
LWVHC'S EQUITY IN EDUCATION STUDY BACKGROUND PAPER

Prepared by Grace Kubofcik, Thea Jones, Barbara Russell, and Krista Threefoot, February 2020

INTRODUCTION

At its Annual Meeting on April 28, 2019, the LWVHC agreed that a Study Committee should be formed to examine the League's current Education Positions. The study committee had two tasks:

1. To examine the League's current education positions to determine if they still supported the Howard County Public School Systems' (HCPSS) goal of providing a quality education for every child in a Howard County public school.
2. To examine the changing demographics in Howard County and in its schools to determine if new education positions were needed.

The current Education Positions of Support were adopted by the LWVHC in 1987. In 1995, one position supporting year-round education was adopted and in 2001, positions related to the Howard County Board of Education were adopted. Since that time, no examination of the League's Education Positions were undertaken.

The Study Committee determined that **dramatic demographic changes** have taken place in Howard County and they have had a tremendous impact on the educational landscape of Howard County Public Schools.

OVERVIEW

This report is organized in the following sections:

1. LWVHC Equity in Education Committee Study Scope
 2. Population and Demographic Statistics and Changes in Howard County
 3. Population and Demographic Statistics and Changes in Howard County Public Schools (HCPSS) Enrollment
 4. School System Reports/Policies on Factors Affecting Inequity
 5. Current Inequities in HCPSS: A Tale of Two Clusters
 6. Summary of Report
-

LWVHC EQUITY IN EDUCATION COMMITTEE STUDY SCOPE

The LWVHC Education Study Committee examined three specific points related to equity:

- The changing demographics in greater Howard County, as well as in Howard County Public Schools, including racial, cultural, and socioeconomic factors.
- The demographic distribution in schools throughout the county and the effects demographic differences have on student success.
- The process of adjusting attendance areas (redistricting), with a focus on balanced capacity utilization and demographic distribution as the school system plans ahead for more growth, including building High School 13 and planning for a future High School 14.

Although a variety of demographic changes described in the following sections have affected HCPSS over the last 20 years, one of the areas of greatest impact has been the increased proportion and uneven distribution of students qualifying for Free and Reduced Meal Services (FARMS).

THE FEDERAL FARMS PROGRAM: Although started as a lunch program in 1946, the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act was expanded to include breakfast (1966.) Household size and income is the most common way to determine eligibility. For example, a child from a family of four is eligible for free school meals if the household's current annual income is below \$33,475. If the family's annual income is between \$33,475 and \$47,638, the child is eligible for reduced-priced meals. There is a more detailed description of the HCPSS's FARMS program in the November issue of *The Voter* on pages 3 and 4. Please use this as a reference.

In Howard County, 12,361 students utilized the FARMS program in 2019 with 10,342 students receiving free meals and 2,645 receiving reduced price meals. **Between 2010 and 2020, the percentage of students participating in the FARM program has increased from 14.5% to 23.8%.**

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN HOWARD COUNTY

- In 2000, the population of Howard County was 247,842 and in 2017 it increased to 321,113.
- Between 2010 and 2018, the population grew by 12.6%
- In 2000, the minority population¹ in Howard County was 27.4%. In 2010, it was 40.8% and reached nearly 50% by 2017. Projections for 2020 indicate that Howard County will be/has become a majority/minority jurisdiction.
- Changes in Howard County Population Diversity Data:²
 - 2000: 73% White 2000: 14% Black 2000: 7.8% Asian 2000: 3% Hispanic/Latino
 - 2017: 52% White 2017: 19% Black 2017: 19% Asian 2017: 6.8% Hispanic/Latino
- Approximately 27% of the population is under 18 years of age.³

POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN HCPSS ENROLLMENT⁴:

ENROLLMENT

- Public school enrollment has significantly increased over the last 20 years, growing by 130% between 2000 and 2019 (from 44,525 students to 57,801 students.)
- Early childhood education has changed, moving from half day kindergarten to full day kindergarten programs in all 41 elementary schools. In 2014, HCPSS began offering full day PreK in select Title 1 elementary schools. (Elementary schools with more than 40% of students qualifying for FARMS assistance.)
- Number of school buildings increased:
 - 2000: 37 elementary, 17 middle, 10 high schools
 - 2019: 42 elementary, 20 middle, 12 high schools (projected to add one more in 2023)

ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE AREA ADJUSTMENTS

School enrollment growth has been accommodated by the building of 23 new schools. 13 of these schools were built prior to 2001. Portables were also utilized in larger numbers, increasing from 50 in 1995 to 238 in 2014, to provide classroom space. Crowding and adjustments for development were made in 2000 and 2004. In 2012, Southeast crowding adjustments were made impacting 10 schools. The Howard County BOE completed its first comprehensive redistricting in the fall of 2019. The changes will go into effect in the fall of 2020-2021 school year. This redistricting impacted 5,400 students and 57 schools. The table below lists all new buildings and attendance area adjustments from 1994-2019.

