

## **Introduction**

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Special Education and Procedures and Guidelines Manual provides staff with the guidelines and procedures governing special education and related services. In part, this manual demonstrates that the HCPSS has established policies, procedures, and programs for students with disabilities that are consistent with federal and State policies and procedures. Adherence to the guidelines and procedures set forth in this document ensures that students residing in Howard County, including students placed in nonpublic special education schools, attending private/religious schools, and who are home schooled, ages birth through 21 years old are provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and that students with disabilities and their parents are provided all the educational rights and procedural safeguards described in the federal and State regulations.

### **HCPSS and the Office of Special Education and Student Services Mission**

The mission of the Office of Special Education and Student Services (DSE) supports the HCPSS mission by supporting schools to address the learning needs of students with disabilities, and to close achievement gaps using inclusive, least restrictive means in partnership with staff, parents, and families.

#### **Mission:**

The mission of the Howard County Public School System Department of Special Education is to support each school in addressing the learning needs of students with disabilities, and to close achievement gaps using inclusive, least restrictive means in partnerships with school-based staff, parents and families.

#### **Vision:**

The Howard County Public School System Department of Special Education affords a dynamic and responsive learning community for children and students with disabilities. All children and students receiving special education services have access to rigorous instructional opportunities with typically developing peers where their learning is supported in the least restrictive environment. DSE staff facilitates open communication and collaboration with school-based staff, families and community members to focus on individual needs of each child and student.

#### **Philosophy:**

The Howard County Public School System Department of Special Education presumes competence of all students with disabilities, staff and families. It is committed to all children and students with disabilities accessing exemplary instructional programs and services that meet their individual needs. The HCPSS system expectations are to:

- Know your students and the differentiated supports in place to ensure their success;
- Ensure students receive exemplary instruction that prepares them for college and careers;

- Have a process in place for continuously monitoring student progress; and
- Develop a relationship with students and their families.

These expectations coupled with presuming competence of all learners, regardless of disability, support the goals and expectations of the HCPSS.