

Vision 2020: Education for All

A DISTINGUISHED TRADITION,
CUTTING-EDGE STRATEGIES

Howard County Library System's Strategic Plan | 2015 - 2020

Approved and Adopted by the
Howard County Library System
Board of Trustees, July 2015







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“a 21st-century library model, with a position, doctrine, purpose, and curriculum worthy of study and consideration by every library in America, if not the world.”

John N. Berry, *Library Journal*

As the timespan of *Public Education for All*, Howard County Library System’s (HCLS) strategic plan for 2010-2015, draws to a close, we look back and take pride in having delivered the very best in education for students of all ages in this dynamic community.

We also take pride that HCLS has attained the status of a premier library system in the region, state, and country. Our commitment to designing and delivering excellence in education for everyone consistently earns HCLS a five-star national ranking by *Library Journal*, achieved by fewer than one percent of America’s libraries, and no other system in Maryland.

Most notably, we are proud to have worked as a team — the HCLS Board, staff, elected officials, funders, and the community — to further develop and implement a new vision for libraries that is ushering in a new era for the profession: Libraries = Education.

For coming together to live the vision, we received the prestigious Library of the Year award by Gale and *Library Journal*, selected from among the continent’s 21,000 public and academic libraries. As part of this accolade, HCLS was hailed as, “a 21st-century library model, with a position, doctrine, purpose, and curriculum worthy of study and consideration by every library in American, if not the world.” (John N. Berry, *Library Journal*, June 15, 2013, p. 33)

While we are pleased to have been recognized with these honors, we realize that achieving excellence is a never-ending process that requires continuous assessment — and a carefully crafted strategic plan.

This is why many architects and sculptors have spent the past year compiling *Vision 2020: Education for All*. Contributors included HCLS staff, Board members, local leaders, and the community.

Building upon our successes to date, this new strategic plan charts our course for the next five years, enabling us to continue delivering quality education for students of all ages in our diverse community, 21st century style.



Valerie J. Gross

Ankur (Andy) P. Dalal

WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE DO, WHY IT MATTERS

Introduction

Those new to our culturally diverse community of 300,000 quickly learn why 90 percent of Howard County residents have—and use—their Howard County Library System (HCLS) library cards. Upon visiting any of our seven branches, they immediately recognize why students of all ages visit more than three million times each year—to borrow seven million items, conduct research, and attend our classes and events.

And these same new residents soon join our loyal customer base who regularly let us know how much they value excellence in education: our quality curriculum delivered with exceptional customer service.

Vision 2020: Education for All focuses on (1) our curriculum, and (2) our valued team of educators and support staff members, whose expertise, creativity, and dedication are unparalleled.

Centering on these two critical components will enable us to continue achieving:

What our customers have to say

“Thank you for bringing Jodi Picoult to Howard County! Congratulations on this highly successful event which was well planned, efficient, relaxed, and promoted maximum human connectivity.”

“Best library anywhere. Excellent service, responsive staff, outstanding curriculum.”

“Howard County Library System is just awesome! We have utilized so much over the years—the children’s classes, the author lectures, workshops, hanging out and reading, checking out books every three weeks, borrowing movies, summer reading ...”

Our Mission:
We deliver high-quality public education for all.

Our Vision:
A vital component of Howard County's renowned education system, we deliver excellence in education for everyone, advancing the economy and quality of life.





Indeed, since the creation of HCLS' 2010-2015 strategic plan, *Public Education for All*, we have persuasively demonstrated our effectiveness as an integral educational institution in Howard County's premier education system.

What sets HCLS apart?

Who we are, what we do, and how we do it. It's the "Libraries = Education" vision we have developed and live each day. In a nutshell, it's our:

- Extraordinary team of innovative educators and support staff.
- Distinctive, timeless purpose: high-quality public education for all.



- Award-winning curriculum delivered under each of our Three Pillars.
- Hallmark of providing exceptional customer service.
- Strategic vocabulary that accurately conveys our true value.
- Strong support from the HCLS Board of Trustees, elected officials, Friends of HCLS, philanthropic partners, devoted volunteers, and our dynamic community.

The Three Pillars

We accomplish our mission through an unparalleled curriculum that comprises three pillars.

Pillar I: Self-Directed Education

This pillar includes our collection of one million items in multiple formats, specialized online research tools, and a host of online classes that open an ever-expanding portal of opportunity for individuals to discover and learn any time, any place.

Pillar II: Research Assistance & Instruction

Under this pillar, HCLS' Instructor & Research Specialists stand ready to tailor research assistance to specific needs. They also teach classes, seminars, and workshops for infants, toddlers, children, teens, and adults.

Pillar III: Instructive & Enlightening Experiences

This third pillar celebrates culture, builds community, and leverages funding and expertise through community partnerships. Partnerships of note include:

- A+ Partners in Education with the Howard County Public School System and Howard Community College;
- Choose Civility, now 125 Alliance Partners strong;
- The Enchanted Garden; and
- Well & Wise with Howard County General Hospital: A Member of Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Signature events include HCLS Spelling Bee, Battle of the Books, HCLS Rube Goldberg Challenge, Summer Reading Kickoff, and notable author events.

A TIMELESS VISION AND 21ST CENTURY CURRICULUM

Seeking continuously to improve our overall curriculum and its delivery, we engaged in a year-long conversation with stakeholders to envision our future. The possibilities we explored together are incorporated into this new strategic plan, *Vision 2020: Education for All*.¹

What did we learn? That our educational mission is timeless. We also determined that, to further bolster and expand our role in Howard County's educational system, our curriculum can be strengthened by incorporating forward-looking trends and best practices in methods of delivery. These include new student expectations, the dynamics of teaching and learning, and the modern requirements of 21st century education.

