BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TOWSON, MARYLAND
LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT
February 7, 2012

<u>**Introduction**</u>

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in January 2012 for the new superintendent of the Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS).

The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with individuals and groups in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by stakeholders. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the District and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. The survey data focused on the primary themes identified in face-to-face interviews, although it should be noted that any time there are a large number of survey respondents, the results accentuate differences in priorities across the five survey groups: administrators, teachers, support staff, students, and parents/community. This phenomenon can be seen in the long list of differences across survey groups noted on pages eight and nine.

<u>**Participation**</u>

Since BCPS is the 26th largest school system in the nation, there were strong levels of respondent interest and participation in both the online surveys and focus group interviews, a testament to the high level of community and staff commitment to a quality school system. The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, involved in the two methods of data gathering are listed below:

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	11	N/A
Administrators	104	171
Faculty (Teachers)	42	696
Parents/Community	137	531
Support Staff	43	174
Students	29	42
Total	**366**	**1614**

It should be noted that many of those participating in personal or focus group interviews had also responded to the online survey, and that board members were individually interviewed. Finally, the category of parents and community includes focus group sessions with county and state elected officials (several Board members and the search consultant travelled to Annapolis to meet with the Baltimore County state delegation), representatives of religious groups,

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business groups, community groups, PTA groups, special interest groups (e.g., gifted, special education, ELL) and the deans of local colleges and universities. Comments that emerged from the three open community forums held around the county are also included in this section; those forums also included small numbers of students and staff. Additionally, unsolicited written input was received from the following groups:

- Association of Elementary School Administrators of Baltimore County
- Baltimore County Council of PTAs
- Citizens Advisory Committee for Gifted and Talented Education
- Elmwood PTA
- League of Women Voters of Baltimore County

The responses provided by the individuals and focus groups during the interviews are listed under "consistent themes," beginning on page six of the report, and then again under the appropriate category: School Board, administrators, support staff, students, or parents/community. All comments are listed alphabetically with no attempt at prioritization.

A separate appendix lists all personal comments made by survey respondents, although negative statements about a single individual have been redacted.

Based on this considerable input, a first draft of superintendent characteristics, to be discussed with the entire Board on February 7, can be found on page 27.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed.

Strengths of the District

One of the most remarkable things about Baltimore County Schools is not only its size but its incredible diversity. The District is simultaneously urban, suburban, and rural. Students of color make up a majority of the district enrollment, while over 40% of district students receive free- or reduced-price lunches. Large numbers of religious and language groups are also part of the community tapestry, where families are likely to hold stronger allegiances to their neighborhoods than to the county system as a whole.

This multi-layer diversity was cited consistently as a positive by all respondents. Even more remarkable, given these demographics, are the high levels of student achievement, as evidenced by test scores, significant reductions in the achievement gap (compared to systems of similar size and demographics), high graduation rates, and the high percentage of students taking and succeeding at Advanced Placement courses.

Certainly, part of the credit for these successes is attributable to the current superintendent, Dr. Joe Hairston, who has spent the last twelve years at the District's helm. His remarkable tenure, vision, focus on strategic planning, and dedication were often cited by those interviewed as a key factor in BCPS success, along with his positive influence on the district for more than ten years. His most important maxim, that "all

means all" was cited many times to explain the system's commitment to ensuring all students' success. Dr. Hairston was also recognized by staff in particular for his work in expanding the role of data-based decision-making and the use of technology in the District.

Aside from student achievement, the single most consistent positive comment made throughout the interviews and surveys was about the quality staff working in BCPS. They are generally seen as dedicated, hard-working, and caring professionals who, several parents noted, had gone out of their way on more than one occasion to help their children.

Staff, students, parents, and administrators also frequently cited the high level of community interest and support for Baltimore County Schools. Many of those interviewed identified their deep roots and personal histories related to individual communities and schools, along with their long-standing commitment to public education. They genuinely like living near Baltimore and view the quality of life as a key reason.

