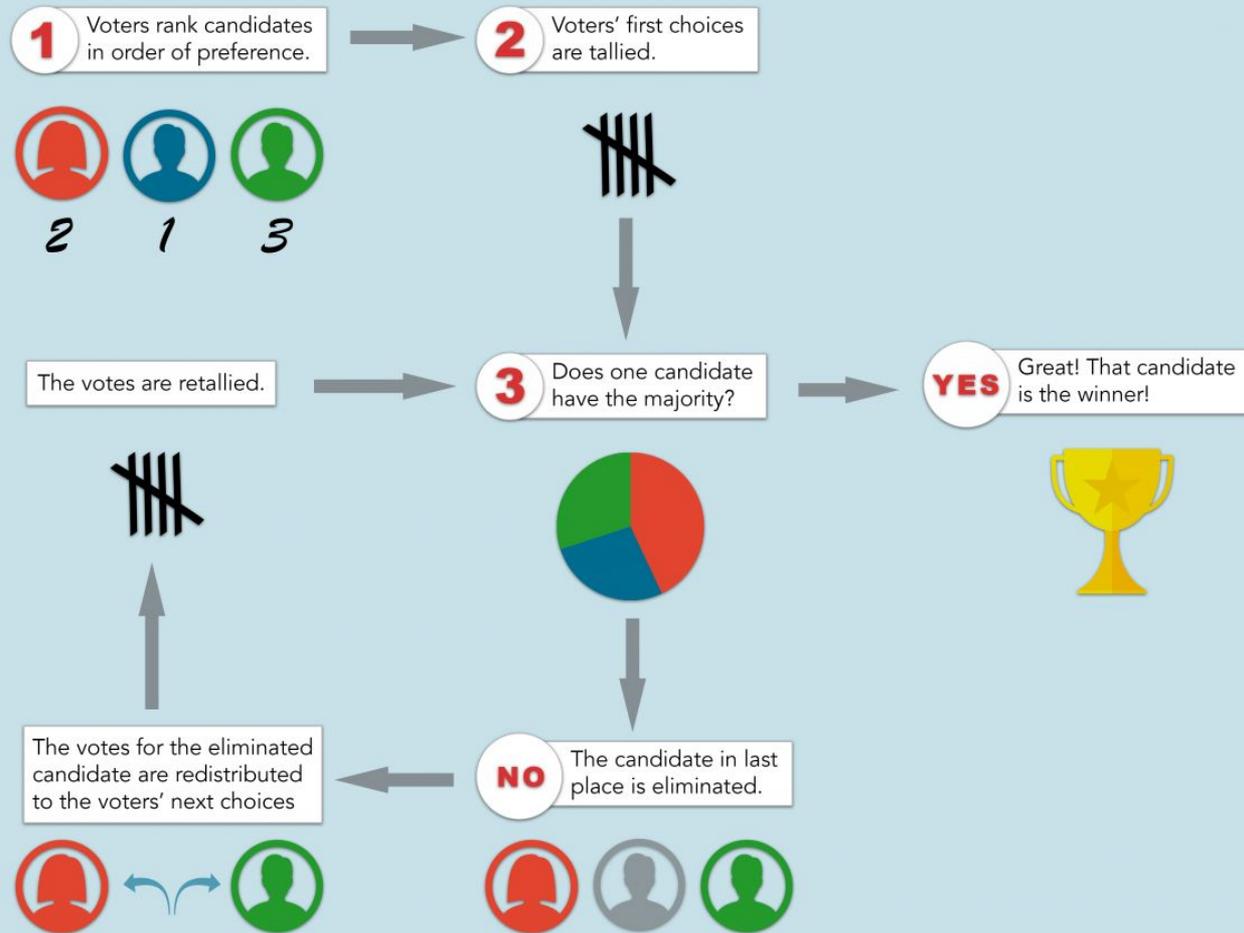A better way to elect the Howard County Board of Education:

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)

What is Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)?

Instead of voting for a single candidate, voters select a set number of candidates in order of preference.

1. Candidates who receive a majority (50%) of first preference votes win the election.
2. If no candidate receives a majority of first preference votes, then the candidate with the least number of first preference votes is eliminated.
3. The votes for the eliminated candidate are transferred to the voters' second preference candidate.
4. This process of elimination repeats until one candidate receives a majority (50%) of the votes.

How is the current Howard County Board of Education elected?

There are seven total Board of Education members.

One member is elected by each of the 5 Howard County districts (following Howard County Council districts). Two at-large members are elected in alternate election years.

2020 Election: District Members
1. Voters vote for one candidate in their district during the primary election.
2. The top two candidates in each district advance to the general election.
3. Voters vote for one of the two candidates during the general election.
4. Top candidate in each district is elected to the board.

2022 Election: At-Large Members
1. Voters vote for up to two at-large candidates during the primary election.
2. The top four at-large candidates advance to the general election.
3. Voters vote for up to two candidates during the general election.
4. The top two candidates are elected to the board.

Advantages of RCV for Howard County Board of Education Elections

1. Reduces negative campaign.
   a. Candidates need to appeal to their voter base as number 1 candidate
   b. Candidates also need to appeal to voters as number 2 candidate. Negative campaign will not win their number 2 candidate position in general.

2. Reduces "wasted" votes.
   a. RCV allows voters to indicate preference among many options.
   b. Multiple candidates in a race makes winning uncertain for a voter's favored candidates. Voters are then more unlikely to vote for their preferred candidates.

3. Preventing a slim majority.
   a. Voters can easily vote as a bloc for a particular candidate to achieve a majority of the votes.
   b. RCV prevents this voting bloc strategy, given the distribution of preferences among many candidates.

4. Winning candidates are more likely to have broad appeal among voters.
   a. Winning a RCV elections means that second, third, or even fourth preferences may matter just as much as the first preference.
   b. Winning may require candidates to appeal to constituencies to rank them second or third preference.