The economy in the United States has rapidly evolved from an industrial to a service economy, driven by innovation and knowledge, and characterized by a marketplace of intense global competition and constant renewal.

Skills and Methodology

The 21st century economy requires a more educated workforce—people capable of responding to complex situations, adapting as needs arise, communicating effectively, and working in teams to solve problems.”²

¹ The appendix contains an explanation of the strategic planning methodology and process.

² Partnership for 21st Century Skills, *21st Century Skills, Education & Competitiveness, A Resource and Policy Guide*, 2008, bit.ly/1GQqDj2

In addition, today's workers must:³

- Demonstrate creativity and entrepreneurial thinking
- Communicate and collaborate across cultural, geographic and language barriers
- Innovatively use knowledge, information and opportunities to create new processes and products
- Take charge of financial, health and civic responsibilities

³ Ibid.





Unlike in the 20th century, when learning was predominantly passive, effective 21st century education involves the following skills and teaching methodology:⁴

- Competencies – mastering not only the traditional competencies of reading, writing, arithmetic, and science, but also digital and cultural literacy
- Critical thinking – developing thinking skills that develop the mind, rather than simply learning facts
- Experiential learning – mastering content “while producing, synthesizing, and evaluating information from a wide variety of subjects and sources with an understanding of and respect for diverse cultures” and learning not only the three Rs, but also “the three

Cs: creativity, communication, and collaboration.”

- Collaboration – learning innovative problem solving in teams
- Lifelong education – recognizing that education takes place inside and outside a classroom, incorporates new technologies, and that education is a lifelong endeavor
- Global perspectives – instilling a worldwide outlook

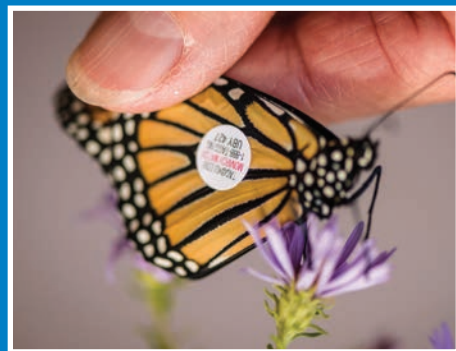
HCLS has already established itself as a leader in 21st century education. We teach many of the skills noted above, incorporating effective methodologies.

Enchanted Garden. An outdoor teaching venue at the HCLS Miller Branch, the Enchanted Garden centers on science and health education (e.g., the garden features a pond and stream, 65 native species of plants, a Peter Rabbit Patch, and a Pizza Garden), as well as environmental education—including a rain garden, bioswale, rain barrels, porous surfaces, and compost bins.

Open year-round for classes (e.g., Sunflowers and Professor Fibonacci), clubs (e.g., Tween Sprouts), and general enjoyment, the wondrous garden entices students of all ages, especially during the growing season and presents ample opportunities to teach using the experiential learning approach.

⁴ *How Do You Define 21st- Century Learning?*, Education Week Teacher PD Sourcebook, October 11, 2010, bit.ly/1cYCFcz

enchanted garden





“Keep up the excellent work. HCLS greatly deserved the recent Library of the Year award and continues to exceed our wildest expectations.”

STEM Education

Today’s knowledge-based, global economy requires workers to know more science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

Locally, *PlanHoward 2030*, the general plan for Howard County, emphasizes how important a highly educated population will be to the county's continued economic development and desired quality of life. The plan underscores that lifelong education is a top priority for developing the knowledge base to foster diversified economic growth, and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. Lifelong education will be crucial for a successful, comprehensive workforce strategy.⁵

In addition, *PlanHoward 2030* aims to establish Howard County as “a leader in 21st century entrepreneurship, information technology, and cybersecurity.” The plan states that county leaders will collaborate with local businesses and educational institutions to identify specific needs in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), then establish leading programs to teach the necessary skills.⁶

At HCLS, our STEM curriculum includes a broad array of materials in all formats, with Research Specialists ready to assist.

Instructors teach STEM-related classes for toddlers (e.g., Go Figure, a class focusing on math concepts, and Wee Science), K-5 students (e.g., Fairy Tale Engineering and Chemistry in the Library), teens (e.g., Ecosystem Science), and adults (e.g., Appy Hour).

In addition, HiTech, our STEM initiative for teens, teaches cutting-edge STEM education through project-based classes that include computer programming, 3D animation, nanotechnology, music/video production, eBooks, game apps, cybersecurity, and robotics.



⁵ Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning, *PlanHoward 2030*, 2012, accessed April 2015, [planhoward.org/PlanHoward2030 adopted.pdf](http://planhoward.org/PlanHoward2030%20adopted.pdf).

⁶ Ibid.



Communication, the Arts, and Life Lessons

Other classes incorporating 21st century teaching practices for the pre-school to college aged student include Introduction to Baby Signing (preschoolers learn about communication), and Kindergarten Here We Come, preparing children for kindergarten. Our curriculum continues for elementary school students with classes such as Discovering Great Artists: Leonardo Da Vinci, and Teen Investor for tweens and teens.

Another example, students from kindergarten through college improve their academic achievement through the use of HCLS' online homework help. From 2 pm to midnight, seven days a week, students receive assistance from a live tutor—in English and in Spanish—with their school assignments in science, English, social studies, and math.

