A 21st Century Library System for A 21st Century Public Education
Those new to our culturally diverse community of 282,000 people quickly learn why 90 percent of county residents have—and use—their Howard County Library System (HCLS) library cards. They also soon understand why, of the 21,000 public and academic libraries in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, Library Journal named HCLS Library of the Year, the most prestigious award a library system can attain!

LIBRARY OF THE YEAR

Library Journal (LJ) selected HCLS for this distinguished recognition for our powerful vision that positions libraries as educational institutions and library staff as educators.

The Library of the Year award was presented at a gala reception held at the American Library Association Conference on June 30, 2013.

In its June 15 issue, LJ’s feature article describes HCLS as “a new model for libraries everywhere” and “a well-supported, sustainable 21st-century library system from which others can and do take inspiration,” concluding that as “a pillar of community education,” HCLS has created: “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.”
WHAT SETS HCLS APART?

We have earned the position as best library system in North America for who we are, what we do, and how we do it—most notably, our:

- Extraordinary team of innovative educators and support staff.
- Distinctive sense of purpose: high-quality public education for all.
- Award-winning curriculum.
- Hallmark of providing exceptional customer service.
- Strategic vocabulary that accurately conveys our true value.
- Strong support from the HCLS Board of Trustees, Howard County Government, State Delegation, Friends of Howard County Library, philanthropic partners, devoted volunteers, and our dynamic community.

BACKGROUND

An allied agency similar to the school system and community college, HCLS delivers high-quality public education for everyone. HCLS' curriculum comprises three pillars: Self-Directed Education, Research Assistance & Instruction, and Instructive & Enlightening Experiences.

Mission

We deliver high-quality public education for all ages.

Vision

A major component of Howard County’s strong education system, we advance the economy, enhancing quality of life.

Branches

Six dynamic branches comprise our extraordinary system: Central, East Columbia, Elkridge, Glenwood, Miller, and Savage.

Board of Trustees

HCLS is governed by a seven-member, policy-making Board of Trustees. The HCLS Board recommends Trustee nominees to the County Executive, who appoints the Trustees with County Council approval.

Team HCLS

Nearly 300 talented educators and support staff members make up Team HCLS. Of this total, 65 percent are full-time and 35 percent work part-time. This team of experts supplies a first-rate collection of materials in a wide variety of formats; provides research assistance; teaches classes, seminars and workshops for our large and diverse student body; and orchestrates outstanding signature events throughout the year.
Notable Statistics
Excellence in education for everyone is more valued than ever, as evidenced by the following analysis. In the past decade, items borrowed doubled (7.4 million in FY 13), as did research assistance interactions with HCLS instructors (2 million). Categories that tripled include physical visits (3.2 million), virtual visits (5 million), as well as class and event attendance (more than a quarter of a million). All this in a county of 282,000 residents—and statistics continue to soar.

WHO WE ARE
HCLS has led the development of a powerful vision for libraries that:
• positions library staff as educators,
• repositions libraries as educational institutions, and
• establishes a distinctive sense of purpose.

What is this distinctive sense of purpose? We are education—what the world values most.

The power of this approach stems from placing all that library professionals do under three, easy-to-remember “education pillars,” and using bold, value-enhanced terminology that commands value—self-explanatory language that people outside of the field can immediately understand.

WHAT WE DO
We deliver equal opportunity in education through a curriculum that comprises Three Pillars:
I. Self-Directed Education
II. Research Assistance & Instruction
III. Instructive & Enlightening Experiences.

While we take pride in excelling under Pillar I, the curriculum we have developed under Pillars II and III remains unsurpassed in the field.
Self-Directed Education

Self-Directed Education includes our collection of one million items, available in print and electronic formats. Our special collections, such as American Sign Language, English as a Second Language, and World Languages fall under this pillar, as do our Health Education Center and Foundation Center. Specialized online research tools include Access Science, HeritageQuest, Wall Street Journal, Mango, and online homework assistance. The Historical Center at our new Miller Branch improves educational opportunities for those desiring to delve into genealogy.

