

Larry Pretlow II

1. Given the budget constraints and the likelihood of no further funding influx, what would you prioritize in special education and how would you go about implementing your ideas?

I would like to focus on hiring additional trained teachers as well as working to ensure all teachers as well as paraeducators are trained. Ideally, we would be able to immediately hire more teachers by going through the budget and cutting areas of wasteful spending such as the bloated central office. However, if we are not able to do that we at least need to ensure every staff member is trained to work with special education students so that every child is able to succeed by ensuring they receive the supports they need.

2. What have you done to learn about and advocate for special education concerns?

I have been a member of the HCPSS special education community shares Facebook group for many years. There I have learned about how HCPSS is currently failing its special education students and how it could improve in the future. I've looked through many charts and graphs and heard from parents of special education parents exactly what they need to succeed and what's been an obstacle for them now.

3. How would you support educators within current fiscal constraints in order to alleviate the rise in behaviors in the school system?

The rise in behaviors is leading to a widening of the achievement gap for special education students. I would focus on giving our special education educators the training they need to successfully handle the rise in behaviors. Research has shown the rise in behaviors can be reduced by ensuring trained

educators work with special education students. Hiring more and more untrained aides does not reduce the rise in behaviors.

4. What are your thoughts on students with disabilities being a part of a general education classroom?

I am a strong supporter of the inclusive classroom model. For starters it is required by IDEA. In addition, it teaches tolerance to general education students and helps special education students get acclimated to learning in a general education environment. If we can focus on early elementary school interventions such as the Orton-Gillingham approach to teach reading early than there will be less pressure on Special Education teachers at higher grade levels. Research has clearly shown that it is easier and quicker to get a student to learn on track when they have a learning disability early in elementary school vs later.

5. Compare and contrast the roles and responsibilities of student achievement liaisons and special education case managers.

Student achievement liaisons work with parents, students and teachers of various minority groups to come up with strategies to work to increase achievement for these groups in order to work to close the achievement gap. Liaisons help bridge the communication gap so that students, teachers, and parents are all on the same page. Special education case managers on the other hand are teachers who also are responsible for developing curriculum and delivering instruction. Special education case managers work directly with special education students as well as work to ensure IEP regulations are being followed.

6. Explain your understanding of how HCPSS special education compares to surrounding counties.

I believe HCPSS's special education system has been underfunded for several years which has resulted in HCPSS underperforming in comparison to surrounding counties. The data shows that Howard County spends around 4% on central office compared to neighboring counties spending 2.5%. The data also shows that there may be many undiagnosed cases of students with special needs as only 10% of HCPSS students receive special education supports while it is closer to 15% in surrounding counties. HCPSS is known to fight parents and make it harder for children to get tested to see if they require any special education supports. This ultimately has led to the reputation of HCPSS diminishing in terms of special education.