



FY2022 BUDGET INPUT REPORT

# BUDGET SURVEY ANALYSIS

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*SCHOOL YEAR 2021-2022*

**Prepared by**

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# INTRODUCTION

## METHODOLOGY

This document presents findings from an analysis of closed-ended and open-ended responses of the Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) Budget Survey (2021-2022).

The Office of Research and Program Evaluation (North Star) administered the survey to all HCPS stakeholders (parents, students, staff, etc.) in fall 2020 and the survey closed after two (2) weeks on Friday, November 20, 2020, at 11:59 p.m. We received a total of **2,124** responses including **814** open-ended responses after data cleaning. Findings should be interpreted as reflecting the sample, which may not necessarily align with the HCPS population as a whole. The table below provides the count of all survey respondents by stakeholder groups.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (N=2,124) – ALL RESPONSES		
Group	Frequency	Percent
Parent/guardian of a current HCPS student	1,627	76.6%
Current HCPS Student	55	2.6%
HCPS teacher	281	13.2%
HCPS administrator	13	0.6%
Other HCPS staff member	132	6.2%
Community member	16	0.8%

Of the **814** open-ended responses, **147** included comments pertaining solely to either reopening schools or improving virtual learning in the context of current school closures. To keep the findings as salient as possible for HCPS’ future decision-making, we excluded these comments from this analysis, focusing on the content contained in the remaining **667** open-ended responses distributed across stakeholder groups as indicated in the following table.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS (N=667) - OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES		
Group	Frequency	Percent
Parent/guardian of a current HCPS student	475	71.2%
HCPS teacher	92	13.8%
HCPS staff member	63	9.5%
Current HCPS student	20	3%
Community member	10	1.5%
HCPS administrator	7	1%

We manually coded the open-ended responses to identify the topics most frequently discussed by respondents. In addition to analyzing aggregate responses, we explored differences across stakeholder groups, where applicable.

For full aggregated and segmented results, please consult the accompanying data supplement provided on pages 7-12.



## KEY OBJECTIVE

Through an analysis of closed-ended and open-ended responses, we addressed the following research question:

- What other priorities or programs should HCPS include in its future operating budget to achieve the goal of ensuring all HCPS students graduate fully prepared for college or career?

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, we recommend that HCPS:

-  Consider stakeholders' survey feedback during budget discussions, recognizing, though, that the feedback may not be representative of the perceptions of all HCPS stakeholders. As noted in the methodology, the findings of this closed-ended and open-ended analysis should be interpreted as reflecting the sample, but the sample may not represent HCPS' stakeholders as a whole.
-  Prioritize staff compensation and supports, as possible, while budgeting for the next fiscal year. 95.2 % of all respondents indicated that it was very important or extremely important to hire effective staff (Teachers, Administrators, Paraeducators, etc.) and 94.4% of all respondents want HCPS to invest in retaining effective teachers and staff (salary and benefit packages). Additionally, more than 15 percent of open-ended responses reference how HCPS should improve staff/teacher quality by offering competitive salaries and benefits, providing additional training and supports, and evaluating performance.

## KEY FINDINGS

To ensure all students graduate fully prepared for college or career, respondents suggest that HCPS prioritize improving staff/teacher quality.

Respondents also advise HCPS to adjust curriculum and instruction, expand opportunities for students to receive life skills training and participate in career and vocational programs, and strengthen supports for special student populations. More than 15 percent of open-ended responses referenced how HCPS should improve staff/teacher quality by offering competitive salaries and benefits, providing additional training and supports, and evaluating performance. Ten percent or more of open-ended responses referenced the need for efforts in each of the following areas: changing the curriculum, **expanding course offerings** (e.g., **AP/IB courses, foreign language courses**), or modifying instruction (11 percent); **adding life skills training/classes or related opportunities** (10 percent); adding **more career and vocational programs, schools, and courses**.

The most frequently identified priorities differed among stakeholder groups (n>30):

- Parents suggest HCPS prioritize **staff/teacher quality** (14 percent) and **curricular changes** (14 percent);
- Teachers suggest HCPS prioritize **staff/teacher quality** (25 percent); and
- Staff suggest HCPS prioritize **mental health** (41 percent).

## CONCLUSION

**What other priorities or programs should HCPS include in its future operating budget to achieve the goal of ensuring all HCPS students graduate fully prepared for college or career?**

As indicated by the number and range of topics identified in the analysis, respondents recommend HCPS pursue changes in multiple areas contributing to the college or career preparedness of HCPS students. In particular, respondents see the value added by effective teachers and staff—noting how the quality of instruction, supports, and services provided to students strengthens not only their academic, but also their personal, development.

Further, respondents suggest reevaluating and changing the breadth and depth of courses and other programming provided to students, emphasizing that students would benefit from more rigorous academic offerings, such as with respect to foreign language acquisition. Respondents also believe students need more opportunities to develop practical life skills, such as financial literacy, as well as opportunities to learn about postsecondary educational or career options that interest them.

