

2012-2013



Superintendent's
ENTRY PLAN

RENEE A. FOOSE, Ed.D.
Howard County Public School System

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board of Education



Sandra H. French,
Chairman



Frank J. Aquino, Esq.
Vice Chairman



Allen Dyer, Esq.



Ellen Flynn
Giles



Brian J. Meshkin




Janet Siddiqui, M.D.



Cynthia L.
Vaillancourt



Tomi Williams,
Student



“...developing
the whole
child, inspiring
creative thinking,
innovation,
perseverance, and
life-long learning.”

Overview

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) is among the nation's highest performing school districts, with the vast majority of students exceeding achievement standards and going on to college. HCPSS has received national attention for providing a premiere public education. The school system's excellence contributed to Money Magazine ranking Columbia and Ellicott City #2 in the 2010 Best Places to Live list. SAT and Advanced Placement performance are well above national averages each year, and HCPSS is consistently among the top-performing districts on the Maryland School Assessment.

The HCPSS instructional program has served our students well. It promotes developing the whole child, inspiring creative thinking, innovation, perseverance, and life-long learning. HCPSS graduates go on to top-notch colleges and universities and are known for their achievements in STEM fields, the Humanities and the Fine Arts. The system is proud that a number of graduates choose to return and teach in the schools they had attended. The reform efforts currently underway are designed to ensure that all students receive a rigorous education that prepares them for future success in a globally competitive society.

The Howard County Public School System is viewed across Maryland and the nation as an innovative, high performing school district. However, during the interview process and in my visits since being named superintendent, several themes have become clear: many stakeholders feel academic achievement at all levels has reached a plateau, organizational alignment to newly mandated initiatives is unclear, technological innovation is desired, and a strong spirit of collaboration and transparency must be embraced.

“These changes aim to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready to enter college or the workforce.”

Observations

As I enter HCPSS, it is incumbent upon our team to ensure that we continue to deliver on our mission and goals amid all of this change. The mission of HCPSS is to ensure excellence in teaching and learning so that each student will participate responsibly in a diverse and changing world.

This Entry Plan is designed to address the themes that emerged during the search process and sets broad objectives and initial entry actions that will be pursued during the first 90 days of my tenure as superintendent.

I join the Howard County Public School System at a time when K-12 education is undergoing critical reforms in Maryland and throughout the nation. Over the next three years, Maryland will be among 45 states implementing the Common Core State Standards which emphasize rigorous math and literacy expectations that aim to prepare all students for college readiness. The Maryland State Assessments will be replaced by a new assessment system currently under development by a multi-state consortium, the Partnership for Readiness for College and Careers. Student growth measures will be infused into the teacher evaluation system. Technology will continue to evolve at lightning speed, opening up new possibilities for the context of communication, productivity, and the learning environment. These changes aim to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready to enter college or the workforce.

Objective 1: To ensure a world class education for every child.

As we strive to provide a world class education for every child, we must first have a shared understanding of what a world class education looks like in each grade, pre K-12. We must ensure our benchmarks encapsulate the needed rigor to prepare our students for college and high-wage career readiness. And we must ensure multiple entry points for rigor and acceleration.

HCPSS has experienced laudable successes meeting and exceeding local and state standards. However, focusing on the successes of the vast majority is different from focusing on the successes of every single child. When we dig deeper, do achievement gaps persist beyond the standard? Is proficient performance predictable by race, socioeconomic status, or zip code? Are advanced performance and acceleration predictable by those same demographic factors? Is success defined the same for all groups and for all schools? Does each student feel nurtured and challenged? Is each student meeting his or her potential?

When we change the conversation from how we're doing as a whole to how well we serve every single child, we are bound to find areas for improvement. When we focus on outcomes for every child, we will unearth our most deeply rooted challenges, and face them head on.

Initial Entry Actions

- Establish a partnership with the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University to conduct thorough diagnostic analyses of student achievement trends and gaps and to evaluate how HCPSS currently uses data at the system level to develop policy.
- Study the alignment among the pre K-12 instructional program, assessments, and college and career readiness expectations.
- Evaluate the district's approach to meeting the needs of diverse learners.



TO ENSURE A WORLD CLASS EDUCATION FOR EVERY CHILD.

Objective 2: To build stakeholder trust and confidence through open and transparent communication.

As I talk with people in the HCPSS community, I am pleased by the multitude of rich curricular and extra-curricular experiences our school system provides. Anecdotes were shared about truly world class opportunities in the arts, world language, athletics, and STEM. There are remarkable programming opportunities for Gifted and Talented education, Special Education, and English Language Learners. The experiences here in Howard County should be communicated in more than just anecdotes.

How do we engage our community? How do we communicate who we are and what we do? How do we leverage new technologies and social media to deepen the communication mechanisms among administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community at large?

Initial Entry Actions

- Conduct a new communications audit to determine levels of effectiveness with building stakeholder trust and engagement, community outreach, and advocacy for HCPSS.
- Review existing internal and external communication protocols.
- Determine current perceptions of the school system communication among the community, parents, teachers, support staff, administrators, and students.