Students, along with most other groups, often noted the wonderful range of program and curricular offerings: language immersion, magnet programs, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, specialized academies, charter schools-- the list is long and varied. While there are some concerns about at least some of these programs (noted later), there was a general recognition that, as one administrator said, "Almost every sound and reasonably priced educational program can be found in our school system."

Challenges/Concerns/Issues Facing the District

Given the number of people interviewed, it is not surprising that the list of challenges and concerns facing BCPS is relatively long, but several issues were most commonly cited by individuals and groups.

The one issue that seemed to garner the most passion centered on facilities. Several times it was noted that BCPS has the second-oldest buildings in the state of Maryland. Many parents, particularly those in aging buildings with climate-control issues, were very vocal about their unhappiness with the current situation. They also noted the enormous pricetag that will be required to update all the district facilities that need attention.

Unlike many urban-suburban districts, BCPS is not seeing a large decline in student enrollment. Indeed, overcrowding, particularly at the elementary level, was cited frequently as a concern. Even though the district has opened new schools, issues around facilities, including over-capacity in some parts of the county, is seen as one of the most important issues that the new superintendent must address.

Related to the issue of diversity, is the issue of equity, another major challenge. As one respondent noted, "equity doesn't mean equality." Because of the wide range of schools and school performance levels, the new superintendent must build a consensus around how to fairly address geographic inequities, while also ensuring that all students, including high-achieving students, remain constantly challenged.   In the uncertain economic period in which we now live, the skills of financial acumen and consensus building will be important in addressing the equity issue.

Relating to school program offerings, there was a strong thread, from parents and teachers in particular, that BCPS needs to consider additional vocational offerings. Not all students need or want to go to college, many said, and the dilemma about how best to serve these students is a subject of some debate.

Directly relating to the financial challenges ahead, is the question of how best a new superintendent can build the transparency, trust, and collaboration needed to work effectively with state and local politicians to get the funding necessary to promote high-quality schools. At the same time, however, there was a strong comment thread that the new superintendent will need at times to openly advocate for "what is best for students."

Desired Characteristics

As alluded to earlier, the top two items on the online survey effectively encapsulate two of the major characteristics that were frequently noted in interviews and focus groups:

- Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators
- Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community.

In short, respondents want a superintendent who will listen and work cooperatively with all constituencies, including elected politicians, but who will also advocate for public education in Baltimore County and the wide range of students the school system serves. Consequently, candidates with strong communication skills are essential in order to be effective in this position.

Expanding on the theme of trust and respect, traits like transparency, visibility, approachability, and good listening skills were often mentioned. Although some districts are considering superintendents without strong educational backgrounds, the need for the new superintendent here to know curriculum and instruction, be able to work with and interact with teachers about classroom issues, be savvy around educational technology, and be able to personally judge the educational effectiveness of a variety of programs were strong themes. An out-of-box thinker and a creative problem-solver were common requests that emerged in multiple dialogues, along with "visionary leader."

Realizing the challenges of running a large and complex district, respondents also wanted a superintendent with charisma and strong leadership skills who is able to both lead and manage the system in tough economic times. In their mind, financial acumen must be combined with sound organizational insight in order to assess current central office staffing levels and hold subordinates accountable for both personal integrity and student success. To this end, the superintendent must likewise demonstrate his or her openness to being held accountable for his or her decisions, while modeling high moral and ethical standards. Finally, personal energy, commitment, enthusiasm, a "thick skin," and a sense of humor were frequently noted as important traits, given the size and scope of the superintendent's responsibility.

Regarding educational background, no consensus emerged about whether it should be required that candidates have superintendent experience or a doctoral degree. There was, however, strong input that good candidates should have experience with and openness to diversity issues, and should also ideally have some experience in working in and/or running a large and complex system. Further, respondents want a leader who will actively engage with business and community leaders, parents, and local colleges and universities to continue and expand on current efforts in this regard. In short, as the survey responses indicate, it is essential that a new superintendent be able to "lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner."