Research Assistance & Instruction

Research Assistance & Instruction for individuals and groups includes:
- Personalized research assistance in-person at our six branches, as well as by telephone and online, and
- Classes taught by HCLS Instructors, such as Mini Milestones and Physics Phun for toddlers & preschoolers; Discovering Great Artists for K-5; Happy Un-Birthday, Lewis Carroll and Math Circle for tweens and teens; and Holistic Vegetable Gardening for adults.

“Kindergarten Here We Come!” and “Movin’ Up to Middle School” are two examples of HCLS classes developed in partnership with Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) that are receiving rave reviews (see A+ Partnership below).
Attendance at Kindergarten Here We Come! in August 2012 totaled 1,377, a 25 percent increase over the previous year’s numbers. We held 25 classes systemwide. HCPSS promotes these classes at orientations. Parents and children alike expressed their appreciation and delight at meeting new friends, learning about what to expect in kindergarten, and boarding a real school bus. Comments included:

- “This was great...so glad we came!”
- “Loved this class. It provided useful information and helped ease my child’s anxiety. This should be a mandatory class!”
- “Great kindergarten prep. The school bus orientation was especially beneficial.”

Movin’ Up to Middle School was offered at each branch in August to rising sixth grade students. Alongside new friends and classmates, students took part in discussions about time management, study strategies, friendship issues, and maximizing academic success, as well as taking part in a book-bag relay and combination-lock time trial. At the Elkridge Branch, three students from high school assisted their peers when they spoke about their middle school experiences. At the Glenwood Branch, a student shared that she had been living in Germany, and she found Movin’ Up to Middle School to be very helpful in her return to American schools.

Teen Time, an after-school academic assistance initiative, focuses middle school students on scholastic achievement, and teaches them life skills, responsibility, and respect. HCLS instructors develop a curriculum that delivers a daily structured setting featuring homework assistance, guest speakers, and activities.

Enchanted Garden, an innovative outdoor teaching venue at the HCLS Miller Branch 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 (see example below: “Sunflowers and Professor Fibonacci,” where 7-9 yr. olds discovered mathematical patterns in nature) and general enjoyment, the garden entices students of all ages during the growing season. Our Enchanted Garden partners include the Center for Watershed Protection, Howard County Extension Advisory Council, Howard County General Hospital, HCPSS, HCC, Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks, University of Maryland Extension Howard County Master Gardeners, and The Horizon Foundation.
HiTech, HCLS’ STEM education initiative lab for teens, delivers cutting-edge science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education via project-based classes that include computer programming, 3D animation, nanotechnology, music/video, e-books, game apps, cybersecurity, and robotics.

Projects have included a weather balloon, robots, an e-book on Choose Civility, and a mobile game, *Escape from Detention!* that has been downloaded 6,000 times across the globe—from 30 countries on every continent (except Antarctica). *Escape* centers on a student who was mistakenly sent to detention because of a classmate’s antics. The game is available for iPhones, iPads, and Android systems.

HiTech instructors teach students ages 11-18 the critical skill sets needed for 21st century careers. Attendance since the popular initiative’s launch in 2012 has reached nearly 3,000. HiTech’s curriculum comprises four modules: Interact, Improvise, Invent, and Instruct (the Academy). Projects are showcased at the annual HiTech Expo.

Leveraging the best technology, teaching tools, and experts to deliver a top-quality STEM education experience, HiTech incorporates an innovative methodology that blends instruction with experiential learning and peer to peer communications. Envisioned as a launching point for the STEM career pipeline, HiTech focuses on producing the next generation of scientists, mathematicians, and engineers needed in the community and nationwide.

The initiative capitalizes on Howard County’s advantage as home to a number of major STEM-oriented employers and higher education institutions, with many providing leadership and guidance as members of the HiTech Board of Advisors, including Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, Mindgrub Technologies, Northrop Grumman, University of Maryland School of Engineering, HCPSS, Howard Community College (HCC), and UMBC Joint Center for Earth Systems Technology.

The Urban Libraries Council (ULC), a membership association of leading public library systems in the U.S. and Canada, named HCLS a “2013 Top Innovator” for HiTech. In announcing the award, ULC President and CEO Susan Benton said, “On behalf of the ULC community throughout North America, I congratulate Howard County Library System for being selected as a 2013 Top Innovator. HCLS staff are commended for setting the pace for growth, change and innovation in the field.”

