



A+ Partners in Education Memorandum of Understanding

This A+ PARTNERS IN EDUCATION Memorandum of Understanding ("AGREEMENT") is an agreement between Howard County Library System (HCLS) and the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) for the term beginning on July 1, 2026 and ending on June 30, 2029. This agreement goes into effect only with signatures of both the HCLS and HCPSS set forth below.

WHEREAS, HCLS and HCPSS established the A+ Partners in Education in 2002 to expand the educational opportunities and enhance the academic achievement of all students.

WHEREAS, as partners in education, HCLS and HCPSS work collaboratively by combining the strengths and resources of both organizations to invest in each student's future and to accomplish results together that could not otherwise be realized.

WHEREAS, HCLS is your place to learn, grow and connect and HCPSS is a great school system that inspires growth, well-being, and excellence for all.

WHEREAS, HCLS and HCPSS strive to ensure that every HCPSS student has and uses an A+ Student Library account to borrow materials, access electronic resources, and actively engage with library resources.

WHEREAS, HCLS and HCPSS develop programs, activities, and events for Howard County students and their families with the common goals of encouraging reading, assisting in the completion of school assignments, promoting learning, creating community and belonging, and providing the best possible chance of overall academic success.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is mutually agreed that:

1. HCLS and HCPSS will meet annually to review the previous year's initiatives and discuss upcoming collaborations.

2. HCLS and HCPSS will collaborate on A+ Partnership events and activities such as, but not limited to, the following:

A. Offerings for Academic Success and Enrichment

i. Summer Reading Programs to Promote Yearlong Academic Engagement

1. HCPSS Library Media Specialists and HCLS Children’s and Teen Instructors collaborate to develop summer reading lists for students in all grade levels.
2. HCPSS Library Media Specialists and HCLS staff promote summer learning engagement through classes that present book lists, summer reading games, and information on free library summer classes.

ii. Classroom-based Literacy and Research Support

HCLS Instructors guest-teach classes with supplemental materials from the HCLS collection to enrich instruction and connect HCPSS students to HCLS resources relevant to their assignments, learning goals, and interests.

iii. Mobile STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art & Math) Instruction

HCLS’ staff make the STEAM Machine, a 33’ long instruction vehicle, available during the school day and after school for enrichment opportunities for HCPSS students preK-12. Equipped with STEAM equipment, laptops, and WiFi, students collaborate, explore their creativity, strengthen their critical thinking skills, and develop new knowledge through interactive, project-based classes and activities.

iv. Kindergarten, Here We Come! & Moving Up to Middle School

HCLS offers annual classes that help students succeed with important academic transitions. These summer classes offer opportunities for students entering kindergarten to practice participating in a kindergarten classroom setting and learn school routines such as meeting new people, following directions, and boarding a school bus. Middle school students prepare for their secondary school experience through activities such as locker combination time trials, hearing from older students, and organizing school materials for multiple course subjects.

v. Free Virtual Homework Assistance, Test Prep, and Enrichment

1. One-on-one, on-demand, virtual tutoring is available via Brainfuse in English and Spanish seven days a week from 2 pm until 11:55 pm, by certified tutors who are expert in K-12 academic topics. Offerings include language and writing labs with live support and live Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) support.
2. HCLS electronic resources include a rich variety of additional tools for students, including AP, ACT, GED, SAT and TOEFL prep, flash cards, educational videos, learning exercises, career exploration, and more.

vi. After School Programming at Schools and Library Branches

Additional support offered by HCLS includes classes taught by HCLS instructors at elementary school after school programs as well as teen drop-in activities and academic support at library branches. After school teen programming includes space for students to continue their daily academic journey with library technology, Wi-Fi, and research resources.

B. Outreach to Increase Access and Equity

i. On the Road to Kindergarten Visits

Library-on-the-Go visits to pre-kindergarten programs provide children with an opportunity to borrow books and learn with library staff. Families are also invited to learn about library classes, library events, community resources and community services, sign up for a library card, and borrow materials to support learning at home.

ii. Kindergarten Field Trips to HCLS

Every HCPSS kindergarten class is invited to visit their local HCLS branch for a tour and a library introduction class to increase familiarity and connection to library resources for students and their families.

iii. Continuous Engagement

1. Each HCPSS school has an assigned HCLS staff liaison to coordinate A+ Partnership activities, answer questions, collaborate on programming, and promote relevant HCLS resources.
2. HCLS staff provide information and resources at key events in HCPSS school communities, including Back to School Nights,

Family Literacy events, Title I and Community School family programming, school orientations, and more.

3. HCLS branches host school Family Nights to increase family and student connections to their local library.
4. HCLS staff collaborate with HCPSS school liaisons, Title I and Community School staff, Career Technology Education educators, Post-Secondary Access advisors, and other HCPSS staff to share library resources with students and their families.
5. HCLS hosts student interns participating in the Gifted and Talented Intern/Mentor program.

C. Strategic Coordination and Communication

i. Ongoing Collaboration

HCPSS and HCLS engage in ongoing meetings and collaboration that help both organizations connect to, and complement, select components of the other's curriculum. HCLS and HCPSS provide opportunities for staff from each organization to serve on committees and advisories of the other organization.

ii. Cooperative Professional Learning

HCPSS provides professional development to help HCLS support and supplement HCPSS instruction (ex: training HCLS staff in literacy strategies and early childhood learning standards) and HCLS trains HCPSS staff to understand opportunities within HCLS (ex: training library media specialists in HCLS electronic resources).

iii. Partnership Promotion

HCLS and HCPSS actively co-promote A+ Partnership resources, events, and activities.