Date	Purpose	Impact
1994	Open Manor Woods ES	
1995	Open Elkridge Landing Middle	
1996	Open Ilchester ES, Long Reach HS, River Hill HS	
1997	Open Fulton ES, Hollifield Station ES, Murray Hill MS	
1998	Open Triadelphia Ridge ES, Gorman Crossing ES	
1999	Open Lime Kiln MS	
2000	Crowding in in Columbia East/Southeast	7 schools
2001	Open Bonnie Branch MS	840 students, 9 schools, 99 polygons
2002	Open Reservoir HS	500 students and 15 schools
2003	Open Bellow Springs ES, Folly Quarter MS	1,500 students, 39 schools, 151 polygons
2004	New development north, west & Columbia east & west	27 students, 11 schools, 5 polygons
2005	Open Marriott's Ridge HS	840 students, 9 schools, 64 polygons

¹ Minority population is defined as everyone other than non-Hispanic white.

² Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census; U.S. Census Bureau 2000, American Community Survey, 2013-2017

³ Data source: Howard County Government Website

⁴ Data source: unless otherwise noted, all HCPSS data is from the HCPSS website

2006	Open Dayton Oaks ES	1,300 students, 18 schools, 64 polygons
2007	Open Veterans ES	900 students, 10 schools, 42 polygons
2010	OPEN ENROLLMENT ENDS	
2012	Crowding in Southeast	900 students, 10 schools, 42 polygons
2013	Open Duckett's Lane ES	1,860 students, 16 schools, 37 polygons
2014	Open Thomas Viaduct MS	1,200 students, 10 schools, 64 polygons
2018	Open Hanover Hills ES and some MS changes	1,400 students, 19 schools, 42 polygons
2019	First comprehensive redistricting	5,400 students, 57 schools, 182 polygons

DIVERSITY

- Racial Demographics have shifted significantly. In 2010⁵, 50% of HCPSS students identified as white and 50% of students identified as African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Other. By 2020⁶, 65% of HCPSS students identified as African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Other, with 35% of students identifying as white.
- English as a Second Language (ESOL) students increased dramatically. In 2015: 2,250 students were speaking 58 languages. By 2019: 3,081 students were speaking 68 languages representing 89 countries.
- The first language of ESL students was reported as Spanish, 20.4%, Hindi-related, 17.5%, Korean, 14.2% and Chinese, 11.4%
- School documents for parents are translated from English to Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese.
- Language other than English spoken at home by persons age 5+ increased from 2014 – 2018 by 25.5%⁷.

SPECIAL SERVICES

- The average number of students qualifying for the Free and Reduced Lunch program has increased significantly, growing from 14.5% in the 2008-2009 school year to 24% in the 2018-2019 school year.
- Our research indicates that these increases have been concentrated within certain schools and geographical areas more than in others.
- Special Education student enrollment has remained relatively steady, with 8.3% of students receiving services in FY2009-2010 to 9.8% in FY2019-2020.

SCHOOL SYSTEM REPORTS/POLICIES ON FACTORS AFFECTING INEQUITY

HCPSS LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE STUDY ON SCHOOL EQUITY, 2000

In 1999, County Executive James N. Robey and Dr. Michael E. Hickey, Superintendent of HCPSS, requested that a report on school equity be prepared as part of the HCPSS' examination of the "No Child Left Behind" data that was collected. In March 2000, the Leadership Committee on School Equity, comprised of 23 members, co-chaired by the Howard County Community College President, Mary Ellen Duncan and Bill Benton, presented their findings and the Executive Summary, page 1, states:

"Despite the overall excellence of education in Howard County, it is clear that significant inequities exist, schools with disproportionate numbers of children with multiple needs have lower performance scores, higher rates of staff turnover, higher percentages of teachers that are new and non-tenured, and higher rates of student mobility than other schools."