**HCLS Project Literacy**, our adult basic education initiative, has taught English to 6,500 adults from 33 countries, including speaking, reading, writing, and basic math through one-on-one tutoring sessions and group instruction. Nearly 150 students have received their high school diplomas through HCLS Project Literacy, and 122 have become U.S. citizens. The annual Graduation & Awards Ceremony celebrates the accomplishments of each year’s class.
Pillar III

INSTRUCTIVE & ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCES

Our curriculum’s third pillar, Instructive & Enlightening Experiences, includes cultural and community center concepts, signature events, and partnerships—such as A+ Partners in Education, Choose Civility, and Well & Wise. HCLS partners at every opportunity to leverage expertise and maximize funding.

A+ Partners in Education

A comprehensive partnership between and among HCLS, HCPSS and HCC, A+ Partners in Education (A+) improves student academic success.

The first of its kind in the country, the partnership enabled HCLS to be nominated for (and win!) the Howard County Chamber of Commerce Educator of the Year Award just one year after the partnership’s inception. A+ has become an established element of Howard County’s culture. Since its launch in 2002, A+ has disseminated more than 50,000 student and educator library cards, and facilitated 652,000 interactions between HCLS Instructors and HCPSS and HCC students, parents, and faculty. A+ has been replicated in numerous jurisdictions across the country. For some perspective on these statistics, HCPSS consists of 73 schools and 50,000 students.

The A+ vision expands the educational opportunities and enhances the academic achievement of each student. Working collaboratively, we leverage our expertise and funding to accomplish results we could not otherwise readily achieve. We take the library into the schools, and bring the schools—students, faculty, and staff—into the library.

The A+ mission includes ensuring every student has and uses a library card to borrow materials and access specialized online research tools. To increase scholarship, we assist with research assignments, develop A+ Curriculum, and organize A+ signature events and academic competitions.

In addition to securing strong support from top leadership, the following key components contribute to the partnership’s success.

- A strong communication network
- Library cards through school registration
- A+ Assignment Alerts
- Compulsory kindergarten field trips to the library
- A+ Classes
- A+ signature events and academic competitions

Working together, we provide our students the best possible chance of overall academic success.
Choose Civility
Launched in 2006, Choose Civility invites everyone who lives and works in Howard County to choose respect, empathy, and consideration at every opportunity when interacting with others, at work, and in their personal lives. The community-wide initiative has flourished far beyond HCLS’ expectations. Under the leadership of HCLS, Choose Civility is now 125 Alliance Partners strong. HCLS organizes the annual Choose Civility Week, which includes a two-part symposium. More than 65,000 car magnets have been distributed, with sightings in California, Maine, North Dakota, Florida, and British Columbia.

As lead organization, HCLS aspires to further strengthen the unique and timely Choose Civility initiative that serves as a model for the region and beyond. The growing movement has inspired other communities to begin Choose Civility Chapters, including Freeborn County, Minnesota; Washington County, Maryland; Portland, Maine; Southern Maryland; and Miami, Florida. In his State of the City Address on March 20, 2013, Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado said, “I am pleased to announce today that Miami is joining a growing number of communities across the country in a national movement to enhance respect, empathy, consideration and tolerance among all people. Choose Civility, an initiative led by Howard County Library System in Maryland, is sparking positive dialogues and robust conversations in communities from Maryland and Minnesota to California and Maine—and now Florida!”

Choose Civility Symposium.
the culmination of Choose Civility Week each October, includes a keynote and/or panel discussion, as well as workshops on timely topics. More than 500 people attended our two-part Choose Civility Symposium, “Would It Kill You to be More Civil?”, which began with a half-day Youth Empowerment Summit in partnership with HCPSS.

Held at the HCLS Miller Branch, the summit brought together 200 students representing 19 middle schools. The symposium’s evening session, which centered on the topic of civility in public discourse, drew a crowd of 300 people. NPR’s Korva Coleman, the evening’s moderator, began with a fireside chat with bestselling author Henry Alford, then continued with a distinguished panel, including Mr. Alford, David Frum of Newsweek, and Andrew Green of The Baltimore Sun.