Two of our popular signature events demonstrate our inventive approach to teaching the three Cs: creativity, communication, and collaboration:

Battle of the Books pits 240 teams of fifth graders (1,200 students) against each other in an academic competition that tests their knowledge of 16 pre-assigned books selected by educators from HCLS and HCPSS. The competition improves reading comprehension, builds vocabulary, and teaches leadership and teamwork.

The **Rube Goldberg Challenge** inspires fourth and fifth grade students to transform everyday materials into wacky innovative machines. Students learn to collaborate and communicate as they creatively incorporate STEM concepts into their creations.

Vision 2020: Education for All identifies strategies that build upon these accomplishments to design and deliver a curriculum that imparts 21st-century knowledge and skills.

State-of-the-art Technology

Technological advancements have enhanced the ways students of all ages learn. We plan to further incorporate state-of-the-art technology into our curriculum.

An analysis of 21st century technology as it relates to education points to ways our curriculum can be particularly enhanced for adults.

Pew Research studies have analyzed how mobile technology is reshaping the ways adults learn, create, and communicate. Nearly two-thirds of American adults own smart phones—up from 35 percent in 2011.⁷

The percentage of adults who own laptops, DVRs, MP3 players, game consoles, eBook readers, and tablets is similarly high. More than 74 percent of adults use social networking sites,⁸ and social networking through mobile technology continues to grow, with 83 percent of adults aged 18 to 29 leading the way.⁹

Not surprisingly, advanced technologies have become second nature, greatly influencing people's educational strategies.

⁷ Lee Rainie, "Libraries and Learning Communities," Pew Internet & American Life Project, October 18, 2011, accessed April 2015, bit.ly/1JUrKH5; and Aaron Smith, "U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015," PewResearchCenter, Internet, Science & Tech, April 1, 2015, pewsrc.ch/19JDwMd

⁸ "Social Networking Fact Sheet," PewResearchCenter, Internet, Science & Tech, pewsrc.ch/1doWsl

⁹ Lee Rainie, "Libraries and Learning Communities," Pew Internet & American Life Project, October 18, 2011, accessed April 2015, bit.ly/1JUrKH5; and Aaron Smith, "U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015," PewResearchCenter, Internet, Science & Tech, April 1, 2015, pewsrc.ch/19JDwMd

HCLS - A LEADER IN 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION

The concept of education as a student-directed process to create knowledge and meaning—the essence of 21st education pedagogy—has been the foundation of HCLS’ curriculum to date, contributing to our success.

Pillar I: Self-Directed Education

We have empowered students to explore our vast collection of items in print, audio and electronic formats. Technology, as well as classroom and study spaces in our branches, enable students, individually and in groups, to study in an inviting, welcoming environment.

Pillar II: Research Assistance & Instruction

HCLS instructors have always tailored research assistance and designed classes for the benefit of students of all ages. Classes, seminars and workshops, which are taught or facilitated by HCLS instructors, have promoted the formation of learning communities.

Pillar III: Instructive & Enlightening Experiences

This pillar includes signature events and partnerships (e.g., A+ Partners in Education, Choose Civility), and the concept of the library as an education center that includes celebrating culture and building community.

Strengthening the HCLS Curriculum with 21st Century Methodologies

Vision 2020: Education for All identifies strategies to ensure HCLS’ curriculum design remains on the cutting edge, expanding educational opportunities for all Howard County residents.





“

Your beliefs become
your thoughts,
Your thoughts become
your words,
Your words become
your actions,
Your actions become
your habits,
Your habits become
your values,
Your values become
your destiny.

”

- Mahatma Gandhi

The Three Pillars will continue to be the organizing framework for our curriculum. We will still provide the same world-class educational opportunities to students of all ages that have made us successful and established our brand locally and nationally.

Based on employment requirements in the scientific marketplace and guided by the evolving educational needs and preferences of students, two primary strategic directions will guide HCLS' curriculum development over the next five years:

1. We will adapt our curriculum so that all components align with the educational mandates dictated by the knowledge economy.
2. We will create the organizational architecture and processes to grow and evolve the curriculum.

How will we accomplish this?

To implement *Vision 2020: Education for All*, we will create committees, task forces and partnerships that bridge departmental boundaries to assist leaders in achieving both strategic goals.

Writing a new strategic plan provides the opportunity to review the internal pillars of HCLS that enable our ability to collaborate, innovate, problem solve, and network to effectively deliver our curriculum. In light of our major accomplishments to date, the pillars still stand strong, reflecting who we are.

The Seven Internal Pillars

We accomplish our vision and mission by living our internal pillars:

1. Authentic Values
2. Strategic Vocabulary
3. Everyone a Leader
4. Winning Teamwork
5. Community Partnerships
6. The Power of Us
7. Fiercely Loyal Customers

1. AUTHENTIC VALUES

As lead organization of Choose Civility, we, the members of Howard County Library System, strive to model the initiative's principles. We have established the following authentic values as the foundation upon which we build our library: respect, inclusiveness, unity, communication, continuing education, exceptional customer service, and progress.

These core values unite us in common purpose and enable us to identify our priorities. Our values are our compass, guiding relationships with each other and our customers, and informing our decisions. We strive at all times to make our personal behavior consistent with these values.

Modeling these values advances the vision and mission of HCLS, as they are our very foundation. We create the most desirable workplace – one where we engage our hearts and minds in earnest pursuit of our dreams.

