

Departments of Human Resources and Employee & Labor Relations

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



YOUR **TALENT**
THEIR **FUTURE**
JOIN US AT HCPSS

HCPSS Vision

Our Vision

We are a great school system that inspires **Growth, Well-Being, and Excellence** for all.

HCPSS Mission

Our Mission

HCPSS creates an **innovative and accountable** learning community where we expand **opportunities and access, remove barriers, and foster an inclusive environment.**

**Together we will
BE GREAT!**

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Introduction

The Departments of Human Resources and Employee and Labor Relations (collectively referred to as HR) are pleased to present this re-envisioned annual report, highlighting key metrics, insights, and strategies for continuous improvement. While HR leads many of these efforts, initiatives such as recruitment, retention, and the employee life cycle are shared, systemwide responsibilities that rely on collaboration across schools and offices, with HR serving as a key partner and support.

The fiscal year (FY) 2025 Human Resources Annual Report aligns closely with the priorities of both the HR department and the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Strategic Plan. It provides data, analysis, and—where applicable—baseline measures for future tracking. This year's report reflects an evolution from previous editions, emphasizing analysis and storytelling to show how data points intersect and inform one another.

HR oversees recruitment, position control and credentialing, employee services, classification and compensation, and data integrity. The Employee and Labor Relations department specifically manages employee investigations and case resolution, workplace accommodations, and the administration of negotiated agreements and grievance processes. Over the past year, HR has established clear vision and mission statements to guide this work.

VISION: HIRE THE BEST, RETAIN THE BEST, AND BE THE BEST.

MISSION: DELIVER EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE AND SUPPORT FROM HIRE TO RETIRE, DRIVING RETENTION, ENGAGEMENT, AND SYSTEM-WIDE EXCELLENCE.

Guided by the HR Strategic Plan and developed through stakeholder feedback, HR has achieved several notable milestones. This plan served as the foundation for the work, shaping initiatives across four key themes: Modernizing and Streamlining Processes, Committing to Innovation and Continuous Improvement, Exceeding Expectations through Excellent Customer Service, and Building a Positive Work Environment. These themes are supported by the plan's drivers, which represent the major levers for success. Each section of this report is intentionally aligned with these themes, demonstrating how data, stakeholder feedback, and cross-functional collaboration have driven meaningful outcomes.

Drivers of the Plan			
Diversification of Workforce	Implementation of Best Practices	Enhanced Employee Engagement & Experiences	Strategic Partnerships, Collaboration, & Outreach

The plan features goals, strategies, and measures of success under the following themes:



As a key element in Theme 1: *Modernize and Streamline Processes* of the HR Strategic Plan, the department has implemented two new systems since January 2025 to modernize operations and improve the employee experience: Workday Recruiting, a new applicant tracking system, and an expanded use of the Guardian case management system for leaves-of-absence tracking.

The transition to Workday Recruiting has delivered measurable improvements: 77% of new hires now report the application is extremely or quite user-friendly (up from 56% under the previous system). Application completion time has also improved, with 81.8% finishing in under two hours and 42.4% in less than an hour—compared to 75% and 34%, last year. Previously, nearly a quarter of applicants reported the process took more than two hours, a concern that has been largely eliminated with the streamlined system.

Beyond recruiting, HR has also simplified key administrative processes, including tuition reimbursement, employee tenure tracking, and certain compliance reports, while advancing several strategic recruitment initiatives to strengthen the overall talent pipeline.

To build on these operational improvements, HR has strengthened partnerships across HCPSS. The Deputy Superintendent convened an HR Advisory in 2024 and 2025 with internal and external stakeholders to review processes, provide feedback, and identify potential future projects. HR also established a Recruitment and Marketing Committee to design and support new recruitment strategies, including the creation of an HCPSS employment brand and tagline—*Your Talent, Their Future*. The committee supported the development of new marketing materials

for both internal and external use and piloted a targeted social media recruitment campaign. More details about these marketing initiatives are included later in this report and examples of the materials are available in Appendix D.

Under the leadership of the Superintendent and the direct oversight of the Deputy Superintendent, and with strategic guidance from the Human Resources Executive Officer, the Human Resources and Employee and Labor Relations teams have focused on building a positive work environment, streamlining operations, and enhancing service to employees. The initiatives in this report reflect a shared commitment to the values and vision of the school system as outlined in the HCPSS Strategic Plan.

The Executive Director of Human Resources has focused on improving efficiency through realigned team responsibilities, cross-training, and enhanced internal and external communication. Concurrently, the Director of Employee and Labor Relations led key improvements to negotiated agreements and expanded system-wide training and employee self-service resources. Results from a recent HR team engagement survey underscore the positive impact of these efforts: 85% of staff viewed departmental changes as somewhat or extremely positive, 87% reported strong trust within the team, and 85% indicated they feel supported by their supervisor—representing an overall improvement in team morale compared to the prior year.

A key element under Theme 3 of the HR Strategic Plan has been enhancing customer support and service for the HCPSS community.

Facilitated by Leadership Development, the HR team completed customer service and anti-bias training to strengthen interactions and promote an inclusive, equitable experience for those we serve. To further streamline support, HR is launching a centralized inbox with a ticketing system and a main phone line with a guided menu to connect callers to the right contact. These improvements, informed by stakeholder feedback, are designed to increase responsiveness, strengthen collaboration, and improve efficiency within HR and across the HCPSS community.

The HR Strategic Plan is closely aligned with Priority 3 of the HCPSS Strategic Plan—fostering staff growth and engagement. HR team members are leading initiatives to enhance recruitment practices, retain excellent staff, and support career advancement, while also participating in groups focused on professional learning, staff engagement, and well-being. By providing leadership in these areas and collaborating with colleagues across the system, HR is able to amplify its impact, incorporate diverse perspectives, and achieve more than would be possible with the departments' resources alone.

This 2025 HR Annual Report is structured to follow the employee life cycle—from recruiting and hiring to overseeing employee movement and analyzing exits. The reporting period is September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2025.

To maximize the value of HR's efforts, it is essential to link accomplishments to measurable goals and define where HCPSS wants to be as an organization. Trend data is critical for setting informed metrics, yet inconsistent or incomplete data has historically limited analysis. By acknowledging these gaps, HR can implement systems and processes that ensure accuracy, establish baselines, and focus on areas most critical to HCPSS's organizational objectives. It should also be noted that, in many areas, baseline data had to be re-established if the previous data sets were altered.

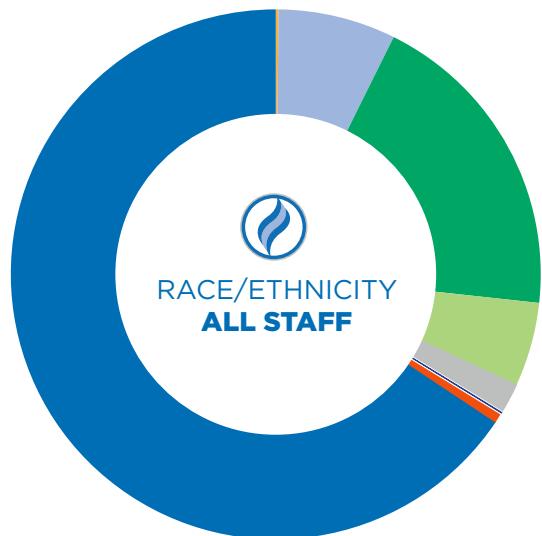
Ultimately, our goal is to provide meaningful data that drives strategy and workforce development. By addressing hiring, retention, resignations, and employee movement, the HR department can reduce reliance on year after year recruitment due to the lack of staff retention while recognizing that HR data and its solutions reflect a shared responsibility across the entire HCPSS community.

Workforce Overview

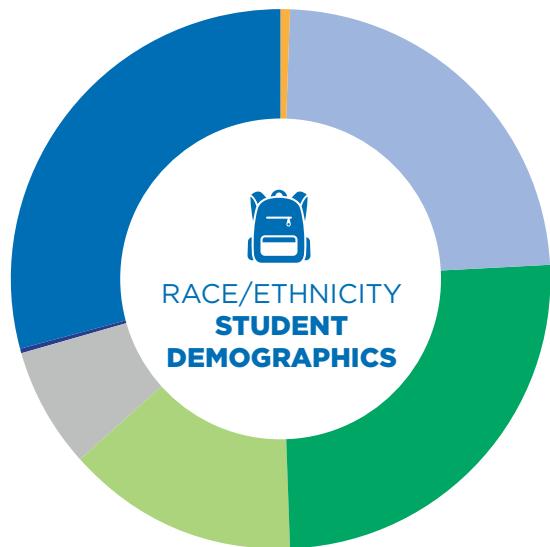
Workforce Overview

As of August 31, 2025, HCPSS employed just under 9,000 permanent staff, with instructional personnel comprising 60% of the workforce. Overall, 33.8% of employees identify as people of color, compared to 71% of students—highlighting a significant gap in representation between our workforce and the student population HCPSS serves. Within instructional roles, the contrast is even more pronounced with 77% of instructional staff identifying as White and only less than a quarter as staff of color.

Policy 7000 — Workforce Diversity and Inclusion establishes several metrics to be tracked over the coming year, enabling HR to monitor this disparity more closely and work with administrators, supervisors and community partners to develop targeted strategies to increase workforce diversity.