HYA cannot promise to find a candidate who possesses all of the characteristics desired by respondents. However, HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to address the concerns expressed by the constituent groups. We will seek a new superintendent who can work with the Baltimore County School Board to provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance in spite of major financial challenges, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The consultants would like to thank the large number of participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey. Also, we would like to thank all of the BCPS staff members who assisted with our meetings. In particular, all the consultants involved owe a debt of gratitude to Brenda Stiffler in the School Board Office who devised and planned all of our meetings and ensured that we made it to every location on time. She was an outstanding professional throughout.

Respectfully submitted,

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Brad Draeger, Senior Associate
Michael Hickey, Senior Associate
Diana McCauley, Senior Associate
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Consistent Themes across Respondent Groups
(listed in alphabetical order)

District Strengths

- Commitment to helping all students succeed ("all means all")
- Community interest and support in providing students with a quality education
- Hard-working, dedicated, and committed staff
- Location of district and quality of life in Baltimore area
- Range of curriculum and program offerings available to students in BCPS
- Rich diversity of the system, racially, socio-economically, geographically, religiously
- Significant district accomplishments reducing minority achievement gaps
- Use of technology

District Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Ability to move district forward in challenging economic climate
- Ensuring that all students are challenged (G/T, low socio-economic, and special education, for example)
- Huge infrastructure needs, both related to aging facilities and overcrowding at some levels and in some areas
- Need for outreach and cooperation with local and state leaders
- Size and diversity of school system and range of programs offered
- The tension between diversity and equity: "equity doesn't mean equal"
- Transparency, for both the new superintendent and for the work done by the board and superintendent together
- Ways to continue to reduce achievement gaps and deal with underperforming schools
- Willingness to look at expansion of vocational programs

Desired Characteristics in New Superintendent

- Ability and willingness to stand up for what's best for all our children
- Ability to foster mutual respect and trust
- Approachable, visible in schools and community
- Belief in personal accountability and someone who can ensure that others are held accountable
- Collaborative skills in working with the board, the community, the unions, and political leaders
- Creativity and innovative problem-solving skills
- Energy and enthusiasm, but with a "thick skin"
- Ethics, honesty
- Experience and knowledge of how large districts function and how to move a school system with diverse demographics forward

- Outstanding communication skills
- Strong educational background – ability to recognize and foster good instructional practices
- Strong financial acumen and oversight skills
- Strong listening skills and willingness to engage with community, business, colleges, etc.
- Technology orientation
- Visionary leadership skills

Online Superintendent Profile Survey Results

The Superintendent Profile survey was completed by 1614 stakeholders. Almost half of respondents were teachers (43 percent), about 33 percent were community members (including parents), another 11 percent were support staff, 11 percent were administrators, and the rest were students.

Stakeholders

	Frequency	Percent
Administrator	171	10.6
Community Member	531	32.9
Student	42	2.6
Support Staff	174	10.8
Teacher	696	43.1
Total	1614	100.0

The top-rated characteristics that respondents selected are:

> - Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (Community Engagement Theme, CE)
> - Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (Community Collaboration Theme, CC)
> - Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (Instructional Leadership Theme, IL)
> - Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner. (Community Collaboration Theme, CC)

Percentages of respondents overall who selected each item, as well as percentages by stakeholder group, are given in the tables on the following pages.

In addition, differences were examined for statistical and practical significance to determine whether the mean scores by stakeholder group differed. Results indicate that, for many items, the various stakeholders were in agreement. On the other hand, there were several items that certain stakeholders valued more than others.

> - Administrators were significantly more likely than community members, support staff, and teachers to select the Vision and Values item "Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change."