In this report, HCPSS Leadership Committee defined equity as fairness to all children, stating that:

"We believe that equity requires that we provide each student with the necessary resources, support and instruction needed to achieve academic success. The (Leadership) Committee does not believe that 'equity' is the same thing as 'equality.' Children with multiple needs require special attention. Schools with disproportionate numbers of children with multiple needs require additional resources."

⁵ Data source: HCPSS Fast Facts, 2009-2010

⁶ Data source: HCPSS Fast Facts, 2020

⁷ HCPSS website

PRIORITY ISSUES

The Leadership Committee identified 47 priority issues organized into 4 clusters:

1. Factors affecting equity like redistricting, open enrollment, fundraising and the financing of the education system.
2. Resource Program equity in the allocation of resources for communication systems, playground equipment, technology, and the educational options.
3. Staffing recruiting and retention of quality teachers, skilled administrators and competent support staff.
4. Accountability comparison of the ways data are collected and used by the school system compared to “best practices” from around the nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Leadership Committee made 70 specific recommendations within these clusters. Pertinent highlights include:

- Replacing the annual, ad hoc, and contentious “redistricting” with a comprehensive “districting plan” that creates a stable path for children from kindergarten through high school.
- Working with the PTA Council to identify strategies to promote more equitable fundraising.
- Developing a systematic plan and schedule for evaluating schools and providing for capital improvements and facilities /maintenance needs.
- Raising teacher salaries at all levels but especially for starting teachers.
- Identifying and reporting to the school board annually those schools with the highest rates of staff turnover.
- Providing incentives to motivate excellent, experienced teachers to remain in or transfer to high need schools.
- Developing a clear retention/promotion policy that requires mandatory academic intervention starting in kindergarten
- Requiring that the Superintendent submit an annual report on school equity to the school board as a part of the Superintendent’s budget proposal.

Many changes were made as a result of this 2000 report: increases to teacher salaries, new teacher mentoring programs, school-based curriculum, specific resources for training in low performing schools as well as dollars to measure performance, resources and a plan to replace and maintain playground equipment and the creation of a Boundary Line Advisory Committee. Instead of decreasing, inequity has grown significantly since this report was produced.

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM POLICY 6010: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AREAS

This policy was adopted April 2004, Revised April 2005, April 2009, Reviewed July 2011, Revised January 2017, Modified November 2018 and February 2019.

The HCPSS Board of Education Policy 6010 provides guidance in the redistricting of schools. The purpose of the policy is to define the conditions and process by which school attendance area adjustments will be developed and adopted. The policy states that *“The Board of Education of Howard County, with the advice of the Superintendent, establishes school attendance areas to provide quality, equitable educational opportunities to all students and to balance the capacity utilization of all schools.....the Board also recognizes the value of diverse and inclusive school populations when establishing attendance areas.”* The School Attendance Areas are determined by neighborhood clusters known as polygons.

DEFINITIONS INCLUDED IN THE BOARD OF EDUCATION’S POLICY 6010:

Demographic Characteristics of Student Populations: Features in the composition of a school’s population that include but are not limited to:

- Racial/ethnic composition of the student population.
- Socioeconomic composition of the school population as measured by the percentage of students participating in the federal Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) program.
- Academic performance of students in both the sending and receiving schools as measured by current standardized testing results.
- Percentage of students enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs.

- Number of students being moved.
- Other reliable demographic and diversity indicators, where feasible. (III. C.)