We Choose:

Respect

We demonstrate respect when we value and appreciate each other, communicate honestly and directly, facilitate mutual learning, and coordinate our knowledge and skills to achieve our curriculum. Respect enables us to make effective decisions, take decisive action, and imagine new possibilities to achieve our goals.

Inclusiveness

We build constructive working relationships characterized by a high level of acceptance, collaboration, trust, and mutual respect. We create a work environment that welcomes, appreciates and supports diversity. We actively solicit input and feedback for decisions.







Unity

We are a community of educators and support staff with diverse perspectives, knowledge and talents, collaborating to achieve our curriculum. We are united by our shared commitment to HCLS' vision and mission. Through collaboration our individual perspectives become a collective vision, and our individual knowledge and proficiencies become the Seven Internal Pillars, empowering us to deliver high-quality education for all.

Assertive Communication

Direct, honest communication facilitates unity and contributes to our success. When we communicate assertively, yet diplomatically, we leverage our knowledge and talents to achieve our educational goals, professional excellence and personal fulfillment.

We Value:

Continuing Education

Continuing education for staff members is the ongoing process of acquiring the knowledge, skills and confidence essential to contribute to the success of our curriculum. Learning begins with humility and self-awareness. Despite past achievements, we know there is always something new for us to learn. The most effective education is goal oriented. A primary

goal is mastering the knowledge and proficiencies necessary to teach students of all ages.

Exceptional Customer Service

We deliver equal opportunity in education for everyone. We value students of all ages and strive to understand their educational needs, interests, and goals. Our charge is to design meaningful educational experiences that anticipate and exceed their expectations.¹⁰

Progress

We are innovative and forward-thinking, dedicated to the continuous improvement of HCLS' curriculum and to creating tomorrow's successes from today's accomplishments. Individually and collectively, we pause to learn from our accomplishments. Through active reflection and dialogue, we align our intentions with our actions to produce extraordinary results.

2. STRATEGIC VOCABULARY

The Libraries = Education vision includes understanding that our choice of language shapes people's perceptions, including how we view ourselves.

¹⁰ See Howard County Library System Customer Service Philosophy; *Service is Personal*, bit.ly/1fdUuWm

We recognize that the most effective way to convey our true value—and thus attain the perceived value we desire—is to communicate using our strategic vocabulary.

We use the strong, value-enhanced terminology set forth in *The Education Advantage Study Guide* as part of our everyday vocabulary.





3. EVERYONE A LEADER

Every HCLS staff member is a leader.

Leaders:

- Value and show respect, collegiality, pride, creativity, and confidence.
- Take ownership of their ideas and actions.
- Leave their personal agendas at the door and work for the common good.
- Make HCLS' goals their own and set exemplary standards for themselves and others.
- Lead by example and mentor others.
- Live the values, model the behaviors and achieve the outcomes of *A Vision of Shared Leadership*, the HCLS philosophy of exceptional internal customer service.
- Care about each other—concern, compassion, and empathy lead to high morale.
- Use humor to reduce tensions and strengthen relationships.
- Manage change to the benefit of HCLS.

- Seek opportunities to learn and use their knowledge to assist colleagues and customers.
- Communicate assertively, listening to understand and to exchange constructive, nonjudgmental feedback to improve teamwork and the curriculum.

4. WINNING TEAMWORK

Winning Teamwork—collaboration within and across departments and locations—enables us to continue providing customers with an innovative, cost-effective, and responsive overall curriculum that is second to none.

Once formed, winning teams are self-directed. They understand their purpose, select their goals, channel their energy, devise their strategy, and use their talents to benefit co-workers, HCLS, and the community.

Teammates are productive optimists, spurred by challenges. They are partners, supporting and caring for each other, and building trust by communicating respectfully. Teammates have fun together, take satisfaction from their work, and celebrate successes. Winning teams are proud of other teams' accomplishments.

5. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community partnerships enhance the pride we take in our work and community. We seek continuously to strengthen our partnerships, as doing so:

- Builds customer loyalty
- Gains visibility
- Capitalizes on strengths and expertise
- Leverages and secures additional funding
- Establishes new and expands existing initiatives
- Attracts new customers
- Doubles marketing impact
- Entices other partners

We aim to further develop two kinds of community partnerships: one-on-one partnerships with individuals, and umbrella partnerships with companies and organizations.

6. THE POWER OF US

Building on the Everyone a Leader pillar, we subscribe to The Power of Us, the notion that none of us is as smart as all of us. We brainstorm ideas and solicit feedback from staff members and customers to explore ideas and seek optimal solutions. We listen actively to



encourage contributions from everyone, conveying that we value their input as we set priorities and goals. New questions and paths to ideas evolve from this collaborative process of exploration. Accountability at all levels is essential to effective collaboration. Collaborators practice humility and transparency, allowing everyone to take pride in our successes.

7. FIERCELY LOYAL CUSTOMERS

We know that in addition to shaping perceptions, using strategic vocabulary effectively strengthens relationships and builds community partnerships. Familiar with customers' needs and tastes, we

aspire to create a connection with customers on intellectual and emotional levels. Aware that forming positive emotional attachments establishes the most enduring bonds of loyalty, we express ourselves in a manner that conveys respect for our customers, as well as interest in, and commitment to, their success.

We strive to transform customers into loyal customers for life by consistently exceeding their expectations, delivering excellence in every aspect of their lifelong educational journey.