- Administrators and students were significantly more likely than community members, support staff, and teachers to select the Vision and Values item "Act in accordance with the District's mission, vision, and core beliefs."
- Community members were significantly more likely than teachers to select the Vision and Values item "Strive for continuous improvement in all areas of the District."
- Support staff was significantly more likely than teachers to select the Vision and Values item "Hold a deep appreciation for diversity and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments."
- Community members and students were significantly more likely than support staff and teachers to select the Vision and Values item "Promote high expectations for all students and personnel.
- Teachers were significantly more likely than community members and support staff to select the Instructional Leadership item "Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology."
- Community members and support staff were significantly more likely than administrators, students, and teachers to select the Instructional Leadership item "Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations."
- Administrators were significantly more likely than community members and students to select the Instructional Leadership item "Provide meaningful guidance for systematic and comprehensive district-wide curriculum, instructional services, assessment programs, and professional development."
- Administrators were significantly more likely than community members, support staff, and teachers to select the Instructional Leadership item "Utilize student achievement data to drive the District's instructional decision-making."
- Community members, students, and teachers were significantly more likely than administrators and support staff to select the Community Engagement item "Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner."
- Community members, students, support staff, and teachers were significantly more likely than administrators to select the Community Engagement item "Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members."
- Support staff was significantly more likely than teachers to select the Community Engagement item "Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media, and community partners."
- Administrators were significantly more likely than community members, students, support staff, and teachers to select the Communication and Collaboration item "Seek a high level of engagement with principals and other school-site leaders."
- Administrators, support staff, and teachers were significantly more likely than community members and students to select the Communication and Collaboration item

"Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators."

➢ Administrators and teachers were significantly more likely than community members, students, and support staff to select the Communication and Collaboration item "Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner."

➢ Teachers were significantly more likely than community members, students, and support staff to select the Communication and Collaboration item "Involve appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process."

➢ Support staff was significantly more likely than administrators and teachers to select the Management item "Be an effective manager of the District's day-to-day operations."

➢ Administrators were significantly more likely than community members and teachers to select the Management item "Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals."

➢ Community members were significantly more likely than teachers to select the Management item "Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effectively personnel throughout the District and its schools."

➢ Community members, support staff, and teachers were significantly more likely than administrators to select the Management item "Guide the operations and maintenance of school facilities to ensure secure, safe, and clean school environments that support learning."

Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results		ALL (1614)	Admin (171)	Comm (531)	Student (42)	SS (174)	Teacher (696)
1	Listen to and effectively represent the interests and concerns of students, staff, parents, and community members. (CE)	59%	24%	60%	60%	64%	65%
2	Foster a positive professional climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, and administrators. (CC)	57%	60%	41%	19%	57%	71%
3	Hold a deep understanding of the teaching/learning process and of the importance of educational technology. (IL)	46%	42%	40%	60%	37%	53%
4	Lead in an encouraging, participatory, and team-focused manner. (CC)	41%	50%	31%	17%	36%	50%
5	Have a clear vision of what is required to provide exemplary educational services and implement effective change. (VV)	39%	54%	39%	40%	36%	36%
6	Promote high expectations for all students and personnel. (VV)	37%	39%	47%	52%	33%	29%
7	Recruit, employ, evaluate, and retain effective personnel throughout the District and its schools. (M)	37%	33%	45%	31%	37%	33%
8	Identify, confront, and resolve issues and concerns in a timely manner. (CE)	36%	19%	41%	62%	32%	34%
9	Involve appropriate stakeholders in the decision-making process. (CC)	35%	32%	29%	17%	30%	43%
10	Encourage a sense of shared responsibility among all stakeholders regarding success in student learning. (IL)	32%	28%	29%	26%	30%	35%
11	Guide the operation and maintenance of school facilities to ensure secure, safe, and clean school environments that support learning. (M)	29%	18%	32%	24%	36%	29%
12	Increase academic performance and accountability at all levels and for all its students, including special needs populations. (IL)	28%	30%	43%	21%	34%	16%

Key	VV-Vision & Values	IL-Instructional Leadership	CE- Community Engagement	CC- Communication & Collaboration	M- Management

Percentage of Respondents Who Selected Each Item (By Subgroups)