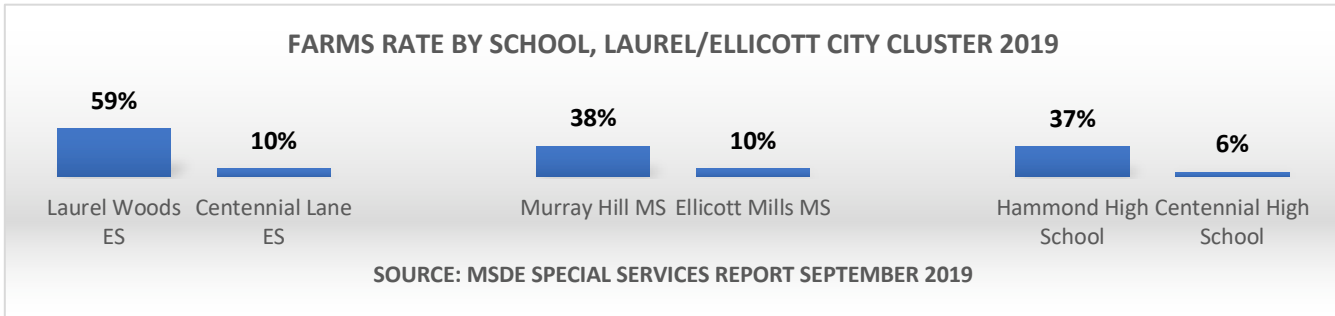
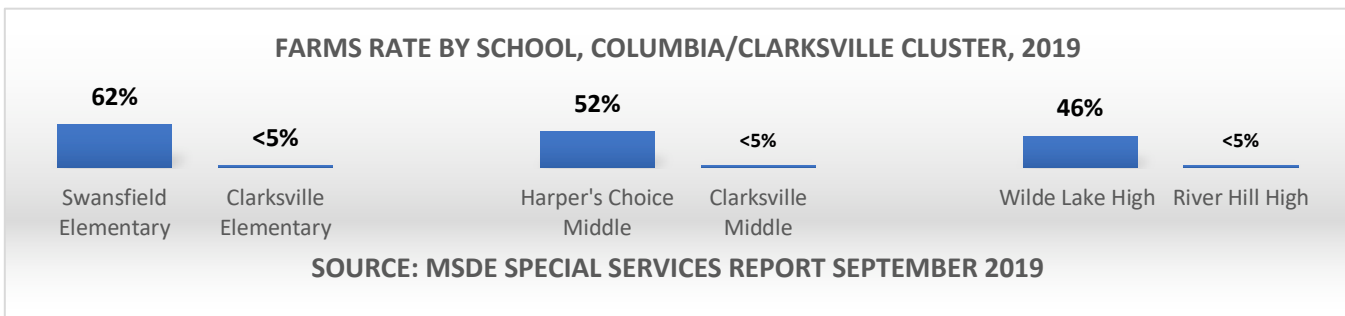
Diversity: “Not limited to race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion/beliefs, mental and physical ability, age and national origin. (III. D.)

Program Capacity: The number of students that can be reasonably accommodated in a school, based on the permanent school facility (portables are excluded) and the educational program offered. (III. O.)

CURRENT INEQUITIES IN HCPSS: A TALE OF TWO CLUSTERS

The Education Study Committee focused on two school clusters (Columbia/Clarksville) that are representative of high poverty schools and low poverty schools to compare data relevant to assessing equity in opportunities in and outcomes within our system. We reviewed: concentration of poverty, growth of FARMS rates, proficiency in state assessment tests, staff morale, teacher experience, donations to schools.

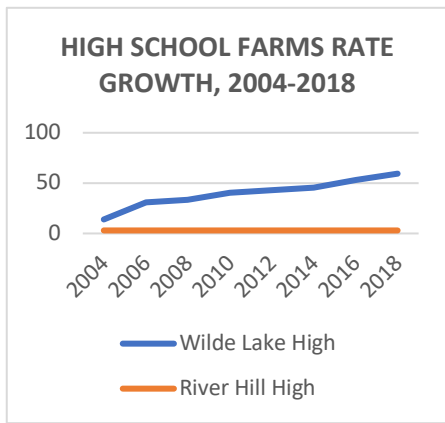
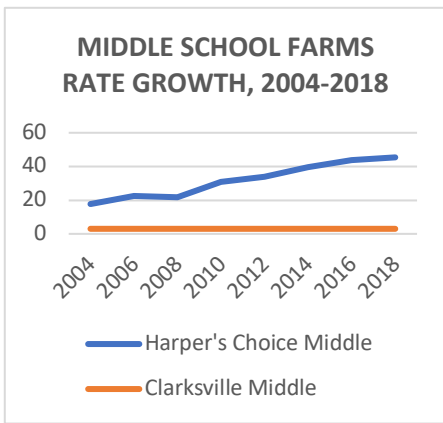
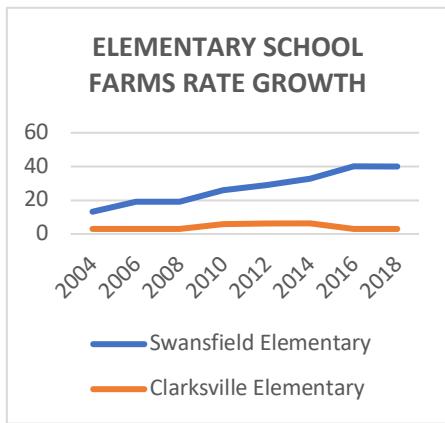
CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY⁸: There is a significant difference in the concentration of poverty among our school clusters. (We have provided two cluster samples in this section for more comprehensive comparisons.)