Lastly, respondents reiterate HCPS' mission to ensure all students' college or career preparedness, meaning that the district should implement additional measures to meet the needs of students with disabilities, students from economically-disadvantaged households, and English language learners, while seeking additional ways to challenge gifted and talented students.

## CLOSED-ENDED RESULTS

### 5. Hiring effective staff (teachers, administrators, paraeducators, etc.)

Response	Frequency	Percent	0	20	40	60	80	100
Not At All Important	11	0.5%						
Slightly Important	14	0.7%						
Moderately Important	75	3.5%						
Very Important	447	21.0%						
Extremely Important	1577	74.2%						

### 6. Investing in retaining effective teachers and staff (salary and benefit packages)

Response	Frequency	Percent	0	20	40	60	80	100
Not At All Important	19	0.9%						
Slightly Important	17	0.8%						
Moderately Important	84	4.0%						
Very Important	424	20.0%						
Extremely Important	1580	74.4%						

### 7. Maintenance and upkeep of vendor contract obligations (technology, transportation, building maintenance, etc.)

Response	Frequency	Percent	0	20	40	60	80	100
Not At All Important	25	1.2%						
Slightly Important	84	4.0%						
Moderately Important	480	22.6%						
Very Important	809	38.1%						
Extremely Important	726	34.2%						

### 8. Providing students with access to quality learning materials, including technology

Response	Frequency	Percent	0	20	40	60	80	100
Not At All Important	11	0.5%						
Slightly Important	36	1.7%						
Moderately Important	127	6.0%						
Very Important	594	28.0%						
Extremely Important	1356	63.8%						

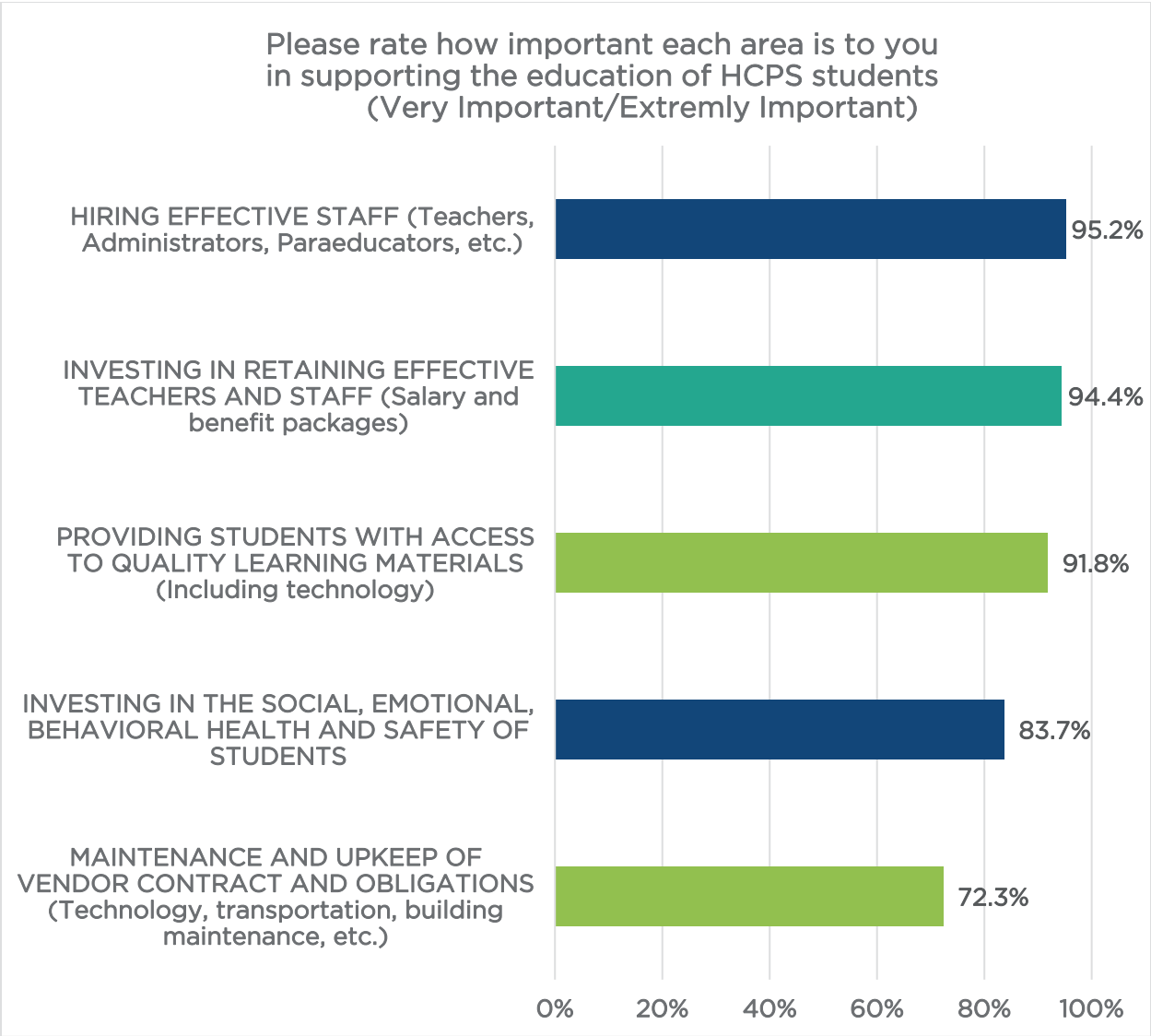
### 9. Investing in the social, emotional, behavioral health and safety of students