Number indicates rank order by overall results		ALL (1614)	Admin (171)	Comm (531)	Student (42)	SS (174)	Teacher (696)
13	Effectively plan and manage the long-term financial health of the District. (M)	28%	29%	24%	17%	27%	31%
14	Provide meaningful guidance for systematic and comprehensive district-wide curriculum, instructional services, assessment programs, and professional development. (IL)	28%	37%	26%	12%	26%	28%
15	Hold a deep appreciation for diversity and the importance of providing safe and caring school environments. (VV)	26%	29%	27%	36%	33%	22%
16	Be visible throughout the District and actively engaged in community life. (CE)	25%	19%	24%	33%	28%	26%
17	Seek a high level of engagement with principals and other school-site leaders. (CC)	24%	44%	24%	24%	19%	21%
18	Communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and in a variety of ways. (CC)	23%	25%	20%	19%	25%	23%
19	Align budgets, long-range plans, and operational procedures with the District's vision, mission, and goals. (M)	22%	32%	21%	26%	25%	20%
20	Strive for continuous improvement in all areas of the District. (VV)	20%	25%	23%	24%	20%	16%
21	Maintain positive and collaborative working relationships with the school board and its members. (CE)	20%	14%	16%	19%	25%	22%
22	Develop strong relationships with constituents, local government, area businesses, media, and community partners. (CE)	18%	21%	19%	19%	25%	15%
23	Be an effective manager of the District's day-to-day operations. (M)	12%	8%	12%	12%	20%	12%
24	Act in accordance with the District's mission, vision, and core beliefs. (VV)	11%	24%	9%	24%	13%	8%
25	Utilize student achievement data to drive the District's instructional decision-making. (IL)	11%	24%	13%	17%	8%	6%

Key	VV-Vision & Values	IL-Instructional Leadership	CE- Community Engagement	CC- Communication & Collaboration	M- Management

Comments from Interviews and Focus Group Meetings
January 17-20 and January 26

Listed in alphabetical order

"/" indicates multiple similar responses from one or more other "groups" during subsequent meeting(s)

BOARD

Eleven board members were individually interviewed.

Strengths

- Auditor reporting to school board
- Belief in "all means all" ///
- Blueprint for Progress
- Board has not micro-managed
- Diversity ///
- Focus on minority student achievement (and improvement) ///
- Focus on safety
- Good relationships with teachers and union
- Great students
- Increased AP enrollment and scores
- Infrastructure improvements
- Listens to community
- Many good leaders ///
- Significant student achievement, strong academic performance /////
- Some great hard-working people ////
- Superintendent stability
- Support from County and State/
- Technology
- Workforce development

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Achievement gap
- Building and maintaining strong senior staff
- Central office morale
- Changing leadership in curriculum department
- Communication and trust //
- Curriculum revision
- Discipline
- Diversity and equity ////

- Many elementary schools are over-capacity
- Funding
- Greater involvement, engagement with state and local leaders //
- Heavily centralized system
- Increased communication between superintendent and board, and among board members, transparency //
- Increased student achievement //
- Increasing numbers of low socio-economic students
- Lack of experimentation
- Lack of parental engagement, involvement
- Length of current superintendent's tenure
- Low number of charter schools
- Magnet schools selection process
- More attention to G/T students
- More training for teachers (e.g., in special education issues)
- Politics, high level of public scrutiny ///
- Promotion of positive growth for all employees
- Race issues //
- Recruitment of teachers and administrators //
- Staff trust and loyalty /
- Technology
- Unions
- Very old inventory of schools – facilities needs //

Desired Characteristics

- Out-of-box, non-traditional thinker, open to new ideas //
- Able to deal with racial tension
- Able to review roles, functions, and positions in central office
- Able to stand ground when necessary and fight for students ///
- Able to work collaboratively with board and staff //////
- Acts transparently
- Advocate for technology
- Change agent
- Consensus-builder
- Decisive
- Energetic, positive attitude //
- Experience with inclusion model
- Experience with unions //
- Experience, knowledge related to diversity ///
- Financial acumen, especially in another system funded like ours ///
- Foresight, vision
- Good judge of talent
- Good listener ///

- Intestinal fortitude to consider redistricting
- Not micro-manager
- Open communicator, strong interpersonal skills ////
- Politically savvy, able to garner support from community and local leaders /////
- Principled
- Strong educational background /////
- Strong-willed
- Visionary/practical visionary ///
- Willing to change
- Willingness to decentralize

ADMINISTRATORS

Five groups were interviewed, including the current superintendent. Several of the administrator groups were quite large.