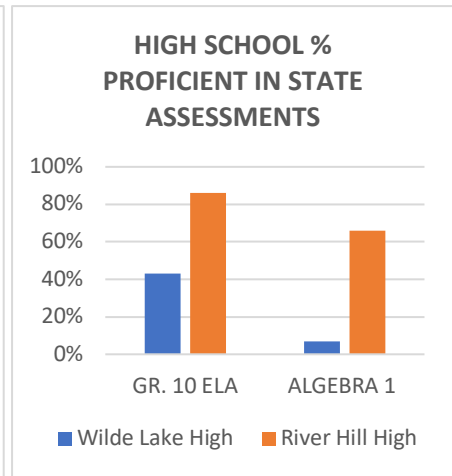
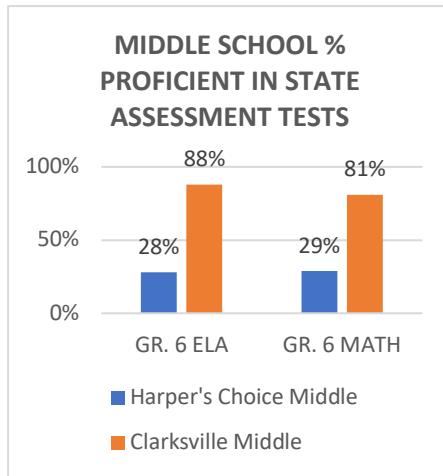
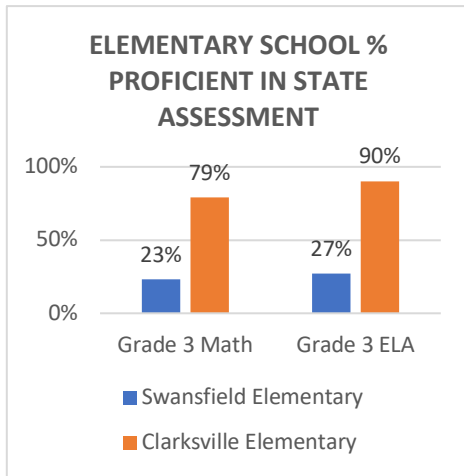
GROWTH OF FARMS RATES: Although poverty has increased throughout Howard County Schools, certain schools have experienced significantly more growth in the number of students receiving FARMS support⁹.

⁸ Poverty in this report is defined by the percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Meal services (FARMS data)

⁹ MSDE Special Services reports, 2004-2019

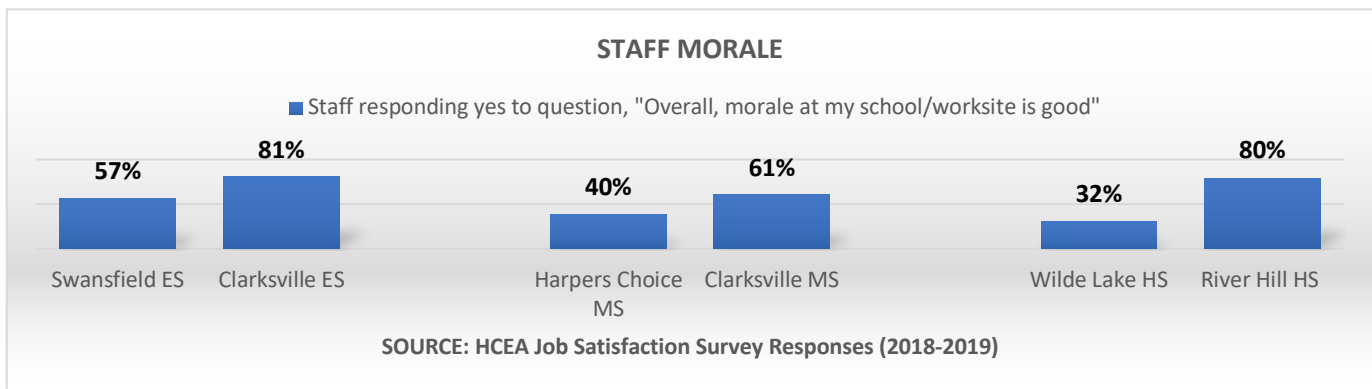


PROFICIENCY IN STATE ASSESSMENT TESTS: There is a significant difference in state assessment proficiency between high poverty and low poverty schools¹⁰.