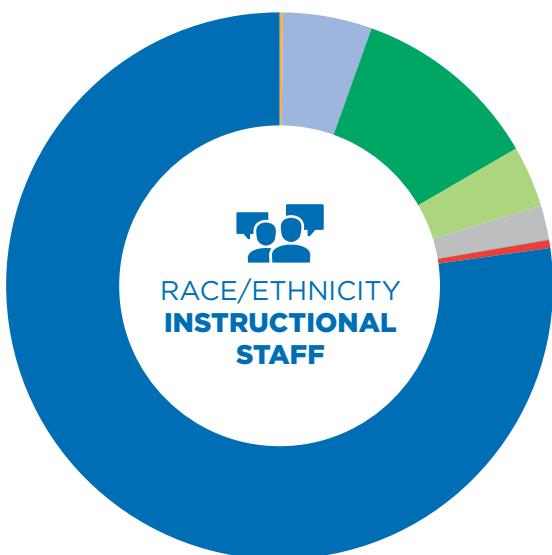
- American Indian/Alaskan Native: ≤1%
- Asian: 7%
- Black/African American: 19%
- Hispanic/Latino: 5%
- More than One Race: 2%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: ≤1%
- Race/Ethnicity Undeclared 1%
- White: 66%



- American Indian/Alaskan Native: ≤5%
- Asian: 24%
- Black/African American: 25%
- Hispanic/Latino: 14%
- Two Or More Races: 7%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: ≤5%
- White: 29%

Workforce Overview

School-based administrators show somewhat greater diversity, with 34.5% identifying as staff of color and 65.5% as White—figures that are stronger than those of instructional staff but still not reflective of the student population, particularly for Hispanic/Latino and Asian groups, where representation gaps remain most pronounced. Because these leaders serve as visible role models for students, increasing diversity among administrators supports fostering a school environment where all students can see themselves represented in leadership. As noted in research completed by the [Albert Shanker Institute](#), this overall lack of alignment between staff and student demographics may contribute to students feeling less of a sense of belonging and inclusion, which can ultimately affect school culture.



- American Indian/Alaskan Native: **≤1%**
- Asian: **5%**
- Black/African American: **11%**
- Hispanic/Latino: **4%**
- More than One Race: **2%**
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: **≤1%**
- Race/Ethnicity Undeclared **2%**
- White: **77%**

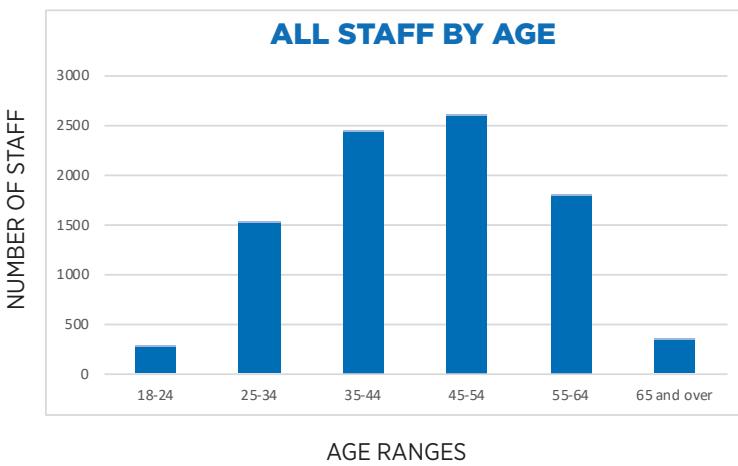


- American Indian/Alaskan Native: **≤1%**
- Asian: **2%**
- Black/African American: **28%**
- Hispanic/Latino: **3%**
- More than One Race: **1%**
- White: **66%**

As of 8/31/2025

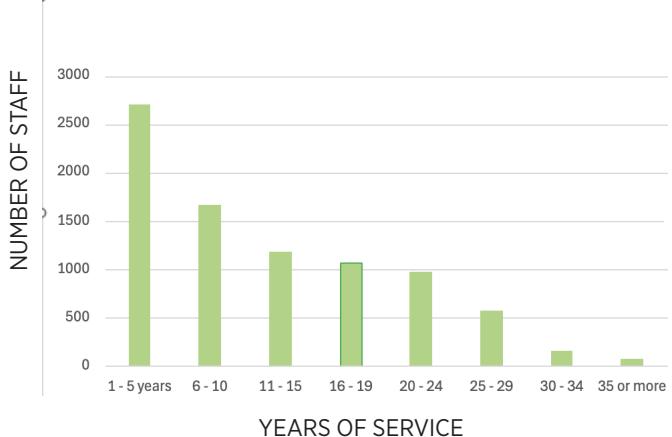
Workforce Overview

The majority of the current workforce is mid-career (ages 35-54), with 24% approaching the age or years for retirement. This underscores the importance of effective succession planning to ensure retiring employees are replaced by qualified internal talent and to provide growth opportunities within the system. At the same time, HR is committed to investing in early-career hires, including recent graduates, to build a strong foundation and to support their long-term development within HCPSS. One current strategy is to engage closely with student interns, offering them early opportunities to join and grow within the team.



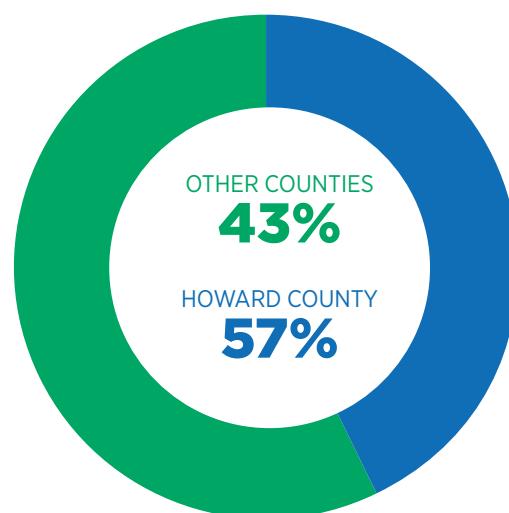
30% of permanent employees are in their first five years of employment with HCPSS. The proportion decreases by 11.5% in the 6-10-year category, suggesting that early-career retention is a critical area of focus. The decline represents a 72.7% retention rate for employees within their first five years. Retention rates then stabilize for employees with 11-24 years of service, indicating that once staff remain with HCPSS beyond their first decade, they are more likely to continue through the remainder of their careers. This trend underscores the importance of targeted strategies to support and retain employees during their initial years.

ALL STAFF BY YEARS OF SERVICE



57% of HCPSS employees reside in Howard County, meaning a substantial portion of the workforce faces a considerable commute, which can affect work-life balance. HR recognizes the importance of collaborating with The Living Wage Howard County Coalition and the HCPSS community engagement team to explore programs, incentives, or discounts to encourage staff to live locally. Additionally, the data underscores the importance of a flexible workplace and telework options for eligible positions, which can significantly benefit the 43% of employees who live outside the county. Implementing and expanding these initiatives can have a meaningful positive impact on employee satisfaction, retention, and overall well-being.

RESIDENTS



Attracting and Hiring Talent

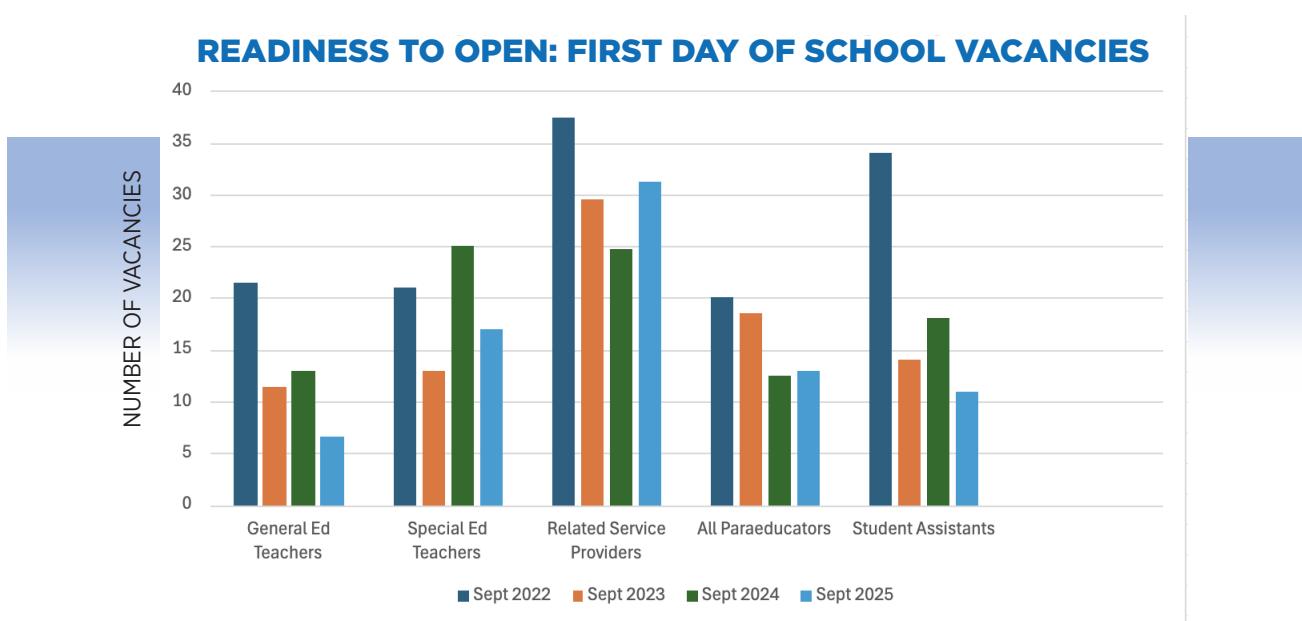
Vacancies

Understanding vacancy trends is the foundation of systemwide recruitment work, as they shape both immediate hiring strategies and long-term planning. The HR team is often asked the question: **how many vacancies do we currently have?** HR is able to report on how many vacancies HCPSS has at a certain point-in-time, but vacancies change on a daily basis with an organization of our size. On average, HCPSS has an approximate 3.7% vacancy rate which aligns with statewide data from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) that reports a 3%-4% vacancy rate across school districts in teaching positions. At the end of this reporting period, August 31, 2025, HCPSS had 350.5 vacancies, which included new positions that were added in the FY26 budget.