Strengths

- Blueprint for Progress, all students can learn
- Child-centeredness
- Commitment to 21st century skills
- Community support ////
- Curriculum development and support
- Diversity (in all its forms) ///
- Fiscally sound //
- Great place to live
- High graduation rates
- ISO
- Mutually supportive administrators
- Number and quality of student remediation programs
- Partnerships with local universities
- Past accomplishments under current superintendent
- Positive parental relationships
- Quality of leadership //
- Quantity and quality of data
- Servant leadership model
- Staff development
- Strong teachers and dedicated staff ///
- Students and high levels of student achievement //
- Superintendent focus on leadership development
- Tradition of excellence
- Willingness to innovate

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Able to handle leadership succession issues
- Curriculum, especially with coming of Common Core
- Diversity and demographic shifts
- Financial needs , equity issues /////
- Helping schools make AYP
- Infrastructure issues ///
- Lack of parental involvement in some schools
- Need for differentiated service model, especially in special education //
- Need for redistricting
- Need for stronger focus on middle school
- Overcrowding, especially at elementary level //

- Red tape/bureaucracy
- Size of system //
- Some dysfunctional staff that continue, "dance of lemons" //
- Staff turnover, especially at high levels
- Systemic challenge of improving low-performing schools
- Taught versus "tested" curriculum, alignment issue
- Technology availability
- Transition issues, from elementary to middle school
- Understands culture

Desired Characteristics

- Ability to gain trust and confidence of staff and community, transparent ///
- Accountability
- Appropriate risk-taker
- Calm, confident, and reassuring /
- Charismatic ///
- Collaborative problem-solver
- Committed to BCPS
- Educational background
- Experience as school-based administrator //
- Experience with collective bargaining
- Focused on importance of curriculum and instruction
- Good judge of people and talent
- Good listener, open to good and bad feedback ////
- Imagination and creativity
- Knows curriculum and instruction
- Openness, transparency //
- Politically savvy ////
- Sense of humor
- Strength of conviction
- Strong communicator ///
- Strong interpersonal skills ///
- Strong moral and ethical convictions, integrity ///
- Student-focused //
- Visible in schools //
- Visionary and future-focused ///
- Visionary, practical visionary //
- Willingness to support principal decision-making

FACULTY (TEACHERS)

Three teacher groups were interviewed, plus there were teachers at several of the community forums. One teacher groups included paraprofessionals.

Strengths

- Citation of district as national educational model
- Collaborative business community
- Diversity ///
- High quality teachers and staff, dedication ///
- Highest PRAXIS scores in nation
- Location/quality of life /
- Music and arts programs
- Nationally recognized library media program
- Range of program options offered to students
- Reasonably good finances (compared to many other districts)
- Resources within district
- Stability of staff
- Staff development opportunities
- Supportive community
- Technology

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Aging infrastructure ///
- Assessing program effectiveness
- Central office out of touch with schools
- Different family values across district
- Diversity/equity //
- Erosion of trust
- Focusing on what is good for kids
- Issues around race and class
- Morale among schools
- Need for improvements in staff development
- Need for more vocational curriculum //
- Needed curriculum improvements
- Objectivity of evaluation process //
- Over-emphasis on college preparation
- Pay for paraprofessionals
- Politics
- Salaries
- Scripted curriculum at elementary level

- Size of district
- Staff movement among schools
- Student discipline
- Suspension and expulsion rates
- Teacher workload

Desired Characteristics

- Accountable, and holds others accountable
- Advocate for affective domain
- Approachable, personable //
- Collaborative
- Data-driven decision-maker
- Ethical/integrity/trust builder ///
- Experience in similar size district
- Experience with diversity
- Experience with unions
- Fiscal management expertise //
- Good decision-makers ///
- Good PR skills
- Innovative, creative //
- Open communicator///
- Politically savvy, good relationship with politicians ///
- Problem-solver
- Student-centered
- Visible in community //
- Visionary
- Willing to embrace local businesses
- Willing to involve teachers in decision-making
- Willing to look beyond data
- Willing to place additional staff where needed

PARENTS & COMMUNITY

A total of eighteen different groups are included in this category.