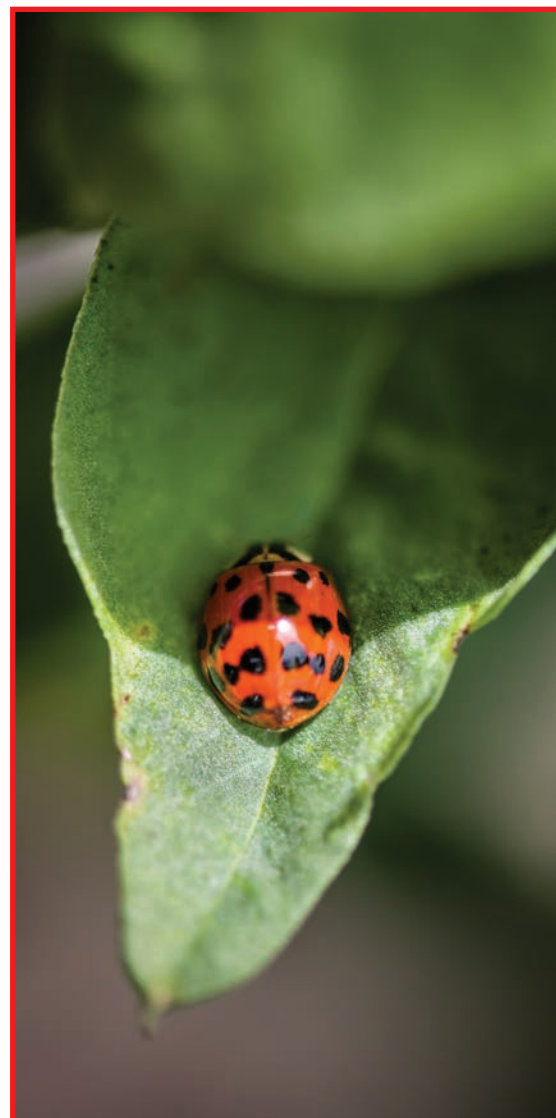
Strategic Initiatives

Over the next five years, we will implement the following strategic initiatives to reinforce and augment the Three Pillars of our curriculum.

Pillar I: Self-Directed Education

We will:

- Improve and expand customer convenience by enabling remote registration and other transactions.
- Expand the selection of languages in the HCLS catalog, as well as for individual customer accounts.
- Implement an “anywhere” online payment feature (for fines and other charges) for customer convenience.
- Explore the implementation of automatic renewal of borrowed items.
- Investigate and implement customer mobile hot spot borrowing devices for Internet access.
- Further improve our onsite Internet access experience.
- Research augmented reality, incorporating the technology where possible to improve customer experiences and generate expanded interest in our collection.
- Capitalize on the latest in technology and social media developments to increase customer awareness.
- Incorporate the latest advances in technology as we build our collection of materials in a wide variety of formats.
- Launch pre-loaded learning collection tablets that will strengthen critical thinking and problem-solving skills to ensure high quality educational success.
- Introduce gamification—products to leverage the education experience of our customers through both explicit material (facts, dates, formulas, methods) and implicit material (critical thinking, attitudes, judgement).
- Investigate online learning platforms (such as Lynda.com and Code School) to promote professional development and support HCLS STEM initiatives.
- Investigate online DIY classes to promote self-directed and self-paced learning.
- Launch an e-tool for seniors to maintain and improve intellectual agility (e.g., BrainHQ).
- Offer personalized online reader advice that will enable our Materials Management and Branch staff to offer concierge-like service and connect with customers while leveraging our in house knowledge and expertise.





Strategic Initiatives

Pillar II: Research Assistance & Instruction

Classes for Children and Teens

We will accelerate the development and delivery of classes for children and teens. The Head of Children's and Teen Curriculum will form and direct the Instructional Design and Practices Committee to:

- Review professional literature, and discuss trends in children's and teen education and best practices in instruction.
- Teach cutting-edge instructional strategies to children's and teen instructors.
- Direct the incorporation of appropriate technology into children's and teen classes with IT coordination.
- Liaison with HiTech Instructors to coordinate and adapt further STEM instruction for children and teens.
- Promote extensive dissemination of knowledge among children's instructors.
- Coordinate marketing initiatives with Public Relations.
- Explore developing classes in the subject areas of parenting skills and knowledge for parents and caregivers to close achievement gaps.

In addition, we will deliver after-school classes at all branches for this age group. The Head of Children's and Teen Curriculum will partner with branch leadership to explore developing:

- dedicated spaces for homework support with computer work stations.
- space for group activities and study.
- technology instruction.

Classes for Adults

We will deliver classes, seminars, workshops, and events for adults that address the educational objectives and goals of all segments of this population.

The Events and Seminar Manager will form and direct the Adult Education Curriculum Committee to:

- Formulate curriculum goals and objectives.
- Identify the educational goals of adult students of all ages and backgrounds.
- Formulate appropriate and innovative instructional strategies.
- Adopt the format currently used to deliver our award-winning children's classes for our adult curriculum.
- Develop and deliver a comprehensive catalog of classes each fiscal year that meets the educational objectives and goals of adult students.
- Use the expertise of Adult Instructor & Research Specialists, and other HCLS staff, as well as resources, facilities and technology in developing and delivering instruction.