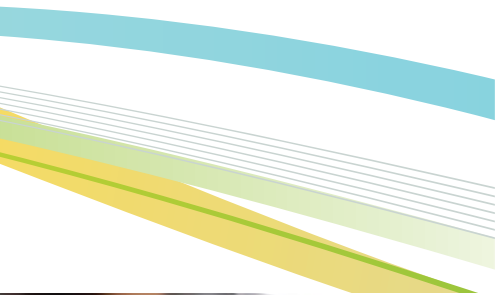
Objective 3: To engender a culture of collaborative governance and workforce engagement with the community.

Families move to Howard County from all over the country because they understand that we have a world class school system. They drive on the streets of Howard County and see green bumper stickers declaring: Choose Civility in Howard County. The Howard County way is about nurturing relationships and putting children first. I like that messaging and believe we can collectively “walk the talk”. Collaboration is essential to meeting the needs of all children. The true spirit of collaboration is built upon cultivating high levels of engagement with all stakeholders and forming strong relationships in which people work together in meaningful ways around critical issues thereby, building trust.

The Board of Education, Superintendent, administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents and community members must work together as one unified, engaged team to move the system forward.

Initial Entry Actions

- Listen to and learn from all stakeholders regarding priorities for HCPSS by meeting with Board members, administrators, teachers, support staff, students, union representatives, political delegations, parents, and community groups. I will also visit schools, meet with business and higher education partners, and hold parent and community forums.
- Develop new partnerships with business and community organizations to support school system progress.
- Assess the state of collaboration and engagement at all levels of the organization.





HOW DO WE KEEP STUDENTS SAFE AND SECURE IN THE CONTEXT OF A DIGITAL WORLD?

Objective 4: To leverage technology innovations for efficient operations and effective teaching and learning practices.

When this year's high school graduates were in kindergarten, a cell phone was just that – a cell phone – there was nothing Smart about it. Students' backpacks were not going abuzz in every high school cafeteria. There was no Facebook, no Twitter, and no YouTube. People may have had PCs in their home offices but they weren't carrying around iPads and accessing the internet on their phones. Terms like "Apps," "Cloud Computing," "Texting," "Skyping," and "Googling" were not part of our common cultural context.

We may have no idea what technology will look like in the next decade, but the one certainty is that we can't even imagine what it might be, based on what we're operating with today. The speed of technological advancements in our personal, academic, and professional lives poses several unique challenges and opportunities for school systems.

How do we teach the skills needed to be technologically competent and responsible, when we don't yet know what technology will look like? How do we use technology to engage students in the learning process? How do we keep students safe and secure in the context of a digital world?

From a business standpoint, how do we leverage technology to make our practices more efficient and effective? To what degree do we invest in the latest and greatest hardware and software, knowing that newer technology is just around the corner?

Initial Entry Actions

- Assess the current state of the technology infrastructure in HCPSS.
- Hold community focus groups to ascertain a vision for a multi-year technology plan.
- Work collaboratively with other districts and business entities to determine cost-effective technological solutions for teaching, learning, and business operations.

Objective 5: To align organizational structures and resources with system priorities.

Much is changing in Maryland school systems over the next few years: standards, curriculum, assessments, administrator and teacher evaluation frameworks. The challenges that come with all of these changes are compounded by dwindling resources. HCPSS will need to make tough decisions about how to streamline resources over the next few years to support students and teachers through these transitions. During this time of change, it is more essential than ever that we have a clear vision as to where we are going and a roadmap for getting there.

Initial Entry Actions

- Identify key staff to assist with the mandatory transitions that will occur within the organization.
- Set a vision for HCPSS and develop a multi-year strategic plan to align actions and resources.
- Conduct a comprehensive audit of systemic structures, resources, and position allocations to determine alignment with system priorities.
- Study business systems and processes to identify areas of redundancy and inefficiency.





Renee A. Foose, Ed.D.
Superintendent

“...achievement,
communication,
collaboration,
engagement,
organizational
alignment, and
technology
innovations...”

The Superintendent's first day and the first day of school

July 2 is my official first day as the Superintendent for the Howard County Public School System. I will visit several offices that are critical to ensuring that we are making progress for the opening day of the 2012-2013 school year. Visitations will include operations and facilities, curricular programs, and human resources. During the first weeks, I will visit schools, meet with Board members, key leaders in Howard County, parents, community and faith-based groups.

On the first day of school for students, and during the first weeks of opening the 2012-2013 school year, I will visit schools across the county. I will meet with teachers, administrators, and support staff to hold town meetings. I will also meet with central office staff to evaluate the opening day/week effectiveness and make needed adjustments and improvements.

After the opening of the new school year and as we near the 90-day mark of my new tenure with HCPSS, I will have learned a great deal about the achievement, communication, collaboration, engagement, organizational alignment, and technology innovations, and I will be ready to report out on the findings. Through multiple meetings with stakeholder groups, some initial ideas will be developed to address findings and recommendations. In the spirit of open communication, I will keep our internal and external stakeholders informed of our progress as we move forward. Your feedback and suggestions are welcome.

**To provide feedback on
Dr. Foose's Entry Plan,
please take the
accompanying survey.**

**Click on this page
to begin the survey.**