Monitoring vacancies throughout the year provides valuable insight into workforce trends and progress, even though openings may result

from a variety of factors, including internal promotions, leaves of absence, resignations, and retirements. Some positions remain unfilled intentionally—for example, a principal may opt to use a long-term substitute rather than appoint a conditionally licensed or permanent teacher if an employee is on an extended leave of absence and plans to return. Vacancies may also stem from pending fiscal year budget decisions, reclassification requests, or other organizational considerations. With 24% of staff nearing retirement age, as noted in the Workforce Overview section, succession planning will be an important future priority to ensure continuity and proactive staffing across the organization.

One of the most critical times to monitor vacancies is at the start of the school year, when HR assesses each school's readiness to open, as shown in the graph below.



*Please note that 24.4 out of 31.2 vacant Related Service Provider positions were filled by contracted services on September 2025, therefore ensuring that students received the support needed with the opening of schools.

Hiring Strategies

Human Resources is proud of our progress this year as reflected in HCPSS's readiness to open schools in August 2025. By August 2025, the number of unfilled teacher and support positions saw significant district-wide improvement. General education teacher positions led the way with a substantial 50% decrease in vacancies compared to August 2024. This success was echoed in support roles, which saw a 39% reduction in unfilled student assistant positions, and in the critical area of special education teacher positions, which decreased by 32%. HR believes that this data is directly linked to the focused efforts and strategies of the HR team, which will be discussed in detail below.

The HR team reviews projected vacancy data at regular intervals throughout the winter and spring in preparation for the summer hiring season. This data is examined alongside real-time applicant counts by position, informing HR's open contract strategy for teachers and related service providers and the continuing recruitment efforts across all positions.

For the 2025-2026 school year, strategies to proactively address anticipated shortages in the area of special education included offering open contracts for special education teachers to exceed confirmed vacancies based upon trend data, providing school-based administrators with the opportunity to consider licensed general education teachers as out of certification area hires within special education, executing a targeted marketing and social media campaign for special educators and speech language pathologists, and collaborating with the Department of Special Education to recruit displaced federal workers to join HCPSS as conditionally licensed teachers.

Additionally, at the start of the school year, HR piloted a new approach to filling Student Assistant positions, as the available candidate pool exceeded the number of vacancies. Human Resources pre-screened and interviewed applicants to create a small pool of "ready-to-hire" candidates, which was then shared with school-based administrators and the Department of Special Education (DSE). Administrators were given the opportunity to meet with candidates and select someone for their school's vacancy.

This selection process allowed HR to fill vacancies more efficiently by directing candidates actively seeking employment to schools that matched their interests, reducing the time required of administrators and helping to build a stronger, more refined pool of candidates for future hiring needs. This pilot is a great example of how HR has been able to innovate and streamline an important process, in alignment with our themes in the HR Strategic Plan. HR will continue to monitor this approach and engage with school leadership on its effectiveness to determine whether it can be expanded to other positions across HCPSS.

Building a Diverse Workforce

The HR department is committed to building a diverse and inclusive workforce in alignment with Policy 7000 - Workforce Diversity and Inclusion, as well as the Priority 3 in the HCPSS Strategic Plan and the HR Strategic Plan. To that end, the HR team has led several new efforts to attract and recruit diverse candidates over the past year. The approach includes both short- and long-term recruitment strategies to establish strong relationships with diverse colleges and universities, community organizations, and affinity groups in order to position HCPSS as an employer of choice for new and veteran educators. These efforts include the launch of the Realistic, Engaging, Educational Learning Seminars (R.E.E.L.S) Shadow Day, in which HR partners with a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) to bring a group of education students to HCPSS for a full day. This is a long-term recruitment strategy where college students (who are not yet seniors) visit and learn about HCPSS. In 2024, the inaugural event was in partnership with Delaware State University, and this year, HR partnered with Morgan State University. The HR team remains in contact with students who have visited as part of a R.E.E.L.S Shadow Day to keep connected as they approach their college graduation.

HR also held the first ever HCPSS HBCU Road Trip in the spring, in which the HR team made recruitment visits to HBCUs throughout Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina (full list in Appendix C). Additionally, HR recently attended the Asian American Educators of Howard County (AAEHC) fall gathering to begin building a relationship with the organization and explore opportunities for collaboration to support recruitment and candidate outreach.

HR is committed to building and supporting diverse candidate pools and has engaged in anti-bias training to promote equitable hiring practices. While final hiring decisions rest with managers or school-based administrators, monitoring the relationship between candidate pool diversity and selections provides an opportunity to offer additional guidance or resources, ensuring all hiring decisions reflect HCPSS's commitment to equity and inclusion.

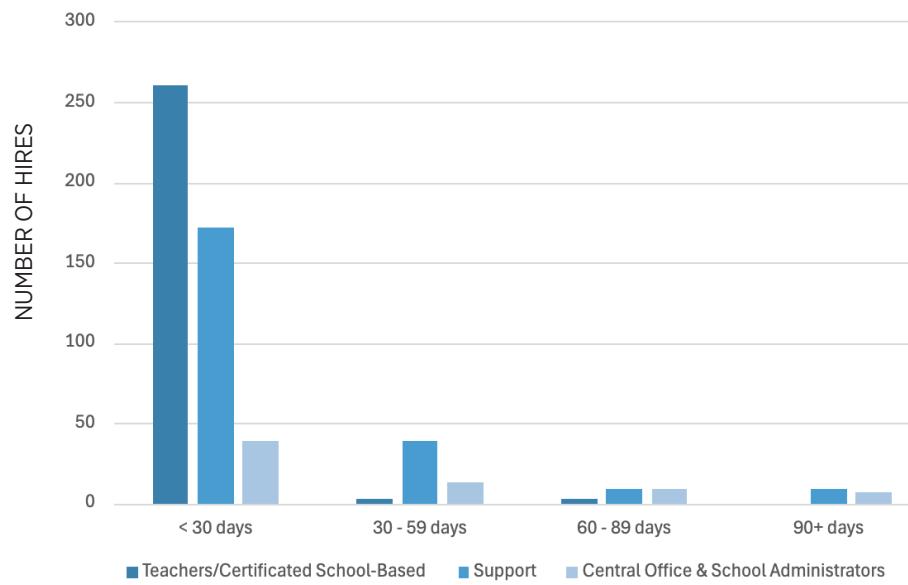
As HR transitions from reviewing current vacancies and diversity-focused strategies, the next focus is on hiring timelines and how tools such as candidate sourcing and open contracts enhance recruitment efficiency.



Time to Fill Positions

Under the HR Strategic Plan Theme 1: *Modernize and Streamline Processes*, the implementation of the Workday Recruiting Applicant Tracking System has allowed the team to monitor time-to-fill metrics in real time. Time-to-fill refers to the number of calendar days between the creation of an internal job requisition and the date HR authorizes the selected candidate to begin employment. This metric begins when a specific job opening is created—either after a role is approved to be filled or when a candidate from one of the pools is recommended for hire by an administrator and is tracked until the candidate is cleared to start. The industry standard for time-to-fill is 45-60 days. Over 93% of school-based and non-school based candidates are hired within 60 days. Additional context about the time-to-fill percentages across position types can be found in Appendix B. HR has opted not to track time-to-hire (as defined in Appendix A) because many positions are posted as ongoing candidate pools, allowing applicants to apply at any time. As a result, measuring the time between application and hire would not yield meaningful or comparable data across positions.

TIME-TO-FILL BY POSITION



Anecdotal feedback from applicants is often that the time between their addition to the candidate pool and their first invitation for a school-based interview is too long. To ensure that there is a large pool of candidates for school-based vacancies when they arise, HR recruits throughout the year; however, school-based administrators are not able to engage with candidates until HCPSS opens for hire following the Board's approval of the FY Operating Budget. In addition, language in the Howard County Education Association's (HCEA) negotiated agreement requires that HCPSS first place teachers who are returning from a leave of absence and have been involuntarily transferred due to student enrollment or programmatic changes which can impact time-to-fill data.

In the coming months, it is HR's goal to address the gap between the actual hiring timeline and candidate perception through proactive and transparent communication. This will improve the candidate experience through proactive communication that clearly explains the hiring timeline and process, including key milestones such as FY Operating Budget finalization and internal staff placements, with the aim of reducing delays and increasing candidate engagement.

While understanding time-to-fill highlights how long it takes HR to bring staff on board, it's just as important to look at why those timelines play out the way they do. By examining source effectiveness, HR can see which channels—such as job boards, employee referrals, or community partnerships—consistently generate strong candidates quickly, and which tend to produce fewer or slower results. This allows HR to connect speed with quality, ensuring that recruitment strategies are not only efficient but also effective in bringing the right educators into our classrooms and staff into our offices.

Source Effectiveness

Applicants are asked to indicate how they learned about employment with HCPSS by selecting from a dynamic list of sources, which is updated in real time to include new job fairs or advertising platforms. HR uses this source effectiveness data to identify both the most common applicant sources and the ones most likely to lead to hires.

HR data indicates that the HCPSS Employment website is the primary entry point for applicants. In response, HR enhanced the Employment landing page this past spring and, in collaboration with the Department of Communications, developed a Teacher Hiring Process webpage. HR also plans to expand this resource hub to provide guidance for additional position types. Based on source effectiveness trends, HR is also exploring an Employee Referral Program and actively engaging current student interns as a pipeline for next year's teacher hires.

HR's most effective sources of hire are:



INTERNS:
42%
HIRE RATE

FORMER HCPSS
EMPLOYEES:
21.83%

EMPLOYEE
REFERRALS:
21.33%

External advertising and job fairs—including those hosted by HCPSS as well as college, university, and other external events—have historically been the least effective sources for attracting candidates. This is not surprising, as HCPSS has not previously invested in a robust external marketing or advertising campaign in part due to funding. Looking ahead, that is changing. In spring 2025, HR and Communications introduced the HCPSS employment brand, supported by new marketing materials and a targeted social media campaign. The social media campaign generated almost 500,000 total impressions and a click through ratio (CTR) of 4.17%, which is significantly higher than a typical average of 0.5% - 1.5%. This led to over 5,400 “apply now” button clicks, which took potential candidates to the Workday position application form. Some examples of the new marketing materials can be viewed in Appendix D. These initiatives mark the start of a more intentional and visible recruitment presence, and HR expects to see stronger results from these sources as they become fully integrated into the strategy for the coming year.