- Strengthen existing and cultivate new partnerships with County agencies, organizations, other educational institutions, and experts in the community to develop and co-instruct/lead classes.
- Expand Howard County Library System Institute (HCLS' internal continuing education program for all staff members known as "HCLSi") to teach cutting-edge instructional techniques to Adult Instructors & Research Specialists.
- Coordinate marketing initiatives with Public Relations.
- Explore developing classes, seminars, and workshops from the following subjects:
 - Entrepreneurship
 - Community issues (under Choose Civility)
 - STEM education for adults
 - Lifestyle classes (e.g., health, stress management, art, music, gardening)
 - Health & environmental education





Strategic Initiatives

Pillar III: Instructive & Enlightening Experiences

We will:

- Create dedicated, appealing spaces for teens, which can also host teen events.
- Hold community forums to discuss various viewpoints on current topics.
- Increase the number of notable author and expert events on issues of community interest.
- Convene events in outdoor gathering spaces (e.g., Enchanted Garden).
- Strengthen A+ Partners in Education with Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and Howard Community College (HCC), that would include:
 - Integrating HCLS, HCPSS, and HCC websites with improved links.
 - Participating in HCPSS' professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators.
 - Expanding communication among partners.
 - Partnering with HCPSS and PTAs to promote A+ Partnership components and HCLS' curriculum at Back to School Nights and other events.
 - Capitalizing on technology to streamline assigning every student a library card through school registration.
- Working together on evolving technology education (e.g., Career Academies, HiTech).
- Exploring coordination of purchase and promotion of e-content among partners
- Expanding Howard County Book Connection with HCC
- Collaborating on curriculum development
- Supporting, mutually, each other's strategic plans
- Enhance additional established formalized partnerships, including:
 - Howard County Autism Society
 - Girl Scouts
- Augment existing informal partnerships, including:
 - Boy Scouts
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Columbia Association
 - Columbia Festival of the Arts
 - Columbia 50th Birthday Celebration, Inc.
 - Downtown Columbia Partnership
 - Economic Development Authority
 - Howard County General Hospital: A Member of Johns Hopkins Medicine
 - Howard County Tourism
 - Leadership Howard County
- Explore opportunities to develop new partnerships.
- Expand signature initiatives, including:
 - Well & Wise
 - Enchanted Garden
 - HiTech
 - Choose Civility

Anytime, Anywhere Instruction for Students of All Ages

We will expand e-learning to include web-based instruction from HCLS instructors. Under the auspices of the Chief Operating Officers of Public and Support Services, and directed by the Head of Customer Service, the new Virtual Instruction Task Force will write a plan that will become the blueprint for developing web-based instruction for students of all ages. The plan will:

- Identify target student populations.
- Formulate corresponding learning objectives and goals.
- Calculate production costs and identify the staffing complement and management structure.
- Explore the use of static and interactive instructional methods, weighing the merits of synchronous and asynchronous learning, and identifying potential content for classes.
- Create a multi-year implementation plan with milestones and measures of success.

Developing a virtual instruction plan, we will provide a variety of options for real-time research assistance.



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Strategic Initiatives

Strategies that Bridge the Pillars

A. PROMOTING CUTTING-EDGE EDUCATION: COMPREHENSIVE MARKETING PLAN

The Director of Public Relations will establish and direct the Marketing Strategy Task Force to create a multi-year plan to promote key classes, events, seminars and materials. The goal is to increase awareness and usage of HCLS' curriculum. The plan will:

- Identify ways to continuously improve publicity for all curriculum components
- Determine target populations
- Delineate budgets, strategies, actions, timelines, responsibilities, and measures of success
- Leverage HCLS brand recognition and strategic vocabulary

The plan will incorporate a strong social network component, involve partnerships, and explore innovative promotional strategies to achieve its goals.

B. SHARPENING THE CUTTING EDGE

1. Understanding the Educational Goals of Students

The Heads of Materials Management and Customer Service will partner with the Information Technology Department to collect, analyze and interpret data about the usage of HCLS materials and classes, students' expectations and perceptions of HCLS, along with their evolving needs, preferences, and learning styles. Findings will be disseminated to the Leadership Team, committees and task forces to ensure the curriculum achieves HCLS' vision and mission.

2. Cutting-Edge Instruction

HCLS instructors will master the knowledge and skills to deliver 21st century education.

HCLSi will deliver a comprehensive catalog of classes to facilitate staff's proficiency with the Seven Internal Pillars and the Three Pillars of the curriculum.

In delivering its curriculum, HCLSi will utilize the expertise of staff to design and deliver classes. In addition, partnerships with community organizations, County agencies and other educational institutions to design and co-lead classes will be explored.

C. HCLS AS THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION DESTINATION

As new HCLS branches are planned and current branches renovated, the following elements will be incorporated:

- Distinct spaces for different types of educational activities
- A variety of comfortable and welcoming spaces for creating and group learning experiences; more tables and chairs to encourage interaction among students of all ages
- More group study rooms, quiet study rooms, and meeting rooms equipped with technology to facilitate teaching and learning
- Space for exhibits
- Spacious classrooms with storage and instructional technology
- Public computers and software, printers (color), copiers and scanners
- Digital zone in each branch with workstations (computer, software and printer) for creative projects





Conclusion

HCLS takes pride in delivering equal opportunity in education for everyone, advancing the economy and quality of life—reinforcing Howard County’s brand as a world-class community.

Thanks

We extend a resounding thank you to the visionary leaders, staff members, supporters, and the entire community. Thank you for guiding Howard County Library System ever forward, ensuring the very best in education for all, today, and for generations to come.



STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURES

HCLS’ Leadership Team will monitor on a regular basis the progress of each initiative, assisting the groups tasked with their implementation.

Leaders of strategic initiatives will report their respective initiative’s progress to HCLS staff.