Symposium attendance: 500 (Youth Empowerment Summit, 200; evening event, 300)
Well & Wise
A final key partnership example, Well & Wise is a health education partnership led by HCLS and Howard County General Hospital: A Member of Johns Hopkins Medicine. Well & Wise enhances, advances, and elevates health education in Howard County, improving the health of the entire community. Well & Wise components include a blog, classes and events, health screenings, health initiatives, speakers on health-related topics, and cross promotion and distribution of materials.

**SIGNATURE EVENTS**

Pillar III also includes signature events. Samples of events and initiatives HCLS holds annually include:

**Battle of the Books** motivates 900 fifth grade students (180 teams) to read 16 books covering a range of reading levels and interests, then answer 50 questions about the books at the event. In addition to great fun, this event improves reading and writing, and builds vocabularies. Convened in four venues simultaneously, teams receive awards in the following categories: Best Score, Best Team Name, Best Costume, Best Team Spirit, and Best Civility. (4,000 attendees)

**HCLS Spelling Bee** invites winners from public and private schools as well as homeschool associations to compete in a countywide spelling bee. Organized under the rules of the Scripps National Spelling Bee, this year’s HCLS Spelling Bee champion, Mitsuki Ota, advanced to the National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. (1,000 attendees)

**HCLS BumbleBee**, a companion to the HCLS Spelling Bee, inspires students in grades one through three to improve their spelling and vocabularies. The 50 winners of school classroom bees receive trophies and certificates, and the opportunity to shake hands with key community leaders and elected officials. BumbleBee winners are also recognized at the HCLS Spelling Bee. (200 attendees)

**HCLS Rube Goldberg Challenge**, an academic competition named after the Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist and inventor, engages the minds of students, challenging them to transform everyday materials into wacky, innovative machines that accomplish a simple task in a convoluted fashion. Over 400 fourth and fifth grade students (69 teams) built machines that squeezed juice from an orange, then produced videos of their operations. (600 attendees)

**Dogs Educating & Assisting Readers (DEAR)** - Fifty third grade students enroll in DEAR each year to improve their reading skills and gain self-confidence. The students read to therapy dogs, which provide a loving, non-judgmental audience. HCLS instructors select books for students to read to the dogs. The nine-week Saturday morning sessions at HCLS branches culminate with DEAR Graduation. (200 attendees)

**Summer Reading Clubs** increase student reading achievement over the summer, creating an educational bridge between the end of the school year and the beginning of the next. Sustained reading over the summer builds vocabularies and strengthens reading comprehension. Popular demand from those outside K-12 led us to add program segments for infants through preschool students, and for adults. (4,000 kickoff attendees; 30,000 reading club participants)
Money Matters Fair focuses on financial education, delivering classes and financial information for students of all ages. Hosted in partnership with Honorary Chair and County Councilmember Calvin Ball, as well as HCC, HCPSS, and makingCHANGE, Money Matters takes place at HCLS’ East Columbia Branch. The fair features interactive activities for children and teens, seminars for adults, and exhibits. (850 attendees)

Children’s Discovery Fair celebrates children ages 3-5. The fair features free hands-on activities, including interactive games, crafts, and stories that teach the foundations of reading and other critical components of childhood education. (800 attendees)

Culture Cafés – In partnership with the Columbia Association and HCPSS, we host Culture Cafés at our Miller Branch that attract crowds of 2,000 and feature exhibitors, food, and performers representing a variety of countries. In addition to the exhibitors and performers, HCPSS instructors teach bilingual classes for young children in the languages represented (e.g., Japanese and Chinese). In November, the following countries were represented: China, Japan, Korean, The Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Customers were treated to ten performances throughout the day, including ballet, musicians, martial arts demonstrations, and folk and contemporary dances.

Evening in the Stacks, HCLS’ annual fundraiser (and “the” social winter happening!), features a different theme each year, and includes author presentations, live music, a silent auction, cocktails, and fabulous food. The 2013 theme of Sparkle & Spurs attracted 700 guests.