Source	% of Applicants Hired
Indeed	1.84%
External advertising	5.45%
Social Media	6.20%
HCPSS Job Fair	6.76%
Other Job Fair	7.46%
College/University Job Fair	7.69%
HCPSS Website	8.02%
Other website	9.28%
HCPSS Employee Referral	21.33%
Former HCPSS Employee	21.83%
Intern	42.02%

Open Contracts

Open Contracts SY25-26			
	Offered	Accepted	Acceptance Rate
Overall	95	78	82.10%
General Educators	42	35	83.33%
Special Educators	37	29	78.38%
Related Service Providers	13	11	84.62%
Counselors	3	3	100%

Having identified both the challenges with time-to-fill and the sources that yield the strongest candidates, the next step is to consider how HR can act proactively to address these findings. One strategy is issuing open contracts, which allows HR to secure top talent ahead of the Board of Education's final FY Operating Budget approval. These contracts are offers of employment to teachers, related service providers (e.g., speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists, school psychologists), and school counselors based on projected staffing needs for the upcoming school year.

Offers are informed by both historical vacancy data and current staffing projections developed during the spring budget process. Candidates for open contracts must complete the application, credential check, curriculum interview, and provide supervisory references before receiving an offer. The HR team is proud of the 82% acceptance rate for open contracts, which tells us that open contracts remain an effective tool to secure teachers and related service providers for HCPSS. Because they have already secured professional references, completed the MD486 background check (process defined in Appendix A), established an MSDE TEACH account, and signed an offer and contract, teachers and related service providers on open contracts are subsequently able to start working in schools following the approval of the budget and their recommendation to hire by one of the schools, which contributes to HR's goal of decreasing the time-to-fill for certificated positions.

An open contract guarantees a position within the candidate's licensure area but does not guarantee a specific location, except in limited cases defined by the HCEA negotiated agreement. HR is pleased to share that for the 2025-26 school year, 100% of staff receiving open contracts selected their location following school-based interviews, ensuring placement decisions reflected individual preferences.

Timely communication of FY Operating Budget decisions is critical to hiring efforts. Uncertainty of the impact of budget decisions throughout the spring limits HR's ability to confidently extend open contracts. As a result, HCPSS risks losing highly qualified candidates to other districts that can offer earlier commitments. While some LEAs offer open contracts and later rescind if the budget does not allow for the availability of positions, HCPSS has remained committed to our reputation as a district that follows through on our promise of employment with educators to whom we offer open contracts.

Conditional Teachers

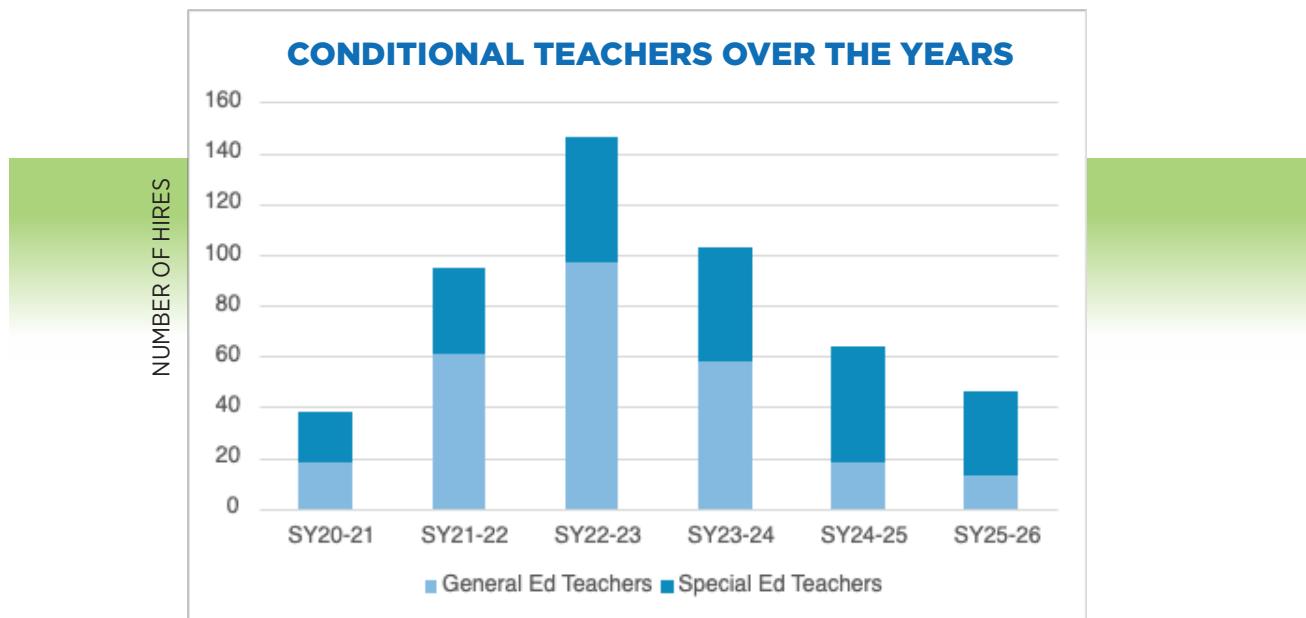
In addition to strategies that strengthen ongoing recruitment—such as improving time-to-fill, refining source effectiveness, and issuing open contracts—HR also supports schools by hiring conditional teachers for vacancies where a licensed teacher is not available. This provides an important strategy to filling vacancies when we are not able to find a licensed teacher for a vacant position while also providing more opportunities for candidates interested in a career in teaching to get started earlier.

The MSDE allows local school districts to issue Conditional Licenses to professionals who do not yet meet the requirements for a Professional License. The minimum requirement for eligibility is a bachelor's degree.

Conditional Licenses have specific validity periods and cannot be renewed:

- Conditional Special Education Licenses are valid for three years.
- Conditional General Education Licenses are valid for five years.

To maintain employment as a teacher beyond the license's validity period, the educator must be eligible for a Professional License, which includes the successful completion of a Maryland-approved teacher preparation program and passing all required assessments.



Conditional Teachers

Retention is Stable but Declines Significantly Over Time

The retention rate outlined below shows a consistent pattern across the complete cohorts (2020-2021 to 2022-2023):

- **Year 1 Retention:** This rate is very high, consistently between 78% and 85%.
- **Year 3 Retention:** By the end of the third year, retention drops to a consistent rate of 63% to 65%, meaning approximately one-third of the initial cohort is no longer employed. As outlined in the Transitioning & Offboarding section, 93.9% of new teachers (licensed and conditional) are retained after their first year, but retention declines to 81.6% by the third year. This data highlights that licensed teachers have significantly higher retention rates than conditional teachers.

Hiring Volume Has Peaked and the Focus Has Shifted to Special Education

- **Hiring Trend:** Conditional hiring peaked dramatically in 2022-2023 (146 hires). Since then, the number has decreased significantly (64 hires in 2024-2025 and 46 in 2025-2026).
- **Shift to Special Education:** There is a critical change in the composition of new conditional hires:
 - From 2021-2024, General Education dominated the hires.
 - In the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, special education conditional teachers account for over 70% of all new conditional hires. This is significant because Special Education Conditional Licenses have the shortest validity period (three years) and are non-renewable, creating a hard deadline for program completion.
 - Strategies HR is implementing to build long-term pipelines in special education include partnering with the Office of Teacher and Paraprofessional Development and Division of Schools to talent spot paraeducators to earn special education licensure through partnerships with universities, targeting recruitment efforts with local universities with special education and related services programs, and leveraging open contracts for qualified special education candidates as soon as possible.

Transition to Professional License Shows a Lag/Drop

- **Complete Cohorts (2020-2021, 2021-2022):** The transition rate is strong, hovering near 60% (60.5% and 58.9%).
- **Recent Cohorts (Incomplete Data):** While the transition rate for the 2022-2023 cohort currently sits at 37.0%, this figure is misleading. These educators still have time on their original conditional licenses to meet full requirements, meaning the final success rate is expected to be higher—as it has been for previous groups.
- The educators in the 2024-2025 cohort are the first hired under the new MSDE regulations, effective April 1, 2024. The core of this change is simple, yet profound: the validity period for the Conditional Special Education License has been decreased from four years to three years, and it is non-renewable. To mitigate the risk of losing these valuable new teachers, supports for this group included ensuring every member of this cohort is enrolled in a Maryland-approved teacher preparation program within their first year of teaching.

The coming years will serve as a crucial test. Monitoring the 2024-2025 cohort's success rate will reveal whether the combination of stricter deadlines and mandatory early supports results in a more efficient path to certification or simply increases the turnover rate for a profession already struggling with severe shortages.

Temporary Services

In addition to long-term hiring strategies, managing temporary services plays a critical role in meeting immediate staffing needs. Temporary staff help ensure schools remain supported during vacancies and absences, maintaining stability for students and operations. Beyond filling short-term gaps, these services also serve as a valuable pipeline for identifying and transitioning strong candidates into permanent roles within HCPSS.

The Office of Temporary Services operates with three full-time employees (FTEs) and oversees the recruitment and hiring of all temporary staff, including substitute teachers and paraeducators, lunch/recess monitors, paid and volunteer coaches, advisors, temporary clerical and professional staff, home and hospital teachers, student apprentices, and external hires for HCPSS summer programs.

The office also manages the Absence Management System—creating and maintaining long-term substitute jobs, processing payroll adjustments for substitutes each pay period, and managing grant-funded substitute codes.