The input and feedback of students regarding the strategic initiatives will be solicited.

Outcomes for each initiative will be defined and measured.

Annual review and refinement of the strategic plan.

Appendix 1

Vision 2020: Education for All is the culmination of a year-long strategic planning process. All stages combined the powerful “Libraries = Education” and “Appreciative Inquiry” strategies.

Libraries = Education (1) positions libraries as educational institutions and library staff as educators, (2) categorizes all that libraries do under three “pillars” (Self-Directed Education, Research Assistance & Instruction, and Instructive & Enlightening Experiences), and (3) replaces traditional terminology with strategic language people outside the profession understand, increasing perceived value (e.g., “education,” “instruction,” and “research” replace “information” and “reference”).¹

Appreciative Inquiry achieves comprehensive participation while channeling desirable outcomes through carefully crafted language. The methodology is based on the belief that organizations are “constructions of the imagination and are, therefore, capable of change at the speed of imagination.”² The concepts of harnessing the power of language to attain the most positive outcome correspond to the Libraries = Education approach.

A winning combination, the above philosophies set the stage for ideal strategic planning. They unleash innovation, enthusiasm, and commitment, while propelling our education vision and mission forward.

Over the course of one year, the HCLS staff, Board of Trustees, and the community worked together to design HCLS’ future.



¹ Gross, Valerie J. *Transforming Our Image, Building Our Brand, The Education Advantage*. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Libraries Unlimited, 2013).

² Watkins, Jane Magruder and Mohr, Bernard J. *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2001, p. xxxii.



ONE YEAR, FOUR PHASES

Beginning July 1, 2014 and concluding July 30, 2015, the strategic planning process progressed through four phases:

I. DISCOVER – *Identifying HCLS’ Successes and Strengths*

The Discover phase is reflective. It builds the foundation for the Dream stage by assessing the best about the present and the past. Focusing on strengths, stakeholder discussions center on who we are, what we do, and why it is important, capturing the essence of exceptional public education.

II. DREAM – *Envisioning a Thriving Future*

Dream is forward thinking. Dream generates ideas for a thriving future curriculum, with already achieved successes as a starting point.

III. DESIGN – *Incorporating Discover and Dream Components into a Strategic Plan*

Design organizes and integrates all elements of the Discover and Dream phases into a cogent, written document—an iterative process involving reviews and revisions.

IV. DESTINY – *Implementing the Strategic Plan*

The implementation phase, Destiny follows the completion and dissemination of the strategic plan document created in the Design phase to all stakeholders.

The following took place during each phase:

I. Discover (July - September)

- A. HCLS Leadership Team – Synopsis and Discussion
- B. HCLS Board of Trustees – Synopsis and Discussion
- C. HCLS staff members – Synopsis and Discussion

II. Dream (October - December)

- A. HCLS Leadership Summit
- B. HCLS Board of Trustees Mini-Summit
- C. Community Leadership Breakfast
- D. HCLS Staff Outlook Forums: “From Today’s Achievements Grow Tomorrow’s Successes”
- E. Community Conversations

III. Design (January - May)

- A. Updates – HCLS Board of Trustees and staff members
- B. HCLS Staff Outlook Forums: “Polishing the Design Together”
- C. Review – Leadership Team
- D. HCLS Professional Development Day
- E. Strategic Plan – First/Revised/Final drafts

IV. Destiny (June - July)

- A. HCLS Board of Trustees Approval and Adoption
- B. Publication
- C. Dissemination

The process concluded with the publication of this document, which details how we will build on successes to date.

STRATEGIC PLANNING MAIN EVENTS

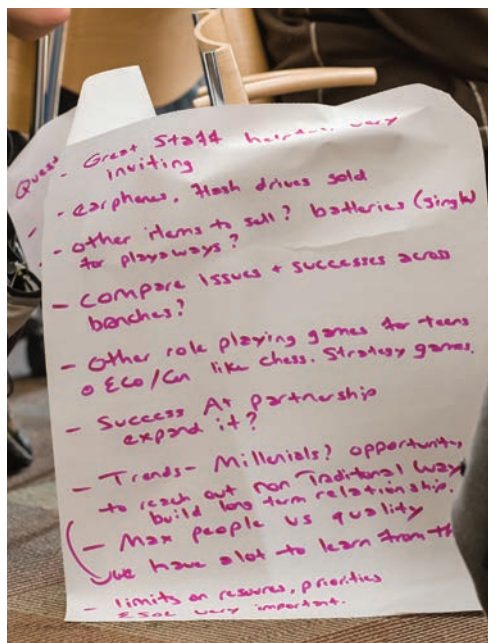
The following key events engaged all stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, providing ample opportunities for participants to contribute feedback and submit ideas.

HCLS Staff Members: Leadership Summit

First in the strategic planning event line-up, the HCLS Leadership Summit convened October 1. More than 30 HCLS staff members gathered to discuss:

- How have we advanced as an educational institution in the past five years? What are our strengths?
- What have been our most significant curriculum-related accomplishments under each of our Three Pillars? How have these achievements advanced our mission: high-quality public education for all?
- How has our curriculum advanced Howard County’s economy and quality of life in the last five years?
- While our mission is timeless, our curriculum and the manner in which we deliver it must continuously evolve. What are the trends in education locally, regionally and nationally? Consider:
 - How county residents are benefitting from HCLS’ curriculum in all stages of life
 - How technology is reshaping our curriculum for each age group
 - Teaching methodologies in the digital age
 - 21st century skills and knowledge needed to be a successful citizen
 - How occupational requirements are driving continuing education expectations
 - The factors driving the growth of online classes
 - The increased desire for convenience
 - How the rising costs of higher education are influencing decisions about college, and how this relates to our curriculum

Pillar III



This same group also discussed HCLS' Seven Internal Pillars that encapsulate our collective knowledge, skills and proficiencies that define us and give life to our curriculum (see p. 12), incorporating HCLS' internal customer service philosophy, *A Vision of Shared Leadership*.³

HCLS Staff Members: Dream & Design Outlook Forums

Staff members at all levels of the organization—including Instructor & Research Specialists, Customer Service Specialists, and Administrative Support Staff—participated in Dream Outlook Forums in November and December, and a Design Outlook Forum in March.