Strengths

- Accessibility to parents of student information (EdLine) //
- Accomplishments relating to minority achievement
- Availability of alternative programs
- AVID //
- Blueprint for Progress //
- Bullying prevention programs
- Communication improving, especially in past year //
- Current superintendent's emphasis on "all means all" //
- Curriculum development
- Data-driven decisions
- District website
- Diversity ///////
- Educated senior citizens
- ELL program
- Existence of interfaith groups
- Flexibility within special education to try new things
- Foreign exchange programs
- High level of school system involvement with community colleges and universities
- High student achievement /////
- Improving G/T program
- Language immersion program
- Magnet programs
- Many outstanding schools
- Number of Blue Ribbon Schools //
- Outreach to parents in multiple languages
- Quality of life ///
- Quality of staff (dedicated, hard-working, committed) //////////
- Schools and communities' willingness to "meet students where they are"
- Strong community and parental support ///
- Students well-prepared for college and career //
- Superintendent listens to student concerns regularly
- Technology //
- Variety of instructional and curricular offerings ////
- Willingness to have parents help in school //

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Admission criteria for magnet schools
- Aging infrastructure (includes safety) ////////
- Amount of technology
- Antiquated pedagogical methods
- Challenging students sufficiently ///
- Closing achievement gap ///
- Communities that can be provincial
- County control of school budget ///
- Curriculum and instruction
- Diverse student needs ///
- Diversity on superintendent's cabinet
- Entrenched central office staff
- Equity issues (between and among schools) ////
- Failing schools
- Finances and funding ///
- "Good old boy" network
- Greater emphasis on writing
- Improved staff development around special education and ELL issues
- Increasing number of autistic students
- Increasing number of college-ready students
- Lack of inclusive practices
- Lack of parental engagement in certain parts of district
- Lack of staff accountability
- Lack of strong personnel evaluation systems
- Lack of vocational education programs //
- Meaningful professional development
- Middle school curriculum
- Need for transparency between Board of Education and community
- Need to evaluate program effectiveness
- Not laying off teachers (reducing administrators) //
- Overcrowding ///
- Political climate, internal and external ///
- Poverty
- Quality of middle school program
- Security and student behavior concerns //
- Segregation within schools
- Staff quality
- Stronger mentoring programs
- Textbook discrepancies
- Transportation challenges //
- Working with teachers union ///

Desired Characteristics

- Able to delegate and build team
- Accessible ////
- Accountable and holds others accountable //
- Can work with teachers //
- Change agent
- Collaborative ///
- Courage and boldness //
- Energetic, excited, enthusiastic //
- Experience and openness to diversity ////
- Experience in large school system(s)
- Good listener /
- Good PR skills
- High expectations for all students
- Honest, open communicator ////
- Innovative, creative, out-of-box thinker //
- Integrity, ethics /////
- Interpersonal skills
- Involved in community //
- Knowledgeable of education and curriculum and instruction //
- Knows assessment
- Knows Baltimore County and surrounding area //
- Open-minded
- Organizational, business, and financial acumen ////
- Outsider perspective
- Paid low salary
- Politically savvy, ability to build alliances /////
- Proven track record of accomplishments
- Student-centered //
- Technology orientation ////
- Thick-skinned, tough ///
- Transparent and trustworthy //
- Understands board roles and responsibilities
- Visible in community ///
- Visionary ////
- Willing and able to reduce achievement gaps ///
- Willingness to fight for disenfranchised students //
- Willingness to partner with colleges and universities

STUDENTS

One large representative group was interviewed.