From January 6 to August 31, 2025, the team screened over 1,500 applications and hired 371 new temporary employees. Each temporary employee HCPSS hires goes through the same process as permanent employees prior to hire, including the review of two supervisory references, completion of the MD486 background check, fingerprinting, and I-9 verification. Temporary hires requested by schools are prioritized in the high volume of hiring requests. Candidates for substitute teacher, substitute paraeducator, lunch recess monitor, and coach positions come to Temporary Services via recommendation for hire from a school-based administrator.

An ongoing area of focus is improving training and onboarding for new temporary employees by developing and implementing consistent, role-specific training opportunities in collaboration with school-based administrators. This partnership ensures that training aligns with school-based expectations, routines, and structures—ultimately leading to better preparedness, stronger performance, and increased retention of temporary staff.

MOST HIRED TEMPORARY POSITIONS

LUNCH RECESS MONITORS

63

PAID COACHES

42

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

177

SUBSTITUTE PARAEDUCATORS

36

Temporary Services

In support of Theme 1: *Modernize and Streamline Processes* in the HR Strategic Plan, the team is also reviewing options for a new Absence Management System designed to improve efficiency, increase temporary position fill rates, and enhance the user experience for employees.

One of the most common substitute needs is for long-term substitutes, who serve when a teacher is on a leave of absence for 10 or more consecutive days. These substitutes assume the full responsibilities of the teacher, including planning and grading, and receive a higher rate of pay for this additional work. School-based administrators select long-term substitutes, while the Office of Temporary Services creates and maintains these assignments in the Absence Management System.

Trend Data: Daily Building Substitutes				
	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26
Daily Building Substitutes allocated	149	204	239	191

Daily Building Substitute teachers, another common substitute need, are allocated by the Office of Temporary Services to each school based upon the previous year's average number of unfilled teacher jobs per day. Daily Building Substitutes are compensated at the long-term rate of pay for their commitment to serve at the school for the duration of that school year. Each day, the Daily Building Substitute is assigned to an unfilled teacher job by the school administration. They do not have planning or grading responsibilities. Trend data shows that post-pandemic, HCPSS experienced an increase in unfilled teacher jobs, leading to the allocation of more Daily Building Substitutes. For the 25-26 school year however, there was a decrease in allocations due to fewer unfilled positions during the 24-25 school year.

The Office of Temporary Services also screens applicants for substitute teacher and substitute paraeducator positions on an ongoing basis. Schools recommend candidates for hire, and the Office processes these appointments. In addition, all Daily Building Substitute assignments are created and maintained within the Absence Management System.

Compensation

While strategies such as improving time-to-fill, strengthening sourcing, issuing open contracts, and leveraging temporary services help attract candidates, compensation remains a key factor in both recruitment and retention. Competitive pay and benefits are essential to positioning HCPSS as an employer of choice—particularly in hard-to-fill roles. The two positions highlighted in this section illustrate where competitiveness is most critical, though other roles not featured here may present similar challenges.

Since 2019, teacher salaries at HCPSS have increased by 55.8%. For example, a teacher with a bachelor's degree who started in 2019 at \$47,802 now earns \$73,311 annually, while a teacher with a master's degree who began at \$53,137 now earns \$82,783. With step increases and general wage adjustments, teacher pay has grown by an average of 6.5% per year. Salaries for support staff have also seen significant growth—for instance, a custodian earning \$31,174 annually in 2019 now earns \$40,194 annually, a 29% increase. In addition to salary, total compensation—which includes benefits such as health insurance, tuition reimbursement, retirement contributions, and paid leave—represents an important part of the overall employment package and is an area we plan to more intentionally examine and highlight as a future area of focus.

10-month Special Education Teacher Compensation Review

The persistent and widespread shortage of special education teachers is a critical issue that significantly impacts the quality of education and support for students with disabilities. Addressing this shortage requires a multifaceted approach implementing various strategies including competitive compensation.

Based on a fiscal year 2026 compensation review, HCPSS ranks third for entry-level special education teacher salaries among eight surrounding districts, trailing only Montgomery County and Anne Arundel County Public Schools. While this places HCPSS in the upper quartile for compensation, it is a current priority for the system to establish a clear compensation philosophy. This would involve a strategic decision on whether to prioritize being a leader in special education teacher pay to enhance recruitment and retention. This is a crucial consideration given the competitive nature of attracting highly qualified educators in a specialized field.

10-month Related Service Providers Compensation Review

A related service provider is a qualified professional who delivers services in special education that are essential for a student with a disability to benefit from their special education program. These services, outlined in a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) include therapies, counseling, and other forms of support, and are provided by specialists such as speech language pathologists, physical therapists, audiologists, and occupational therapists.

A fiscal year 2026 compensation review indicates that HCPSS trails Montgomery County Public Schools in overall compensation, with a notable \$13,000 salary disparity for speech-language pathologists due to a separate pay lane in Montgomery County. Furthermore, HCPSS ranks a distant third behind Anne Arundel County Public Schools for compensation across all related service providers.

Due to the competitive compensation landscape, HCPSS faces challenges in filling vacant speech-language pathologist positions, often relying on contractors which is an expensive strategy. Feedback from potential candidates indicates that compensation is the primary factor in declining employment offers. Addressing this issue, HCPSS recently created a separate pay scale for related service providers in its most recent negotiated agreement with HCEA, aiming to improve its competitiveness in attracting and retaining talent. The system is monitoring the impact and continuing efforts to address the hiring gap.

Understanding Employee Movement

Employee Movement

Employee movement provides valuable insight into how vacancies are being filled and, in some cases, created. Whether through new hires, promotions, temp-to-hire conversions, transfers, leaves of absence, or workers' compensation cases, these shifts reflect not only the current state of the HCPSS workforce but also emerging patterns that can inform future planning. By analyzing these trends, HCPSS can better anticipate staffing needs, identify areas of growth or turnover, and strengthen our strategies for recruitment, retention, and career development across the system. The table to the right provides an overview of the various employment transitions that occurred during the reporting period.

In the past year, 23% of HCPSS staff experienced some type of movement, reflecting both the fluidity of the HCPSS workforce and the variety of transactions that take place across the system. Transfers and lateral moves account for 1,203 cases, making this the largest category of staffing changes. These include voluntary and involuntary moves, administrative reassignments, location changes, and other lateral adjustments. It is important to note that some promotions are captured within transfers due to inconsistent coding, particularly among administrative moves such as assistant principals moving into principal roles. While data shows a promotion rate of 2.3%, this does not fully capture all promotions for this reason. This highlights a larger issue with transaction coding, which limits HR's ability to analyze movement accurately. Moving forward, HR will better define coding procedures to ensure consistency in tracking.

As referenced in the table above, the 390 new hires demonstrate the significant volume of bringing permanent staff on board in a single year—on top of rehires (50) and temporary-to-permanent hires (156). The temporary-to-permanent conversions also underscore the strength of the pipeline strategy and the critical role the temporary services team plays in supporting long-term staffing needs.

Transaction	# of Transactions
Transfers and Lateral Moves	1,203
Promotions	205
New Hires	390
Rehires	50
Return From Leave Placement	73
Temporary to Permanent Hires	156
Total	2,077

Involuntary Transfers

Two of the more significant transactions that fall under Transfers and Lateral Moves in the previous table, are voluntary and involuntary transfers. An involuntary transfer is a change in a staff member's assignment to a different school(s), typically due to shifts in student enrollment, program changes, FY Operating Budget reductions, or redistricting. Involuntary transfers and staff returning from a leave of absence are given priority placement per the HCEA and Education Support Professionals (ESP) negotiated agreements.

For the 2025–2026 school year, a total of 419 staff members received involuntary transfer notices based on the projections at that time.

- **April 2025:** 176 certificated/licensed staff and 63 support staff (239 total) were informed that they were to be involuntarily transferred for school year 2025-2026 due to enrollment and/or program changes.
- **June 2025:** An additional 89 certificated/licensed staff and 91 support staff (180 total) were informed that they were to be involuntarily transferred for school year 2025-2026 due to budget reductions based on the FY26 Board approved budget.

The Operating Budget for the upcoming fiscal year must be approved before final involuntary placement decisions can be determined. Because of this timeline, it is likely that some staff members who were awaiting placement proactively chose to separate (by resigning, retiring, or taking a leave of absence). In FY26, the budget approval in June resulted in notifications and transfers occurring later than ideal for staffing coordination. Ultimately, 216 employees received a new placement through the involuntary transfer process, while 35 of those initially notified were able to remain in their original placement.

The following table summarizes these resulting employee changes.

			Long Term		Terminated Contract not renewed	Terminated Reduction in Force	Received new assignment	Returned to original placement
	Resigned	Retired	Leave of Absence	Promoted				
Licensed Staff	5	1	2	0	3	3	216	35
Support Staff	4	1	0	2	0	0	135	12

Involuntary transfers are a necessary measure for organizational efficiency, but they carry significant emotional, professional, and logistical impacts for staff. The timing of these notifications is critical. Budgetary decisions made in June are more disruptive to the affected employees' personal and professional lives. Furthermore, this timeline creates a delay in the district's overall hiring timeline, as involuntary placements must be finalized before voluntary transfers can be processed and new personnel hired, per negotiated agreements. To address these challenges, HR is collaborating with labor partners to review the transfer process, improve the timeliness of notifications, and minimize future impacts on hiring and budget planning.

Voluntary Transfers

Staff members, including certificated/licensed staff and select support staff, can request voluntary transfers to different schools.

- Certificated/Licensed Staff can submit requests between February 1 and the deadline of April 15.
- Support Staff can submit requests between December 1 and the deadline of April 1.

Voluntary transfer requests may be considered for vacancies that remain after all involuntarily transferred staff members receive a new placement. At that time, school-based administrators may consider filling existing vacancies with a current staff member through a voluntary transfer or with a new hire.