As part of the Dream sessions, “From Today’s Achievements Grow Tomorrow’s Successes,” teams assessed how we have been successful in delivering our curriculum under all Three Pillars:

- What was the success? What factors contributed to the success? Why is it important?
- How has it contributed to HCLS’ overall success? How has it contributed to our customers valuing HCLS? How has it advanced our educational mission?

In addition, staff members worked on developing vision and mission statements for their own departments. They began the process by discussing:

- Who are we? What's the identity of my department? How do customers see us? What are our strengths (e.g., knowledge, skills, proficiencies, and abilities) that contribute to our successes and enable us to deliver an unparalleled curriculum with extraordinary customer service?
- What do we do? What have been our most significant accomplishments?
- Why is it important? What impact have we had on customers and Howard County? Why does customer service matter and to whom?

The concluding March Outlook Forum, “Polishing the Design Together,” provided staff members with an update on the year-long process, as well as an opportunity to offer feedback to the strategic plan outline and first draft.

HCLS Board of Trustees: Mini-Summit and Community Leadership Breakfast

The HCLS Board of Trustees participated in a Strategic Planning Mini-Summit on November 19. In addition, we held a Community Leadership Breakfast on January 13 for 70 community leaders representing a variety of businesses and organizations—including HCPSS, HCC, the Columbia Association, the Horizon Foundation, Economic Development Authority, and financial institutions.

Both meetings began with an introduction to the strategic planning process followed by an overview of HCLS and a snapshot of the library system’s achievements over the past five years.

Participants then divided into nine groups, with each assigned a pillar of HCLS’ curriculum. A member of HCLS’ Leadership Team facilitated each conversation. Participants were asked to answer three questions:

1. What makes HCLS critical to education for people of all ages? Please identify the areas in which HCLS excels.
2. What are the burgeoning economic, social, and technology trends shaping education that HCLS should consider as it plans for curriculum enhancement to (select a pillar: Self-Directed education, Research Assistance & Instruction or Instructive & Enlightening Experiences)?
3. In light of these trends, how might HCLS:
 - (a) Strengthen and expand its curriculum under that particular pillar in the next five years?
 - (b) Improve its facilities to best deliver our curriculum (e.g., renovations, new branches)?

Conversations were lively as attendees exchanged insights, ideas and proposals.

Among the reasons cited for HCLS' success are the friendliness and expertise of staff, leadership's ability to anticipate community needs and willingness to pursue educational opportunities, the HCLS brand, and plentiful classes for all age groups. Identified trends affecting HCLS ranged from an aging and increasingly diverse population to everyone’s increased reliance on technology in all aspects of their lives. Many ideas were offered to strengthen HCLS’ curriculum in light of these trends.

In addition to generating ideas to strengthen our curriculum, the breakfast successfully bolstered attendees’ perceptions of HCLS as a critical component of the education system.

³ *A Vision of Shared Leadership: HCLS Internal Customer Service Philosophy*, May 2014.



At the conclusion of the breakfast, many participants expressed their appreciation of being included in the strategic planning process, including the following comments:

- Awesome strategic planning meeting for the best library system on the planet.
- Tons of new ideas. Glad I could participate.
- It was so inspiring to be a part of the future planning of this amazing institution!!!
- Great meeting, well organized and well attended.
- What a way to start a day...great minds sharing plans of our already fabulous Library system in the country!!
- Lots of great ideas. Honored to be asked to share mine.

CONCLUSION

Vision 2020: Education for All represents the collective wisdom of the participants in the planning process. The inclusive and participatory planning process generated the same energy, creativity and hope that propelled the previous two planning processes. Vision 2020 is the collective autobiography of HCLS.

Underscoring that quality education for everyone is our business and our passion, this strategic plan sets forth our road map for the next five years.



Appendix 2

Compiled over the course of one year, *Vision 2020: Education for All* - Howard County Library System's Strategic Plan 2015-2020 continues the best of our previous strategic plan, *Public Education for All*, while adding clarity to our distinctive purpose. We extend our gratitude to everyone who contributed to this revised plan. Special thanks to the following key participants:

HOWARD COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Bruce I. Rothschild, Chair
Ankur P. Dalal, Vice Chair
Thomas K. Munns, Treasurer
Richard M. Alexander
Stacie A. Hunt
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Louise B. Riemer
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HOWARD COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM STRATEGIC PLAN LEADERSHIP

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Angela L. Brade, Chief Operating Officer
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Diane Li, Savage Branch Manager
Phil Lord, Elkridge Branch Manager
Megan Maguigan, Adult Curriculum Specialist
Tanya Malveaux, Glenwood Branch Manager
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Shirley O'Neill, Materials Specialist
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Adrienne Zeroth, Children's Instructor & Research Specialist

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