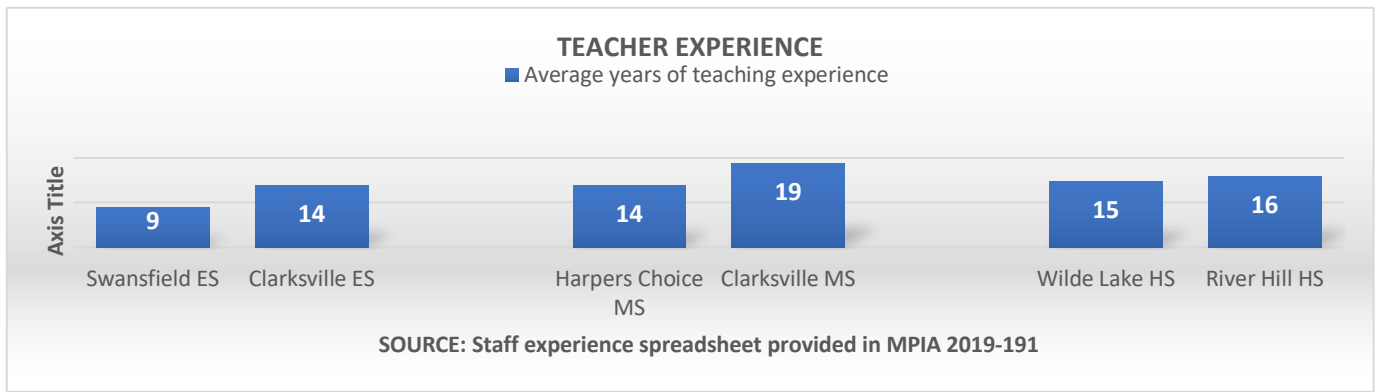
Data Source: MDSE School Report Card 2018

STAFF MORALE: Self-reported staff morale is significantly different in high poverty schools and low poverty schools.

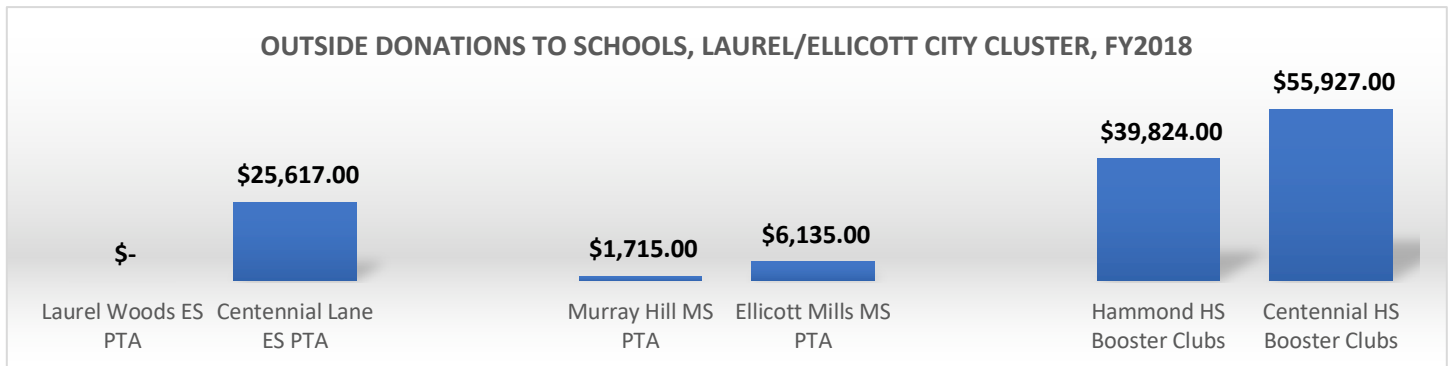
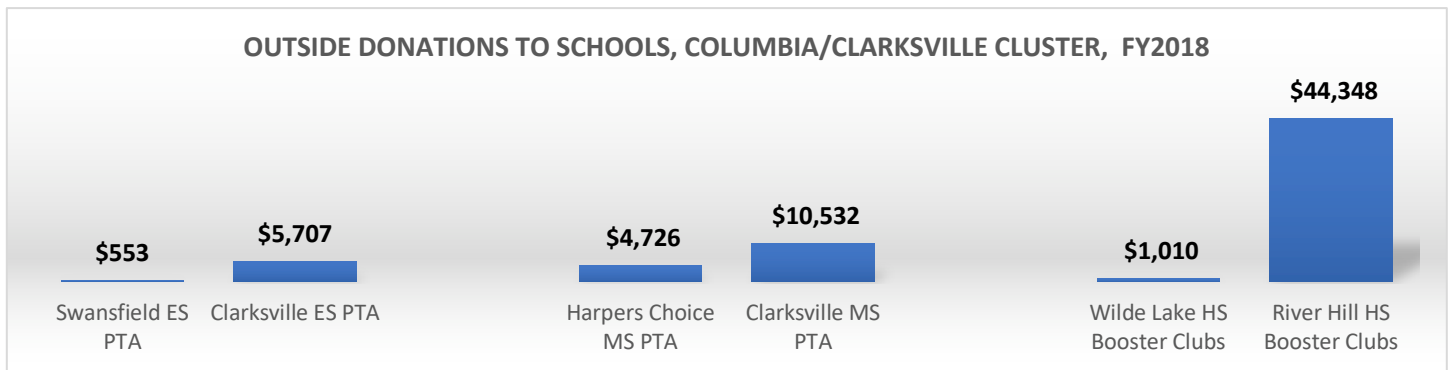