Due to delays in the FY26 Operating Budget approval, staff members whose positions were reduced were granted an exception this summer. To help them find new placements, they were permitted to submit voluntary transfer requests during the month of June, outside the standard negotiated timelines. This accommodation helped them express interest in transferring and securing a new assignment.

For the 2025-2026 school year, the Department of Human Resources processed a total of 1,153 voluntary transfer requests (928 from certificated/licensed staff and 225 from support staff). From this pool, school-based administrators offered 210 transfers to interested staff members, which were accepted. This resulted in 192 successful transfers for certificated/licensed staff and 18 for support staff.

Currently, the voluntary staff transfer process lacks a formalized mechanism for collecting data on the reason(s) for a transfer request. Informal data suggests reasons often center on improving proximity to home or family-related locations (e.g., child's school/daycare).

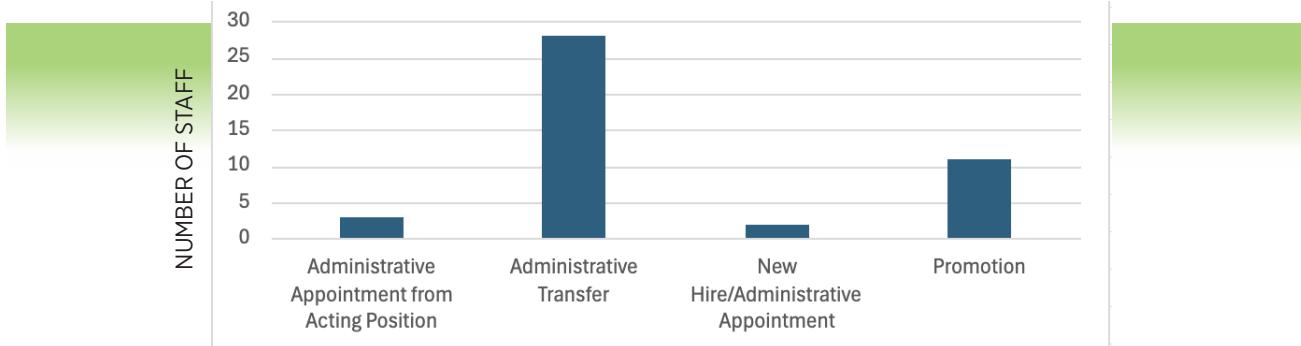
A process improvement to be implemented in Spring 2026 will involve developing and implementing a mandatory, categorized field within the voluntary transfer request system. This field will require staff to select a reason from a defined list (e.g., Proximity to Home, Career Development, School Environment, Prefer Not to Disclose), ensuring comprehensive and measurable data collection to inform retention strategies.

As part of Priority 3 of the HCPSS Strategic Plan, which focuses on staff retention and development, HR and labor partner teams are examining the systemic impact of non-tenured certificated/licensed and conditional teachers transferring between schools before achieving tenure. These early transfers disrupt the continuity of support, training, and professional development provided by the original school administration, limiting the effectiveness of our investment in their growth.



School-based Leadership Changes

SCHOOL-BASED ADMINISTRATION CHANGES IN SY25-26



In addition to the annual transfer process, each school year brings a number of school-based leadership changes. For the 2025–2026 school year, **15 schools welcomed a new principal**—13 were internal hires and two were external. In total, **44 schools experienced some form of leadership change this school year**, either in a principal or assistant principal role. In seven of these schools, the transition involved an assistant principal moving into the principal role, a shift that may be less disruptive and provides a valuable growth opportunity for the employee. Although the long-term impact of such changes has not been systematically tracked in recent years, HR plans to monitor these trends more closely to better understand how leadership transitions influence retention, school culture, and ultimately, student outcomes.



Leaves of Absence

In addition to transfers, promotions, and other internal movements, employee absences due to leaves of absence (LOA) or workers' compensation also affect operations. Though often temporary, these absences create lost time and, in some cases, lost wages, requiring others to assume additional responsibilities or prompting temporary staffing solutions—impacting both workload and overall organizational capacity.

Leave types are divided into two categories: job protected leaves under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and leaves provided through the negotiated agreements (General Leaves). The two most common reasons for employees taking FMLA leave were personal illness (307 cases) and maternity/paternity/adoption (223 cases). For General Leaves, the leading reasons were Child Rearing (158 cases) and personal illness (56 cases).

At any given time, about 9% of all permanent employees are on a leave of absence, which can create a persistent strain on resources (increased employee workload), the budget (additional substitute wages), and continuity of learning for students. However, providing additional leave options beyond those required by federal law, such as general leaves, also has clear benefits. These include strengthening employee loyalty, supporting the well-being of staff on leave, fostering a sense of organizational support, and enhancing the ability to attract and retain talent.

Notably, almost half of all leaves taken (4.4%) were related to maternity, paternity, adoption, or child rearing. This underscores that HCPSS's family-friendly policies are both valued and widely used.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEAVES OF ABSENCE IN FY25

FMLA Leaves	Number of Cases	Percentage of All Permanent Employees on Leave
Family Member Illness	36	0.40%
Maternity/Paternity/Adoption	223	2.48%
Military Exigency	2	0.02%
Personal Illness	307	3.42%
Total FMLA Leaves	568	6.33%
General Leaves		
Child Rearing	158	1.76%
Family Member Illness	9	0.10%
Other	22	0.25%
Maternity/Paternity/Adoption	15	0.17%
Military	2	0.02%
Personal Illness	56	0.62%
Study/Professional	20	0.22%
Total General Leaves	282	3.14%
Total Leaves of Absence		
All Leaves of Absence Cases	850	9.47%

Workers' Compensation

TOTAL NUMBER OF CLAIMS IN FY25

Claims	Number of Cases
Lost Time Claim Count	114
Medical Only Claim Count	669
Total Number of Claims (Lost Time, Medical Only)	783
One-Time Visit Count	544
More Than One Visit Count	97

Workers' compensation data provides valuable insight into the safety and well-being of the HCPSS workforce, as well as the effectiveness of our injury prevention and response programs. This report highlights key trends and metrics from recent claims, including both lost time and medical-only cases. By analyzing the severity, frequency, and cost of these claims, HCPSS can better understand the current performance and identify opportunities to strengthen our approach. The data also reflects how HCPSS compares favorably to other Maryland Local Education Associations (LEAs), reinforcing the impact of the ongoing efforts to maintain a safe and supportive work environment.

The data provided includes both lost time claims (when an employee misses work due to the injury) and medical-only claims (when the employee sought medical treatment but did not miss work).

Approximately 15% of claims (114 cases) were considered more severe, as they involved lost time. The remaining 85% of claims (669 cases) were medical-only and resolved without missing work. Notably, 69% of all claims required just a single medical visit before being resolved.

A key workers' compensation metric is the cost per \$100 of payroll, which shows how much an organization spends on claims relative to wages. Over the past year, HCPSS has spent \$0.38 for every \$100 of payroll on workers' compensation costs. According to the HCPSS claims administrator, SISCO, this is significantly lower than other LEAs, which can be closer to \$1.00 per \$100 of payroll. This favorable result reflects the strength of our program, and will continue partnering with Risk Management to reduce incidents and promote a safe, healthy workplace for all employees.

HCPSS has spent \$0.38 for every \$100 of payroll on workers' compensation costs vs. other LEAs which are closer to \$1.00 per \$100 of payroll!

Labor Relations

The lifeblood of any organization is its people. Human Resources plays a vital role in supporting staff and schools by ensuring that agreements and policies are administered fairly and consistently. At the heart of this work is a commitment to cultivating strong working conditions—conditions that empower employees to bring their best selves to work, thrive in their roles, and contribute meaningfully to the success of the school system. These efforts are foundational to retaining high-quality teachers and staff.

As a part of Human Resources, Employee and Labor Relations (ELR) carries this mission forward in a focused way. This fall, the Board will enter full contract negotiations with Howard County Association of Supervisors and Administrators (HCASA/NCS) and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), while the three-year agreement with HCEA, representing teachers and educational support professionals, will fully reopen for FY2029. ELR also partners in managing investigations and case resolution, coordinating workplace accommodations, overseeing grievance processes, and fostering labor-management collaboration rooted in transparency, consistency, and equity.

Investigations into employee misconduct and other violations are completed in alignment with Board policies. In FY2025, over 248 investigations were supported centrally. The data collected on the type and nature of these cases has informed the Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline revision committee, whose recommendations will be presented to the Board in February 2026.

Workplace accommodations—including those mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act, religious accommodations, intermittent leave, and light duty—have seen a moderate increase in requests, rising from 102 in FY2024 to 146 in FY2025. Similarly, contractual grievances and appeals under Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 4-205 have increased, with 14 filings in FY2024 and 53 in FY2025.

In response to the rise in cases, Employee and Labor Relations (ELR) has taken proactive and strategic steps to meet the moment. As the team responsible for upholding policy, promoting fairness, and resolving workplace concerns, ELR has deepened its collaboration with labor partners and streamlined internal processes to more effectively support staff and maintain a positive, productive work environment. This includes:

- Increased labor-management collaboration, such as biweekly meetings with HCEA member representatives, monthly meetings with HCASA, and expanded time for contractual Labor Management meetings.
- A comprehensive review of standard operating procedures for both workplace accommodations and the investigatory process, with a focus on efficiency and customer service.
- Clarification and consistent communication of disciplinary policies to ensure fairness across the organization.
- System-wide training for administrators, shaped by trends and insights from investigations and grievances to proactively address systemic issues and strengthen leadership practices.
- A recommendation to the Board to develop an employee Code of Conduct once revisions to Policy 7030 Employee Conduct and Discipline.
- ELR has been restructured to enhance capacity and now includes additional specialists, allowing the team to more effectively manage investigations and case resolution, coordinate workplace accommodations, oversee grievance processes, and foster labor-management collaboration rooted in transparency, consistency, and equity.

These efforts reflect a shared commitment to fostering a workplace culture rooted in transparency, fairness, and respect—one where staff feel supported and valued.

