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Precinct Results Shows Where Primary Races Were Won

By Aaron Kraut

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Jeanette Dixon's Surprise Win in the Board of Education Race Came Due to Broad, Countywide Support

There's little doubt county government insiders expected incumbent at-large school board member Phil Kauffman and [well-supported challenger Sebastian Johnson](#) to move on to November's general election as that nonpartisan primary's top two vote-getters.

But it was a third candidate, former Paint Branch High School Principal Jeanette Dixon, who was the top vote-getter, blowing away those expectations with broad, countywide support for which there appears to be little immediate explanation.

Dixon won more than 31 percent of the vote in the five-person race, with Kauffman finishing with 28 percent and Johnson a distant third with 18 percent, despite a fundraising advantage and growing support from other county elected officials.

Dixon swore off endorsements from other county elected officials, declaring them "inappropriate."

As expected, she performed well in precincts in the eastern section of the county and the Route 29 corridor, where Paint Branch is located and where she became a well-known community leader. But she also outperformed the rest of the field in Germantown, Clarksburg, Gaithersburg and in other outlying areas of Silver Spring.

She also held her own in Olney, where Kauffman is from and where he won the area's 12 major precincts by a combined total of a little more than 200 votes.

Meanwhile, Johnson was done in by many fourth- and even fifth-place finishes in Olney, Gaithersburg and Germantown precincts. At Seneca Valley High School in Germantown, a precinct emblematic of Dixon's success and Johnson's struggles, Dixon won 246 votes and Kauffman won 129. Johnson finished fifth with just 80 votes.

Johnson performed better in Bethesda, Chevy Chase and Takoma Park, where he lives. He finished first with 549 votes at Takoma Park Middle School, with Dixon finishing second with 146 votes and Kauffman with just 68 votes. But it wasn't nearly enough to get one of the top two spots.

Political insiders are left to ponder whether Dixon's long career in public schools around the county—she taught in Silver Spring and was an assistant principal at Walter Johnson High School in Bethesda before taking over Paint Branch—played a role in her broad support.

With reporting from Louis Peck

- 6 comments

[DV](#) • [10 days ago](#)

One other possible explanation for Dixon winning the most votes - many people don't know anything about school board candidates and her name was first on the ballot. Studies show that "offices in the middle and bottom of the ballot are especially susceptible to the first-listing bias." <http://www.centerforpolitics.o...>

MrBethesda • [10 days ago](#)

I supported Dixon because she wants top-to-bottom review of the MCPS programs and budgets. Such a review is long overdue. MCPS is a kingdom run by the teachers union with little interest in the Board members, the County Executive, the County Council and the taxpayers. Accountability is now the name of the game.

[ter13](#) • [10 days ago](#)

Anyone who has ever worked with or met Jeanette Dixon knows what a dynamic, committed person she is to education. She was principal to my children more than a decade ago at White Oak MS and left a very lasting impression. A true uniter and someone who knows how to connect and get things done.

[Vidi](#) • [10 days ago](#)

Could it be that Dixon won because she is the most thoughtful of the three and appears to have a more holistic approach to what ails the achievement gap than her challengers? Could be that she actually narrowed the gap when she was at Paint Branch.

[Nathan A](#) • [10 days ago](#)

I think you overlook the obvious as to why Dixon did well (and cheers to her!). Kauffman is part of the problem: the school board that keeps making mistake after mistake. The inappropriately-handled firing of Starr, then botched search for a new superintendent, rubbed a lot of people the wrong way. I hope we'll see more school board members go as their numbers are up.

The Shadow's Shadow [Nathan A](#) • [10 days ago](#)

Amen to that!