

# The Calvert Recorder

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FEATURED

## Equity returns as focus of school board meeting

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Equity was the dominant theme of the Calvert County Board of Education's monthly meeting Aug. 10, as the human resources department presented an

## **employment update on the school system's equity policy and the citizens advisory committee offered suggestions to attract black male teachers.**

Supervisor of Calvert County Public Schools human resources department supervisor Kevin Howard, joined by director Laveeta Hutchins, began the employment update presentation by describing the results of the latest exit surveys, which are optional for employees leaving the school system.

Thirty-eight people responded to the exit survey. Twenty-one were with the school system for more than 15 years. The most common answer on the exit survey for leaving the school system was that the individual became eligible to receive full pension, with the second highest response being "other."

"Does someone who was a probationary employee who we determined is not really cut out for the job and told them we're not going to renew their contract, are they given an opportunity to complete the exit survey as well?" school superintendent Daniel Curry asked, to which Howard replied yes.

"We wanted to be unbiased and get as much factual information as possible," Howard added.

As of July 27, CCPS has brought in 47 individuals for intake — 38 white employees and nine non-white. Hutchins explained that intake is the process where an employee has been hired contingent on a clean drug screen and fingerprinting.

Referring to the higher percentages of blacks who are incarcerated in America, vice president of the school board Tracy McGuire asked what criminal charges prevent someone from being hired by the school system. Howard answered that it is a case-by-case basis.

"I would also say that from my experience, it's not always what you might find, but how long ago was it," Curry chimed in.

“We’re still hiring. We actually have 11 vacancies right now,” Hutchins explained, adding that people are brought in weekly for intake. “This week we brought in 12 new hires.”

Hutchins said the elementary school vacancies are due to increases in enrollment at respective schools. She indicated the human resources department will be back with a full report once the school system gets into “hiring season.”

The citizens advisory committee (CAC) gave its year-end report at the meeting as well, responding to the topic of recruiting, hiring and retaining minority teachers and special education teachers. Committee chair Judy Hooker and member William Wiggins represented the committee during the presentation.

Following a presentation from the human resources and special education departments last school year, the CAC decided to narrow the topic to solely focus on the hiring of minority teachers, as there are differences between the two positions.

“The similarities were in hiring. However, with the hiring process, major emphasis is placed on recruiting minorities from major colleges. The special education teacher is not recruited at target colleges or areas. The recruitment and hiring process is different for the special education teacher than the minority teacher. The retention and other factors is also different for the special education teacher than minority teachers; therefore, the special education teacher is not a part of this report we are presenting today,” Hooker told the board.

Hooker reported that minority students make up 28.5 percent of the school system’s student population, while only 9 percent of CCPS’s professional staff are minorities. She gave similar statistics for both St. Mary’s and Charles counties. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 17 percent of the total teacher population nationally are minority teachers.

Indicating he has three children who have graduated from CCPS and two who are currently enrolled, Wiggins described the beneficial impact of having minority teachers in the classroom instructing, especially for minority students.

A 2014 CAC report was referred to as an example of perception issues in the school system. According to the presentation, a number of fifth-grade CCPS teachers compiled their student recommendations for enrollment into sixth-grade honors math and the final results showed African-American students were rated 40 percentage points lower than their test scores, Asians were rated 13 percentage points lower than their scores, Hispanics were rated 36 percentage points higher than their scores and multi-racial students were rated 50 percentage points above their test scores.

Wiggins also said studies show black students at all levels of education score better on assessments when they're instructed by a black teacher.

“Simply put: If you have an African-American student that has an opportunity to have an African-American instructor between the grades of 3 and 5 — just one, doesn't have to have two or three — their potential to finish high school goes up. Their potential for higher college aspiration goes up, and thus, they have a greater potential for their careers,” Wiggins said, citing a survey conducted on about 100,000 North Carolina students, as well as some Tennessee students.

The committee presented a five-part recommendation to the school board to be completed in the form of an intentional pipeline named the Harriet Elizabeth Brown pipeline, which is purposed to attract and inform African-American males about the teaching profession.

The first recommendation is that the school system initiate a trial program at two high schools with minority-centric academic achievement clubs, using programs like MAC Scholars and Boys' Place At the Table as resources.

MAC Scholars is a mentorship organization at Calvert High School for African-American male students who hold each other accountable for their academics, as well as mentor elementary and middle school boys. Boys' Place At the Table is a group at Patuxent High School that pushes toward developing leadership and encouraging achievement for the African-American male community by focusing on education, breaking down stereotypes and supporting others.

Secondly, CAC recommended the school system seek to expand the number of colleges that accept credits from graduates of the CCPS Maryland Teachers Academy, to include the local historically black universities of Morgan State and Bowie State.

The committee recommended the school system review the Clemson University program Call Me Mister and its intentional and intense efforts to recruit young black men from high school into the teaching profession. The 10-year-old program has nearly 20 partner universities. The school system was further advised to explore establishing a Call Me Mister chapter at a local university and entice enrollees to return to CCPS to begin their teaching careers.

The final recommendation is that the school system conduct cross-institutional job fairs with other organizations like the Calvert County Sheriff's Office and Calvert Memorial Hospital, as well as pursue job fairs that attract large populations of veterans and active-duty military, and use outside consulting services to establish a baseline on recruiting and hiring performance from previous school year data.

Wiggins said the advisory committee strongly believes these recommendations will benefit all students in the school system, not just minorities.

"Now we don't think this is going to be a panacea. It's not a cure-all, but it's a reality that we have to overcome," Wiggins said. "We want to be able to see one day where our kids can look across the classroom and see role models that look like them, see role models who have nothing but the highest expectations for them and role models who will inspire them."

School board president Pamela Cousins said she loved the proposed name of the pipeline and the recommendations are aligned with where the school system is heading and needs to be.

"Like [board member] Dawn [Balinski] said, the new idea of the pipeline is critical because if we're not bringing black females in, we're definitely not getting the black males. If we adopt this, this would definitely in the future provide that mechanism where, like I've always said, kids thrive when they feel included and they feel open to share," Cousins said.

The CAC is still taking applications for members for the 2017-18 school year. Those who are interested can go to [www.calvertnet.k12.md.us/board\\_of\\_education/citizen\\_advisory\\_committee](http://www.calvertnet.k12.md.us/board_of_education/citizen_advisory_committee) or call the superintendent's office at 443-550-8006.

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