Notable Author Events, a key curriculum component, lure standing-room-only audiences. Recent authors include Jodi Picoult, Alexander McCall Smith, Laurie King, Lisa See, Rebecca Skloot, Manil Suri, Diana Gabaldon, Mary Doria Russell, Edward P. Jones, Isabel Wilkerson, and Dr. Neal Barnard. (300-600 attendees)
HOW WE DO IT

At HCLS, we recognize that, above all, our extraordinary team of educators and support staff receives the credit for the stellar curriculum and customer service we deliver. Second to none, this talented team contributed to two publications: *Howard County Library System Customer Service Philosophy: Service is Personal* and *Public Education for All: Howard County Library’s Strategic Plan for 2010-2015*.

Customer Service Philosophy

Essential to achieving our vision is our Customer Service Philosophy. This philosophy is the lens through which we perceive our colleagues and customers, the map that orients our actions, and the system of meaning that provides us with purpose and goals. It gives us an integrated, consistent basis for interpreting policies and procedures, making judgments and decisions, and providing exceptional service, an HCLS hallmark.

A customer service philosophy enables us continually to assess and adjust our world-class curriculum, bolstering all Three Pillars in the most critical subject areas of interest to our customers.

Created by a team of Customer Service and Instruction & Research specialists, this document incorporates input from supervisors and front line staff, rookies and veterans. Its content outlines how a customer service philosophy can assist us in achieving the vision of HCLS.

When we put on our name badges and step behind a Customer Service or Research Desk, we personify our Customer Service Philosophy. We prize its values, operate from its assumptions, and model its behaviors. We achieve our values through incomparable customer service.

Strategic Plan

Compiled over the course of one year, Public Education for All: Howard County Library System’s Strategic Plan 2010-2015 includes contributions from all HCLS team members. Charting our course, the document adds clarity to our distinctive sense of purpose.

What our customers have to say

At HCLS, we are serious about:

- delivering exceptional education,
- advancing the economy, and
- improving quality of life for everyone who lives and works here.

This is our mission. It’s our business, and our passion. But don’t just take our word for it! Here is a sampling of feedback we received recently from our customers.

- “All of the staff of the Howard County Library System should be applauded for giving our community a resource that other counties envy.”
- “Yet another example of the incredibly fine customer service offered by Howard County Library System.”
- “Everything HCLS does is first class.”
- “Yo Howard County Library is nice!!!!”
- “Best library system in the galaxy!”

As a final example, an impressive crowd of 6,000 fans attended 2013 *Library of the Year: Here’s to You!* a community-wide event on July 10, 2013 complete with foam fingers and complimentary ice cream treats held to thank the community and celebrate the reason HCLS was named North America’s best library system: Excellence in education for all ages.
Here's To You Community Celebration
## FY2013 Statistics

### Financial
- Operating budget: $19,153,184

#### Revenue
- Howard County: 88%
- MD Department of Education: 4%
- HCLS/Grants: 8%

#### Expenditures
- Staffing: 78%
- Instruction, Customer Service, Other: 13%
- Curriculum: 13%
- Equipment: 1%
- Other: 8%

### Self-Directed Education
- Collection items: 1,086,603
  - Adult: 63%
  - Children: 37%
- Fiction: 41%
- Non-fiction: 31%
- E-resources: 7%
- Non-print: 21%
- Items borrowed: 7,439,154

### Research Assistance
- Interactions: 1,963,755

### Classes & Events
- Attendance (all): 251,450
  - Children’s classes: 192,480
  - Teen classes: 38,591
  - Adult classes: 20,379

### A+ Partners in Education
- A+ Interactions between HCLS instructors and HCPSS and HCC students, faculty, or parents: 104,368
- A+ Library Cards generated: 2,470
  (46,881 since 2002)
- A+ Educator Cards generated: 165
  (3,879 since 2005)
- Materials borrowed with A+ Educator Cards: 55,776

### Other
- Volunteer hours: 22,453
- Card holders: 268,899
- Virtual visits: 5,059,387
- Physical visits: 3,191,835

### FY13 Expenditures

![Pie chart showing expenditure distribution]

- Instruction: 49%
- Customer Service: 19%
- Curriculum: 16%
HCLS DONORS

Many Thanks!
We express our profound gratitude to our generous sponsors, who enable our signature initiatives.

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Christmas present for Chris, Scott, Megan and Sam Burleigh.
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Kings Dominion
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Suki Lee
Lee-lynns Dining Room-Lounge
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