



20 QUESTIONS

July

Celebrating 20 Years of ACS

ACS is 20 years old! We're celebrating this milestone with a game of "20 Questions," featuring some of the people who've inspired us the most during our two decades in the field. Each month, we'll highlight a few answers from each of our featured guests.

Lori Ward, Chief Talent and Equity Officer (retired), Cleveland Metropolitan School District

Lori Ward is funny, kind and humble—but don't for one second mistake that for weakness! She's smart, determined, strategic, persistent, and one of the strongest women we know. After 13 years in the corporate world, Lori decided to dedicate the rest of her long career to public education. Although being there to support her young daughter was a big motivator, Lori became a success factor for thousands of young people over the next 27 years. In Dayton, OH, she was a classroom teacher, an educational technology specialist, chief information officer, chief operations officer, deputy superintendent, and superintendent. In 2016, she joined the much larger Cleveland Metropolitan School District as Chief Talent and Equity Officer. Through it all, she maintained an unwavering belief that she could make a positive impact on the lives of all of the young people in her care—which she undeniably accomplished.

1 What's your philosophy for life?

Treat everyone as you want to be treated.

2 Best book you've read lately?

I'm very hooked on Stacy Abrams's books, and have been researching her background and motivation. She's my author of choice at this time.

3 Something you've done in your work that you're most proud of?

Teaching 4th grade math to students who did not believe they had good mathematical skills, and seeing them succeed on the year-end proficiency tests. That proved to me that even when students believe they can't succeed, given the right nurturing they can meet the challenge.

4 Favorite watering hole?

I don't have one, but I really like Pappadeaux restaurant.

5 One public policy you'd change?

Our society is changing, based on the words written in the federal vs. state constitutions. I'd like to see clarity about how we interpret both, because there are a lot of policy implications connected to that and a lot at stake.

6 What made you choose your career path?

I was traveling a lot in my corporate job, and I wanted a career where I could also be an active mom—and I really thought I could make an impact in education.

7 A favorite mentor?

Kurt Stanic. He was the superintendent at Dayton Public Schools prior to me. He was the epitome of remaining calm through the storm.



8 Rock, rap, or country?

Gospel.

9 Dogs vs. cats: who rules and who drools?

Dogs.

10 Favorite thing about working with ACS?

I met them as a member of The Ohio 8. I loved their deep understanding of the political landscape in Ohio and the overarching impact that different policies would have on education. They also have deep knowledge of the Ohio legislature and who supports whom, and I appreciated the way they truly helped us to understand and prepare testimony.

11 A skill that might surprise us?

I am a puzzle queen!

12 Biggest “win” or “lesson learned” of your career so far?

Biggest lesson is discerning the difference between the various levels of professional relationships, from peer colleagues, to community members, to your ultimate supervisor, to mentors or sponsors. You must determine what kind of topics you address with each of those individuals, and when and how to relate to them to advance your understanding of a topic and your own professional growth.

13 Favorite vacation spot?

Any island!

14 Ideal weekend activities?

A blizzard with ample food and drink, a great movie line-up, a couple of books, and family who can't go anywhere.

15 Pet peeve?

People who are impatient.

16 Advice for rising leaders in your field?

Remain curious at all times.

17 If you could magically become an expert in anything, what would it be?

I believe God has gifted each of us with talent—some we know we have, and others that have not yet come to fruition. I just want to use the talents that God has given me or that are yet to come to me to make life better for people.

18 Favorite holiday?

Thanksgiving. It represents extended family and friends, and I can remember aromas, laughter, games and kinship.

19 Country you'd live in if not this one?

Southern Switzerland. I fell in love with it when my daughter lived there.

20 Most recent thing that made you smile?

Yesterday, at my daughter's graduate school showcase, when she received the Outstanding Ph.D. Scholarship in Educational Leadership from the University of Dayton. (She graduates with her Ph.D. on May 4!)