Transitioning and Offboarding

Employee Separations

Reporting Period	Employee Separation Data				
	Involuntary Separations	Voluntary Separations	Total Separations	Broken Contracts	Turnover Rate
All Staff					
9/1/2022 - 8/31/2023	43	680	723	71	8.00%
9/1/2023 - 8/31/2024	44	784	828	76	9.11%
9/1/2024 - 8/31/2025	40	649	689	38	7.70%
Special Education Staff					
9/1/2022 - 8/31/2023	17	179	196	19	9.14%
9/1/2023 - 8/31/2024	*	246	252	25	11.16%
9/1/2024 - 8/31/2025	13	201	214	21	9.33%
Special Education Teachers and Paraeducators					
9/1/2022 - 8/31/2023	17	158	175	12	11.19%
9/1/2023 - 8/31/2024	*	223	229	19	14.15%
9/1/2024 - 8/31/2025	12	139	151	15	9.20%

*Note: Data are not reported for groups with fewer than 10 employees.

Overall turnover is currently 7.7% and has decreased by 1.4 percentage points from FY24 to FY25, reflecting a positive trend toward improving HCPSS turnover rates and the lowest that HCPSS has been in the last three years. A turnover rate that is below 10% is considered reasonable per industry standards. Conversely, HCPSS has an overall employee retention rate of 92.3%.

However, 31% of all separations come from employees in special education (as defined in Appendix A), where turnover remains higher at 9.3%. The number of broken contracts in special education has remained roughly the same over the past two years. When a teacher breaks a contract mid-year for a non-exceptional reason, MSDE withholds their teaching license for a full year, underscoring the severity of these departures. This suggests that the circumstances leading to such separations are often significant, highlighting the critical importance of strong retention strategies, regular employee check-ins, and ongoing monitoring to help prevent these situations.

As noted in the first table on page 33, a retention rate of 86.74% means that 13.3% of employees leave within their first year of employment during this reporting period and HR should examine why. Onboarding represents a significant investment of time and resources, making early turnover costly. Considering substitute expenses, recruitment costs, and staff time, the average cost to manage a vacancy and complete a full recruitment is at least \$10,000. For this reason, monitoring first-year turnover closely is critical to inform strategies that improve retention and maximize the return on our investment in new employees.

One of the key areas of focus for retention is new teacher retention. While we do not yet have data specific to new teachers, demographic data for all permanent employees shows that 30% are in their first five years at HCPSS, and those who remain beyond ten years are more likely to stay for the remainder of their careers. These trends highlight the importance of onboarding, developing, and supporting new teachers to promote longevity and consistency within the system.

Employee Separations

Specifically, instructional staff have a 93.9% retention rate in their first year, compared with 86.7% for all employees. Retention remains an important focus given the costs of managing vacancies and the time, effort, and resources invested in onboarding new educators. Within the first three years, retention drops to 81.6% for instructional staff and 78% for all employees. For context, the MSDE reports that, on average, 88% of teachers remain in their school district year to year.

These data indicate that many teachers are leaving before achieving tenure, underscoring the need to develop strong, system-wide retention strategies—a responsibility shared across the organization. While retention rates among instructional staff remain higher than for all employees, the exit data summarized below provide insight into the key reasons employees separate from HCPSS.

Separations within First Year of Employment All Staff	
Involuntary Terminations	18
Voluntary Separations	111
Total Separations	129
Broken Contracts	16
Retention Rate	86.74%
Instructional Staff Separations within First Year of Employment	
Involuntary Terminations	10
Voluntary Separations	39
Total Separations	49
Broken Contracts	16
Retention Rate	95.53%
Separations within First Year of Employment - Special Education	
Involuntary Terminations	*
Voluntary Separations	58
Total Separations	64
Broken Contracts	12

Separations within First Three Years of Employment All Staff	
Involuntary Terminations	29
Voluntary Separations	246
Total Separations	275
Broken Contracts	30
Retention Rate	78.13%
Instructional Staff Separations within First Three Years of Employment	
Involuntary Terminations	17
Voluntary Separations	98
Total Separations	115
Broken Contracts	30
Retention Rate	81.60%
Separations within First Three Years of Employment - Special Education	
Involuntary Terminations	11
Voluntary Separations	103
Total Separations	114
Broken Contracts	17

*Note: Data are not reported for groups with fewer than 10 employees.

Exit Data

Over the past few years, HR has collected exit data through a standardized form in Workday, which is shared when an employee submits a task to resign. However, this information has not been consistently tracked or thoroughly analyzed. While some questions on the form provide useful insights, others combine multiple topics, making the data difficult to interpret reliably. As a result, the dataset is too inconsistent and disorganized to support meaningful analysis. Moving forward, a comprehensive overhaul of the exit form is necessary—revising the questions for clarity, focus, and consistency—so that HR can gather actionable insights that truly inform retention and organizational strategies.

Despite challenges with the data collection, HR was able to review the responses for three questions:

- What is your reason for separation?
- What did you like most about employment with HCPSS?
- What did you like least about employment with HCPSS?

The exit interview data provides insight into both the reasons employees are leaving HCPSS and what they valued most during their time with the organization. **Among the 301 respondents who provided a reason for separation, retirement was the most common at 44.5%, followed by seeking other employment (15.6%), personal reasons (14.3%), and relocation (13.6%).** While retirement is expected and less preventable, the proportion of separations tied to seeking other employment or personal/relocation factors underscores the importance of continued efforts in employee engagement, retention strategies, and workplace flexibility.

When asked what they liked most about working with HCPSS, the largest share of respondents (28.3%) cited supporting HCPSS students, employees, parents, and the broader community, highlighting a strong sense of mission-driven work. Benefits (18.3%), work schedule/calendar (15.3%), and job responsibilities and duties (15.0%) were also frequently mentioned, signaling that employees appreciated both the tangible support and the meaningful nature of their roles. Fewer respondents highlighted salary (9.2%) or leave time (9.8%) as top positives, suggesting these may not be perceived as competitive advantages compared to other employers.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while HCPSS employees are motivated by purpose and community impact, turnover drivers such as pursuing other opportunities and personal or relocation reasons are notable. The data underscores the need to balance retention strategies that support career growth and work-life balance with continued emphasis on the qualities that attract individuals to the organization in the first place. It is important to recognize that all employees and Board Members serve as ambassadors and recruiters for HCPSS, sharing responsibility for attracting and retaining talent. Employees choose to join and remain at HCPSS for a variety of reasons, and they are influenced by different factors as they make decisions about their careers within the organization.

Looking Ahead

Looking Ahead

Human Resources is actively rebuilding its foundation—modernizing systems, strengthening partnerships, and leveraging better data—to attract, retain, and support the best educators and staff for every student. Over the past year, initiatives such as the implementation of Workday Recruiting and Guardian, the enhancement of HR systems and processes, and the training and focus on centralized service channels have measurably improved efficiency, transparency, and the employee experience. Strategic recruitment efforts, including HBCU partnerships, the R.E.E.L.S shadowing program, targeted marketing campaigns, and pre-screened candidate pools, have strengthened our ability to attract and retain talent. At the same time, HR is leveraging an equity lens to support our work and better serve the HCPSS community.

Looking ahead, HR will continue to use data-informed insights to guide retention, succession planning, and employee engagement. Onboarding, workforce diversity, and targeted compensation strategies remain key focus areas, alongside continued digital transformation and expanded self-service tools. The team is also working collaboratively with professional networks such as the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO), Maryland Association of School Personnel Administrators (MASPA), Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), Maryland Negotiation Service (MNS), Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) chapters, etc., to enhance the collective knowledge and skill set and to stay aligned with emerging best practices in the field. While challenges such as budget timing, pipeline gaps, and specialized staffing needs persist, HR is committed to leading these efforts in partnership with schools and offices, leveraging both internal and external expertise to ensure a high-performing, inclusive workforce that drives student success and advances the mission of HCPSS.

As these FY25 initiatives transition to archive status, the focus now shifts to sustaining momentum and advancing strategic priorities in FY26. These include:

- **Equity and Inclusion:** As part of our commitment to fostering a more inclusive workplace, the HR team will build upon anti-bias training to ensure equitable practices in recruitment, hiring, and employee relations. This training will support our efforts to build a workforce that reflects the diversity of our student population and community.
- **Career Development and Internal Mobility:** Expanding professional learning opportunities, clarifying career pathways, and partnering with bargaining units to support certification and continuing education.
- **Recruitment and Retention:** Enhancing digital outreach, refining branding, and exploring incentive programs such as housing stipends and signing bonuses to address hard-to-fill positions and reduce turnover.
- **Customer Service and Employee Engagement:** Launching feedback mechanisms, streamlining communication channels, and expanding onboarding resources to improve employee experience.
- **Policy Development and Structural Alignment:** Revising key policies (e.g., 7030 and 1020), defining seniority, and establishing an Employee Code of Conduct to support consistency and transparency.
- **Data Integrity and Process Optimization:** Improving tuition reimbursement workflows, salary placement accuracy, and credential screening through system enhancements and training.

Looking Ahead

- **Workforce Planning and Succession Management:** Addressing retirement trends and early-career retention through targeted support and internal pipeline development.
- **Classification and Compensation:** Advancing position reviews and benchmarking efforts to ensure equity and competitiveness across roles.
- **Organizational Culture and Collaboration:** Strengthening cross-team communication, celebrating milestones, and fostering a culture of appreciation through engagement committees and wellness initiatives.

