

Responses to The Business Monthly Questionnaire By Board of Education Candidate Allen Dyer

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George,

I tend to be wordy so please let me know if you want me to edit my answers down. My biographical sketch follows my answers to your questions and a color and a black & white photo should be attached to this email.

Question 1. What is the Howard County Public School System (“HCPSS”) doing right, and where do you feel it needs improvement?

The recently established document repository is a solid step forward and the central office staff did well by establishing it. The repository lets experienced teachers bank lesson plans for new teachers to use. To make the repository even better, it needs to be more freely accessible without the red tape of getting permission to submit a lesson plan to it.

HCPSS is also doing well in providing a quality education to children from two parent households in which both parents are college educated. In contrast, the system needs to improve how it meets the needs of children from more transient or chaotic households. The distractions of family issues faced by these children interferes with their learning. For them, school needs to be more interesting than the distractions. We need to be able to assign our more experienced, better qualified teachers to where they are most needed.

Question 2. What are your views on redistricting?

I am a long-term advocate for a feeder system. School attendance lines should be drawn based on “clusters” of schools where each cluster is made up of one high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools. Establishment of a feeder system would eliminate “small feed” situations where students advance from middle school to high school only to find that most of their middle school classmates are sent to a different high school.

In addition to providing a less socially disruptive environment, a feeder system would permit greater accountability because struggling students couldn’t be hidden by the average scores of a particular school. Struggling students must be identified and helped rather than being redistricted “out of sight.”

Question 3. The state is facing more budgetary shortfalls, and there is always

the possibility that voters could reject slots in November, forestalling an anticipated stream of dedicated revenue for education. Capital projects, classroom resources, technology, safety and health are some of the primary areas that could suffer as a result. In lean times, where should the school system and the school board place priorities?

Operating Budget —

While much of our innovation in curriculum and new programs comes from the central office, in lean times many of our central office personnel can be transferred out to the front lines of our school system — the local school classrooms. Innovation will slow and maybe even stop until better times return but the day-to-day programs that impact children will not be touched. Another area that could be scaled back in lean times is the assessment testing budget.

More important than knowing the first place to cut is knowing the last place to cut. The core of our public schools system is our dedicated teachers. Thus, even in lean times, the school system should honor existing collective bargaining agreements that were negotiated with teachers and paraprofessional personnel and, at the same time, provide our teachers with the resources necessary for them to do their jobs.

Capital Budget —

The first item to cut in the capital budget is new school construction. If new schools cease to be built, the adequate public facilities ordinance will kick in and prevent new residential unit construction that would overload an already stressed public school system with even more students. Class size, especially in the higher grades may also have to be adjusted upward until better times return.

In lean times, projects to rebuild or renovate older schools should be completely halted. Only building maintenance projects directly related to student or staff safety should be permitted to continue. During times (such as now) when insufficient funds are available to replace aging infrastructure, cheaper renovations tend to be chosen in spite of the long term advantage of school building replacement. See, for example, the recent decision to renovate rather than replace Mt. Hebron High School. Never again should HCPSS rush into a renovation that costs more than half of a new school and doesn't even comply with current state ecology-oriented LEED certification requirements. If the money isn't there, WAIT until it is. Do the job right.

Thank you. Allen Dyer

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

Name: **Allen Dyer** Age: 61

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EDUCATION:

Public Schools 1-12 (Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, Washington State)

U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado (1968)

U.S.A.F. Pilot Training, Laughlin AFB, Del Rio, Texas (1969)

University of Maryland School of Law, Baltimore, Maryland (1976)

EXPERIENCE:

Served as a forward air controller combat pilot (Cessna O-2A) in Viet Nam (1969-70)

Served as a flight instructor of USAFA cadets in airplanes, gliders & balloons (1971-73)

Admitted to the Maryland Bar (1976)

Taught computer science at Anne Arundel Community College (1979–82)

Parent of two Howard County Public School graduates (2000 & 2004).

River Hill Boosters teen driver safety coordinator. (1997-2004)

Developed a proposal for a “Teen Passenger and Driver Safety Coalition.” (2000)

See — <http://www.riverhill.org/driving/project/index.htm>.

Board Member, TeX Users Group, an international software users group supporting the mathematical typesetting program written by Stanford Professor Donald Knuth.

Board Member, Blacksmith Guild of Central Maryland. (2004 – present)

Board Member, Howard County Citizens Association. (2008 – present)

Email List Moderator for Howardpubliced, FACNET, BGCM, & UPT7001DLF.

29 years business experience as a lawyer and computer consultant.

20 year Howard County resident and homeowner.