Strengths

- Challenging, college-prep curriculum
- Course rigor
- Current superintendent meets with students regularly and "listens"
- Diverse atmosphere
- Excellent art, music, and dance programs
- High test scores
- Integration of technology
- Magnet opportunities
- Many AP courses
- Many opportunities for student involvement
- Motivated students and teachers
- STEM competitions
- Student leaders who are able to make friends across schools
- Student leaders work together
- Students given opportunity to use learning
- Students' preparation for future
- Teachers who care
- Variety of programs

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Budget
- Consideration for creation of curriculum around county diversity
- Continuation of emphasis on math and science
- Focus more on academics, not just athletics
- Need more opportunities that can involve all students
- Not all students in AP classes should be there
- Recognition of school differences – gap between some schools
- Teaching students how to learn

Desired Characteristics

- Able to handle stress
- Able to manage details
- Approachable and friendly
- Emotionally strong
- Encouragement of student to learn about world and world events
- Enthusiastic

- Experience in large school system
- Good sense of humor
- Innovative
- Knowledge of what's happening in classrooms, not just test scores
- Openness to change
- Passion for learning
- Possession of vision for future
- Transparency
- Value on communications with students
- Willingness to learn culture, respect culture

SUPPORT STAFF

Three groups were interviewed.

Strengths

- China exchange program
- Commitment to professional development
- Dedicated, talented staff //
- Diversity
- Employee benefits
- Facilities improvements made in last 10 years
- Focus on data
- High levels of student achievement //
- Magnet programs
- Music and art programs
- Opportunity for student to take advanced courses
- Partnerships with local colleges
- Professional development opportunities
- Range of student programs/range of student opportunities
- Use of software for business processes
- Use of technology

Challenges/Concerns/Issues

- Alignment of curriculum to common core and new evaluation systems //
- Attracting and retaining talent
- Avoiding furloughs and layoffs
- Better equipment
- District size //
- Diversity/equity
- Helping lower performing schools
- Infrastructure aging
- Infrastructure needs with increasing enrollment
- Keeping kids healthy
- Keeping the momentum going after current superintendent
- Leadership succession plan
- Maintaining retirement benefits
- Managing with dwindling resources, funding issues //
- Recognition and equal treatment for support staff
- Working with whole child, not just test scores

Desired Characteristics

- Ability to lead in tough times
- Able to see "big picture"
- Approachability/openness
- Change manager, not change for change's sake
- Collaborative
- Effective communicator
- Energy
- Good listener
- In tune with national education agenda
- Instructional leader
- Knowledge of curriculum and instruction
- Media savvy //
- Not a reactionary
- Open to and experienced in issues around cultural diversity
- Openness to working with unions
- Passion and love for children
- Politically savvy
- Sense of humor
- Visionary //

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Baltimore County Public Schools
Superintendent
Desired Characteristics

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After seeking input from its Board members, parents, staff, students, and community via focus groups, interviews, and an online survey, the Board of Education of Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) seeks a strong educational leader who possesses the following characteristics and is able to:

- Assess the effectiveness of a diverse array of educational programs, making recommendations for improvement as necessary.
- Attract and retain committed and quality staff, while addressing succession planning issues
- Be involved with and active in community issues, modeling traits such as visibility and approachability.
- Courageously and decisively lead the system with vision, always standing up for what he or she believes is in the best interest of the students of BCPS.
- Demonstrate past success in addressing diversity and equity issues.
- Demonstrate past success in working effectively with a variety of unions.
- Foster a climate of mutual trust and respect among faculty, staff, parents, community, and elected officials.
- Hold high expectations for both students and staff.
- Partner successfully with the School Board in developing strategic, organizational, and communication plans that move the school system forward, both nationally and globally.
- Possess a track record of success in addressing the improvement of student achievement, while simultaneously addressing the needs of both "all" children and the "whole" child.
- Possess strong communication skills.
- Possess strong interpersonal skills.
- Think creatively and "outside the box" to address system challenges relating to equity and an aging infrastructure.
- Uphold high personal standards of honesty, integrity, and accountability, while holding subordinates accountable for the same high personal standards.

With regard to leadership experiences and accomplishments, the ideal candidate:

- Has a strong educational background, with experience in personnel and organizational management.
- Has experience leading a large and diverse school system.
- Has knowledge of quality improvement programs related to education, specifically ISO.
- Has understanding of and experience in financial management and budget decision-making.
- Is or is able to be certified in the state of Maryland (required).