D. Academic Competitions

i. Battle of the Books

Fifth grade students participate in a lively academic competition that generates a love of reading, improves reading comprehension, builds vocabulary, and teaches teamwork and good sportsmanship. Selected by

HCLS instructors and HCPSS library media staff, book titles include a wide range of reading levels and subjects. In addition to reading the books in preparation for the Battle of the Books, teams choose a creative team name, design a team costume, and engage in team spirit activities. Participating teams can meet the authors of selected books through the Bauder Battle of the Books Author Event. Family members and caregivers serve as team coaches to support learning and community-building activities.

ii. Spelling Bee and BumbleBee

HCPSS students in grades four through eight who win their school spelling bees compete in the HCLS Spelling Bee, which is organized under the Scripps National Spelling Bee rules and registered with Scripps National as an official regional bee. The winner of the HCLS Spelling Bee advances to the National Spelling Bee. The BumbleBee is a companion initiative to the HCLS Spelling Bee for students in grades one through three.

iii. History Day Research

HCLS Research Specialists offer assistance for students preparing for National History Day, covering topic selection and development, appropriate primary and secondary resources, and review of finished projects.

iv. Student-Envisioned Competitions

HCLS supports HCPSS students in competitions they envision and realize, including peer Speech and Debate, Hackathon, and Mock Trial activities.

3. Each June, HCPSS will determine with HCLS the A+ Partners in Education programs and activities that will be funded in part by HCPSS. Taking into consideration the community funding secured by HCLS for these programs and activities, HCPSS and HCLS will mutually agree to the amount of HCPSS funding for each fiscal year, not to exceed \$75,000. The Superintendent or designee is authorized to determine the annual selection of HCPSS-funded A+ Partnership programs.

4. The HCPSS Coordinator for Library Media will annually provide to the Howard County Board of Education Office a list of the HCLS event dates for the upcoming school year.

5. Indemnification: To the extent permitted by law, HCLS agrees to indemnify and hold harmless HCPSS from and against any and all liabilities, and damages, including court costs and reasonable attorney's fees, arising out of third party claims for: (i) intentional or unintentional torts by HCLS or its employees, subcontractors, or agents, (ii) failure by HCLS to comply with applicable laws, or (iii) breach of this Agreement by HCLS. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the indemnification obligation(s) of HCLS for indemnification arising under this Section 5 shall not exceed Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$400,000.00) in aggregate, for any and all claims arising during the term of this Agreement.

To the extent permitted by law, HCPSS agrees to indemnify and hold harmless HCLS from and against any and all liabilities and damages, including court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees, arising out of third party claims for (i) intentional or unintentional torts by HCPSS or its employees, subcontractors, or agents, (ii) failure by HCPSS to comply with all applicable laws, or (iii) breach of this Agreement by HCPSS. Notwithstanding the foregoing, HCPSS' liability shall be limited by the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article, Section 5-518, Maryland Annotated Code, as amended.

Each party is prohibited from seeking from the other party any indemnification for its own tortious conduct, failure to comply with applicable laws, or breach of this Agreement.

Each party shall provide written notice to the other party no later than twenty (20) days after learning about a claim by any third party that may be subject to this Section 5. Written notice for these purposes must describe the claim, claimant, alleged factual basis for the claim, and the basis for indemnification.

6. Each Party agrees that it shall not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, immigration status, religion, physical, mental, or educational disability, pregnancy, age, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status or socioeconomic status in its educational programs; including co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, in the workplace or in hiring practices.

7. Maryland Law requires certain child sex offenders to register with the State and with the local law enforcement agency in the county in which they will reside, work and/or attend school. Section 11-722(c) of the Criminal Procedure Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland states, "[a] person who enters into a contract with a County Board of Education or a non-public school may not knowingly employ an individual to work at a school if the

individual is a registrant. A person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to imprisonment not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or both.” If a child sex offender, sexually violent predator, or sex offender, as defined in the Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure Articles of the Annotated Code of Maryland, is employed by the HCLS, the HCLS is prohibited from assigning that employee to perform management, delivery, installation, repair, construction or any other type of services on any HCPSS property, including the project property. Violation of this provision may result in immediate Termination for Cause.

Additionally, in accordance with Md. Ed. Code Ann., §6-113 (b), HCLS and any of its subcontractors will not knowingly assign any employee to work on school premises with direct, unsupervised and uncontrolled access to children, if that employee has been convicted of a crime identified in Md. Ed. Code Ann., §6- 113(a).

8. Modifications to this Agreement may be made only in writing signed by authorized representatives of both Parties.

9. The Agreement is deemed to be made under, and shall be constructed in accordance with, the laws of the State of Maryland.

10. Either party may terminate this agreement upon 60 days' written notice without any further liability to the other party.

11. The individuals designated below, by signing this Agreement, so indicate that they possess the necessary authority to bind the parties to the obligations described herein.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this agreement on the date and year indicated below.

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

BY: William J. Barnes
William J. Barnes, Superintendent

Date: 10-06-2025

HOWARD COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM



BY: _____

Tonya Aikens, President & CEO

Date: __10/1/2025_____