Below are a few examples of key projects, metrics and targets that the HR department will focus on in the coming year to establish trends and baseline data:

- Improve applicant satisfaction with the user-friendliness of the application process from 77% to 82%.
- Decrease the number of support positions filled within 30–59 days by 10%, increasing the proportion of hires completed in under 30 days.
- Increase the open contract acceptance rate for special educators from 78% to 83% to align more closely with other position types.
- Increase the percentage of applicants hired as interns from 42% to 50%, per our source effectiveness data.
- Analyze racial, ethnic, and gender demographics of applicants meeting minimum qualifications compared to newly hired staff for the current school year to establish baseline metrics.
- Track staff retention, attrition, promotion, and termination rates disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender at both the district and school levels to establish baseline metrics.
- Reduce the number of schools with first-day-of-school vacancies in school-based support positions by 10%.
- Revise the staff exit survey to collect more accurate and actionable data on reasons for departure, and target a response rate of at least 30%.
- Review HCPSS turnover rates, especially first-year turnover, in comparison to industry standards to identify reasonable targets for improvement.

While HR has achieved many successes and milestones, several challenges remain that must be addressed to keep pace with the evolving employment landscape. Additionally, meeting the demands of our system is constrained by limited staffing resources. Currently, we fall below the industry benchmark set by the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM), which recommends one HR professional for every 100–200 employees. This staffing shortfall has been acknowledged in the Superintendent's proposed FY25 budget.

This report is not only a reflection of progress—it is a strategic roadmap for what's next. With clear priorities, strong partnerships, and a shared commitment to excellence, the Human Resources and Employee & Labor Relations teams are well-positioned to support the evolving needs of HCPSS. While we cannot do this work alone, we are committed to leading the way. By continuing to attract, develop, and retain exceptional talent, we will ensure a safe, inclusive, and high-performing workforce that drives our mission forward.

Appendix

Key Definitions

Instructional Staff - includes MSDE positions codes 11 - 23, such as Teacher, Staff Developer/Teacher Trainer, Other Instructional Professional Personnel, Audiologist/Hearing Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech Pathologist, Other Therapist/Diagnostician, Librarian/Media Specialist, School Counselor, School Psychologist, Student Personnel Worker, School Social Worker.

Non-instructional Staff - includes MSDE position codes 1-10 and 24-34, such as Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Assistant, Associate, Area Superintendent, Director/Manager/Comptroller, Coordinator/Consultant, Supervisor, Other Administrator, Principal, Assistant Principal, School Department Chairperson/Other School-Level Administrator, Nurse/Hygienist/Health Professional, Other Professional Personnel, Teacher Aide/Teaching Assistant, Library/Media Center Aide, Other Aide, Secretary/Clerk, Technical Personnel, Transportation Personnel, Crafts and Trades Personnel, Manual Laborer, Service Worker.

School-based Administrators - Principals, Assistant Principals, Leadership Interns, Athletics and Activities Managers.

Special Education - When referenced on a chart, it includes all positions assigned to a cost center beginning with 33__ and includes positions such as Special Education Teacher, Special Education Paraeducator, and some central office staff.

Leaves of Absence - approved time away from work for specific reasons. There are two broad types of Leaves of Absence at HCPSS: Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and General Leave. FMLA is a law that allows eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for specific family and medical reasons. General Leaves are specified in the negotiated agreements for employees that are not eligible for FMLA or for reasons that is not covered by FMLA. Child Rearing Leave is typically used after maternity leave is exhausted, but the employee would like to continue to be out to bond with their new baby.

General Education teacher - A General Education Teacher is an educator who supports the academic and developmental growth of students within a standard classroom setting. Trained in a wide array of subject areas, these teachers provide foundational instruction in core areas such as mathematics, literacy, science, and social studies.

Special Education Teacher - A Special Education Teacher is an educator dedicated to providing tailored educational experiences to students with diverse learning needs, disabilities, or exceptionalities. These educators possess specialized training and credentials that enable them to understand and address the unique challenges faced by their students. Their primary objective is to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters academic, social, and emotional growth among students who may require individualized instruction, modifications, and accommodations.

Appendix A

Key Definitions Continued

Professional License - Issued to an educator who has completed an approved educator preparation program offered by a college or university that includes coursework and a clinical internship and leads to licensure.

Conditional License - Issued by a Maryland school district to an employed teacher who is working toward professional licensure. A conditional special education license is a three-year non-renewable license. A conditional license for all other teaching areas is a five-year non-renewable license.

Involuntary Transfer - An involuntary transfer is a change in a staff member's assignment to a different school(s), typically due to shifts in student enrollment, program changes, FY Operating Budget reductions, or redistricting.

Voluntary Transfer - A voluntary request for a change in assignment to a different school(s).

Involuntary Transfer versus Surplus - These terms are used interchangeably as they reference this process.

MD486 Background Check - Maryland HB486 is also known as Md. Code, Education §6-113.2 and titled "Education – Personnel Matters – Child Abuse and Sexual Misconduct Prevention". It requires county boards of education, nonpublic schools, and contracting agencies to: collect specific employment history information from applicants for positions involving direct contact with minors, review that history before hiring, check eligibility for substitute positions, and report employers or applicants who fail to respond or provide false information.

Time-to-fill - This metric begins when a specific job opening is created—either after a role is approved to be filled or when a candidate from one of the pools is recommended for hire by an administrator and is tracked until the candidate is cleared to start.

Time-to-hire - This metric begins when a candidate enters the recruitment process until the time that they accept an offer. HR does not track this metric because so many of the positions are candidates pools and the position is always posted on the HCPSS website. This metric is only applicable to open/close vacancies.

I-9 Employment Verification - The I-9 employment verification process is a federal requirement under U.S. law to confirm that every person hired for employment is legally authorized to work in the United States.

Time-to-Fill Metrics

Overall Performance

- 83.66% of candidates are hired within 30 days of receiving a recommendation to hire.
- 93.43% are hired within 60 days.

After a recommendation to hire is received, the Recruitment and Hiring team completes the following pre-hire steps:

- Gathers professional references and conducts preliminary background checks
- Initiates the MD486 background check, which can take up to 20 calendar days
- Prepares and extends a salary offer
- Coordinates any required pre-hire tasks (e.g., TEACH account setup for licensed positions or pre-employment physicals for support roles)

Hiring Timelines by Position Type

Teachers and Certificated School-Based Staff

Includes teachers, related service providers, counselors, and school psychologists

- 97.74% hired within 30 days
- Candidates are selected by hiring managers from a pre-screened candidate pool
- Required documents (transcripts, licensure, test scores) are collected during application, enabling an expedited process

Support Staff

Includes custodial, food services, grounds, maintenance, warehouse, clerical, paraeducators, health assistants, and student assistants.

- 75.11% hired within 30 days
- Only certain positions (e.g., entry-level custodial and food services, health assistants, student assistants, and paraeducators) are filled from evergreen postings (postings that are always live on the HCPSS job board)
- All other positions are posted for a minimum of 2 weeks before screening
- Most require a pre-employment physical as part of the hiring process

Central Office Professionals and School-Based Administrators

Includes central office professional staff, cluster and float nurses, liaisons, and school-based administrators:

- 57.35% hired within 30 days
- All roles require a minimum 2 week posting period
- This includes specialized roles, which often require longer posting windows to collect a competitive pool of qualified candidates
- Positions in this category typically require at least two rounds of interviews
- Some positions in this category require approval by the Board of Education; recommended candidates are not hired until approved at a public Board of Education meeting

Appendix C

Historically Black College or University (HBCU) Road Trip Schools Visited in FY25

- Bowie State University
- Delaware State University
- Morgan State University
- Coppin State University
- University of Maryland, Eastern Shore
- Hampton University
- Virginia State University
- Winston-Salem University
- North Carolina A&T

Source Effectiveness Definitions

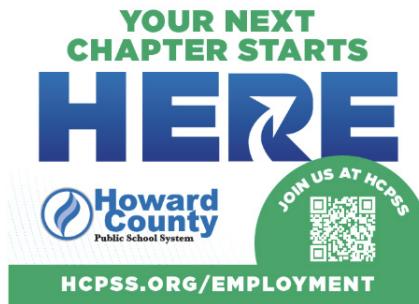
- **HCPSS Hosted Job Fair:** Virtual and in-person events planned and executed by the HCPSS HR team. Includes Educators of Color, Summer job fairs, Get to Know HoCo, special education information sessions, any other HCPSS job fairs
- **External Advertising:** Paid advertising including Columbia MVA campaign, niche job boards (e.g., DICE, AASA, ASBO, SHRM, National Association of School Nurses)
- **College/University Hosted Job Fairs:** Any job fair sponsored by a college or university exclusive to education students
- **Other Job Fair:** General (non-education specific) job fairs, including Howard County Workforce Development, HCC, Federal Workers Career Fairs, other community job fairs
- **Social Media:** Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn

Appendix D

HCPSS Employment Brand & Materials



YOUR **TALENT**
THEIR **FUTURE**
JOIN US AT HCPSS

A large recruitment poster with the following sections:

- EVERY STUDENT'S FUTURE BEGINS WITH a great team.**
- CONDITIONAL TEACHING**: HCPSS may consider candidates for conditional licensure when there are fewer licensed candidates than anticipated vacancies. Conditionally licensed teachers are completing coursework and assessments to meet Maryland's professional licensure requirements. They have 3-5 years to do so through a Maryland Approved Educator Preparation Program and required assessments. Hired under a provisional contract, their employment is reviewed annually.
- REQUIREMENTS FOR A PROFESSIONAL LICENSE**: To transition from a conditional to a professional license, teachers must have:
 - Successful completion of a Maryland Approved Educator Preparation Program
 - Passing scores on applicable Maryland licensure assessments
 - One (1) year of successful full-time teaching experience at the appropriate age or grade level in the appropriate subject area
- HCPSS SUPPORT**: Once hired, HCPSS provides resources to guide you through the licensure process, including:
 - Employee Credentialing Specialists for personalized support
 - Tuition reimbursement for coursework completion
 - Instructional Mentor
- WHAT DO YOU NEED TO APPLY?**: Bachelor's degree (minimum)
Teaching experience or progress toward an MSDE license (preferred)
- Discover YOUR PATH AT HCPSS!**

Appendix D

Digital Campaign Posts

