

Nomination Form

Fill out the form below to submit a nominee. Note that nominees should be district-level personnel. Deadline is Sept. 15.

Your Name

First Name: Jessica

Last Name: Goldstein

Your Email: Jessica_Goldstein@hcpss.org

Your Title: Communication Specialist

Your District or Organization: Howard County Public School System

Your Nominee

First Name: Michael J.

Last Name: Martirano

Nominee's Title: Superintendent

Nominee's District: Howard County Public School System

Tell us about your nominee's fresh idea and why it's noteworthy. Please be as specific as you can.

This past year, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Superintendent Dr. Michael J. Martirano oversaw the largest redistricting effort in Howard County's history, which advanced socioeconomic equity across all 74 comprehensive schools while undoing nearly a decade's worth of overcrowding at many of its schools.

The process represented a major milestone in moving the system forward in addressing significant imbalances in terms of school capacity utilization and to narrow disparities among student poverty, as measured by Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs) participation.

Every HCPSS school has tremendous staff, curriculum, resources and opportunities. At the same time, a crowded school, or one that serves a community where nearly 70% of students live in poverty, faces much steeper challenges in providing adequate care and support to every student than a school where less than 5% of students are economically disadvantaged.

The growing concentrations of poverty in Howard County is a reality that HCPSS educators must confront to fully support each of its 59,000 children. It is indisputable that easing crowding and reducing high levels of poverty at a school benefits all students. Research also has shown that greater diversity in schools has a positive impact on every child.

The decision to change school attendance areas for over 5,400 students completed an 11-month redistricting process that demonstrated the school system's commitment to equity, underscoring the importance of providing the right educational services and supports for students, and the need for an equitable learning environment in which every student thrives.

The HCPSS redistricting process for the 2020–2021 school year strengthened Martirano’s resolve as an educational leader to ground all HCPSS work in equity. Under his leadership, the school system has made tremendous progress in leading Howard County public schools forward through his Strategic Call to Action, “Learning and Leading with Equity,” which is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment for all students and staff.

For Howard County schools, equity has become ingrained as a fundamental value that drives all its work. Future redistricting processes, budgets and the day-to-day work by all HCPSS staff will continue to use equity as a guiding tenet. Graduation rate is the ultimate measure by which a school district gauges success, and the only way to move that needle upward is ensuring that every student has the right supports and a school environment that enables them to thrive, beginning from their first years of school.

List four specific accomplishments

1. Utilization/capacity number: As a result of redistricting, 51 HCPSS schools will be within target utilization of between 90% and 110%, up from 42 schools. In addition, Howard County will increase enrollment at under-filled schools, bringing more of them closer to 90%, and reducing enrollment at its most overcrowded schools, bringing them closer to 110%.

2: FARMs rate: In addition, HCPSS has taken a significant step toward advancing socioeconomic equity in its schools. Based on enrollment and FARMs program participation projections, this plan will have a significant impact. Thirty-three schools above the countywide average of 22.5% will see an overall decrease in their FARMs percentage as a result of these moves. Thirteen of these 33 schools will experience a 5 to 22 percentage point decrease in their FARMs rate. The FARMs percentage for four schools below the countywide average will increase by a minimum of 8 percentage points, putting them closer to the countywide average.

3. Moving forward the equity conversation nationally: Howard County’s redistricting drew national attention and was labeled a “courageous redistricting proposal” by the Century Foundation. HCPSS advanced a powerful conversation about the importance of socioeconomic status when discussing capacity. That in itself is a victory for Howard County children and community, and will have sustained and lasting impact.

4. Following through with redistricting despite COVID-19: HCPSS is going forward with its redistricting for the 2020-2021 school year, despite starting with distance learning due to the coronavirus pandemic. By the time school buildings were closed in mid-March, many students and families had already been welcomed to their new schools. Principals swiftly shifted to an online format to continue the orientation process, and school administrators, families and students are all taking an active role to extend a welcome to the new students.

List two references who are familiar with the nominee's work and innovation

Jahantab Siddiqui

HCPSS Chief Administrative Officer, Communications, Community, and Workforce Engagement

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Dr. Kevin Gilbert

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Additional insights:

Dr. Martirano's recent honors include a 2020 Leader in Diversity Award from the Baltimore Business Journal, 2019 Most Admired CEO award from the Daily Record, and Education Champion award from the Howard County NAACP in 2019. Additionally, HCPSS was named a 2019 and 2020 Best Employer for Diversity by Forbes.