surrounding schools are closed due to overcapacity for more than two years and more development still takes place, redistricting seems to be the only remaining solution. However, since there is some time before that situation occurs, I would actively seek suggestions from the public and other school districts around the country as to possible ways to avoid extensive redistricting.

But, if redistricting cannot be avoided, I am a STRONG proponent of a feeder school system. In a feeder school system the #1 priority is keeping the student peer groups together.

In 2001 Board of Education candidate Barry Tevelow and his campaign staff created a feeder system based on the then current student population projections. While those projections are no longer valid and new schools have been constructed, the essence of the Tevelow feeder system remains fundamentally sound. I agree with the rationale for a feeder system Barry Tevelow presented to the sitting Board of Education in 2001:

Under Maryland Law, The first responsibility listed for the BOE is: Expressing and representing the views of the community in matters affecting education.

In other words, the Board is to develop policies that represent the community's feelings and direct the Superintendent, his staff and administrators to implement them.

I can think of so many instances where this does not seem to be the case. In this specific case of redistricting it appears once again. Time and time again I've heard from the community that the overriding concern is: "Keep Our Community Together". In order to implement that, you have to understand what it means.

You move into your neighborhood. Your kids start going to school. K, 1st grade, 2nd grade. You start building relationships with families that are in your elementary school area. You get comfortable with the families that your children interact with. You know that other parents are also watching out for your kids. You don't want those relationships disturbed. That is a community.

That being the case, why on earth would you start a redistricting process based on high schools? Worse yet, the school system tells you that you are going to go through this redistricting process again and again and again each year. The numbers weren't right for this year, the numbers aren't projected correctly for next year. This is an exercise in futility.

Wouldn't it make a lot more sense to keep those relationships that were built at the elementary level in place as much as possible throughout the entire education process?

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The taxpayers of this county pay the superintendent \$180,000 a year and his assoc. superintendents \$140,000 a year to implement the policies that this Board creates. This Board is supposed to represent your viewpoints.

...

A feeder system can work right now. You'll hear all the usual reasons why it can't work - the numbers don't work, bus routes don't work, the costs involved, teacher mobility, cafeteria workers, on and on. For reasons that I don't have time to go into, the bottom line is your DOE and BOE doesn't want it to work.

The highlights of the Tevelow feeder system are:

1. The Bottom-Up approach of the Feeder System Plan starts with K-5 and keeps these peer cohorts together as much as possible through grade 12.
2. The Feeder System Plan's central theme is the elementary school district. We have 38 elementary school districts today (2001) and it was our goal to utilize them, as they exist today.
3. Of the 37 elementary school districts (2001), the Feeder System Plan proposes:
 - a. 28 of the elementary school districts continue together to 1 middle school and continue to 1 high school.
 - b. 9 elementary school districts divide into 2 middle schools and reunite back into 1 high school.
 - c. 1 elementary school district divides into 2 middle schools and each group continues together into their respective high schools.
 - d. 1 elementary school goes to 1 middle school and splits into 2 high schools
4. RED HERRINGS
 - a. Busing —This is a NON ISSUE. The majority of our students are bussed. No matter which plan is eventually settled on, busing of our kids will be implemented. We pay the superintendent \$190,000 / year and the associate superintendents \$150,000? / year to implement approved policies/ plans (including redistricting). Busing is merely an implementation of existing policies and plans. The HCPSS has about a \$400,000,000 budget of which about \$10 million is allocated to the actual transportation of our kids. Even if the Feeder System Plan required a 10% increase (which we don't believe it does) this would increase busing costs from \$10 to \$11 million (which we believe could be found in the budget quite easily). Busing is merely an issue that the Superintendent and his associates will decide during implementation.
 - b. Rising Juniors —This is a NON ISSUE. Any redistricting plan will effect where kids go to schools. This includes Juniors. We pay the superintendent \$190,000 / year

and the associate superintendents \$150,000? / year to implement approved policies/ plans (including redistricting). The Rising Juniors issue is an item the superintendent and his associates will decide on during implementation. While outside the scope of this discussion, we have several suggestions that seem reasonable.

c. The Numbers Don't Work. —Ask the Pointers Run community if the school system's numbers work. Their numbers have been off for so many years it is shameful. In fact, we have filed a freedom of information act request to find out the exact makeup of each high school's numbers as a proportion of each elementary school and middle school that sends students to that high school. We have not received a response as of yet.

The Feeder System Plan's numbers do work. Furthermore, they can be easily modified, if necessary, by slightly adjusting elementary school boundaries.

d. Tech Magnet —The current perspective is that Tech Magnet restricts redistricting options. Tech Magnet can be implemented in a number of ways. In fact, Tech Magnet could be implemented in such a way to increase the options available in redistricting.

Bottom Line: I support a feeder system NOW.

Issue # 2 Lack of County Funding for Older School Renovations/Additions

- Budgetary cut backs will require delaying projects. Since the nine million dollar utilization study has been removed from the current budget, how will you determine which projects will proceed and which will be delayed?

Board Candidate Allen Dyer's Response:

Before surrendering to the conclusion that “budgetary cut backs will require delaying projects” I would encourage the Board of Education to undertake a round of educational meetings with the Howard County local delegation. One way to communicate with the local delegation is for the Board of Education to “go to the mountain” by scheduling a Board of Education meeting in Annapolis at a location and time convenient for members of the local delegation, as well as the public, to attend. The Board must aggressively pursue funding for older school renovations.

As a Board member, I would also work toward the elimination of the “wall” between new capital projects and renovations. While new schools are important, there comes a time when the condition of existing schools must take equal funding priority. Ideally, any new school construction project would be bundled with one or two renovation projects. Sometimes it is necessary to look again at abstract budgetary categories and make sure they reflect reality.

If no choice other than delay of some of the renovation projects exists, then I would support establishing a rank order priority system before any efforts are made to give priority to any renovation. In addition, as part of the rank ordering system, I would propose the Board reach out to the volunteer labor and expertise in the community to replace the loss of the county funded utilization study. The 2003 efforts of the Centennial Lane PTA volunteers to measure school floor space and compared it to the HCPSS specifications is an example of how volunteers can help provide the information necessary

for informed decision making by the Board of Education. I would, however, want to make sure that the utilization of Howard County volunteer labor and expertise was fairly and evenly available to all of the Howard County schools and not just to those schools that provide the bulk of the volunteer time and expertise. We are a countywide system of schools and when volunteer time and expertise is substituted for properly funded professional expertise the Board must insure that the information being gathered accurately reflects the conditions of all schools.

In sum, I would support the creation of a rank order priority system that would be feed with information collected by the volunteer efforts of Howard County citizens. There will be budget shortfalls from time to time but I believe Howard County volunteers will always be available to help our schools through the rough times.