STAFF EXPERIENCE: Staff experience varies between high poverty schools and low poverty schools, especially at the elementary and middle school levels.

¹⁰ Data Source: BOE Fundraising and Donation Report, January 2019



PTA AND BOOSTER CLUB DONATIONS: School funding from outside sources, like PTAs and Booster Clubs is significantly different between high poverty and low poverty schools.



SUMMARY

The data reviewed by the LWVHC Equity in Education Study Committee indicates that:

- Over the last 20 years, significant changes to the population density, racial/cultural demographics, and socio-economic distribution in Howard County have had a tremendous effect on the needs HCPSS must meet for today's students.
- The growing population in Howard County has created the need to increase school capacity. The first system-wide attendance area adjustment occurred in 2019.
- A formal definition of equity, including factors related to resource distribution, fundraising, staff experience, and balanced, strategic attendance area adjustments, was established by HCPSS in the 2000 HCPSS Leadership Committee on School Equity. This report identified that inequities in the school system existed and recommended specific actions to address them.
- As of 2019, many of the inequities HCPSS noted in the 2000 report continued to exist, with pronounced socio-economic disparities.

CONCURRENCE STATEMENTS AND STUDY QUESTIONS

Using the information and data that is provided above, please review the following Support Statement, the Concurrence Statement, and the Study Questions in preparation for the discussions that we will have at the March 19 and March 19, 2020 Unit Meetings.

CONCURRENCE STATEMENT

Proposed Concurrence Statement: **Equity** requires that we provide each student with the resources, support, and instruction necessary to achieve academic success. Schools with disproportionate numbers of students with special needs (including English as a Second Language (ESL) and Free and Reduced Meals (FARM)) require more support than schools that are less challenged.

Support: _____ **Non-support:** _____

STUDY QUESTIONS

To achieve equity, do you support:

1. Striving for both ethnic and racial diversity at every school? **Support:** _____ **Non-support:** _____
2. Striving for socio/economic equality at every school? **Support:** _____ **Non-support:** _____

Do you agree that factors affecting equity include:

1. Balanced redistricting? **Support:** _____ **Non-support:** _____
2. How funding for the allocation of resources such as communication systems, technology, and even playground equipment is dispersed? **Support:** _____ **Non-support:** _____
3. How experienced the staff, administrators & support staff are? **Support:** _____ **Non-support:** _____
4. How data is collected and used by the HCPSS? **Support:** _____ **Non-support:** _____
5. Other:

Should any of these be weighted factors in determining School Attendance Areas?

Yes: _____ **No:** _____

If yes, which ones?

Use the back of this page for additional comments

Education Committee Members: Krista Threefoot, Chair, Thea Jones, Grace Kubofcik, and Barbara