Response	Frequency	Percent	0	20	40	60	80	100
Not At All Important	23	1.1%						
Slightly Important	84	4.0%						
Moderately Important	239	11.3%						
Very Important	543	25.6%						
Extremely Important	1235	58.1%						

# CLOSED-ENDED RESULTS (OVERALL)

The table below provides a summary of all closed-ended results with **95.2 %** of all respondents indicating that it was very important or extremely important to **hire effective staff** and **94.4%** of all respondents indicating that HCPS should invest in **retaining effective teachers and staff**.

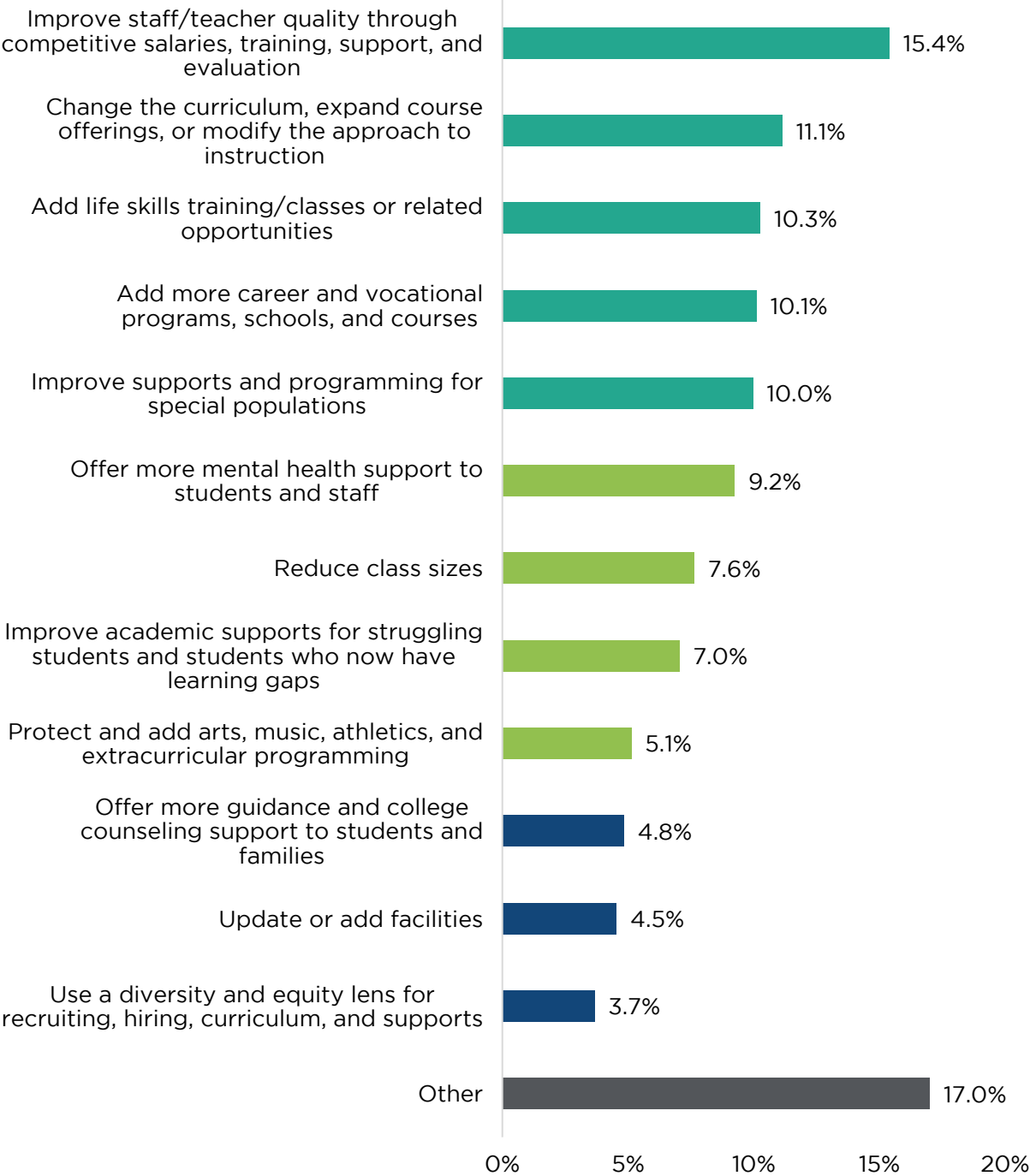
**91.8%** of respondents also indicated the high importance of **providing students with access to quality learning materials** (including technology). A high percentage of respondents, almost **84%**, stated that it was very important or extremely important for HCPS to **invest in the social, emotional, behavioral health and safety of students**. Please refer to the table below for additional information.





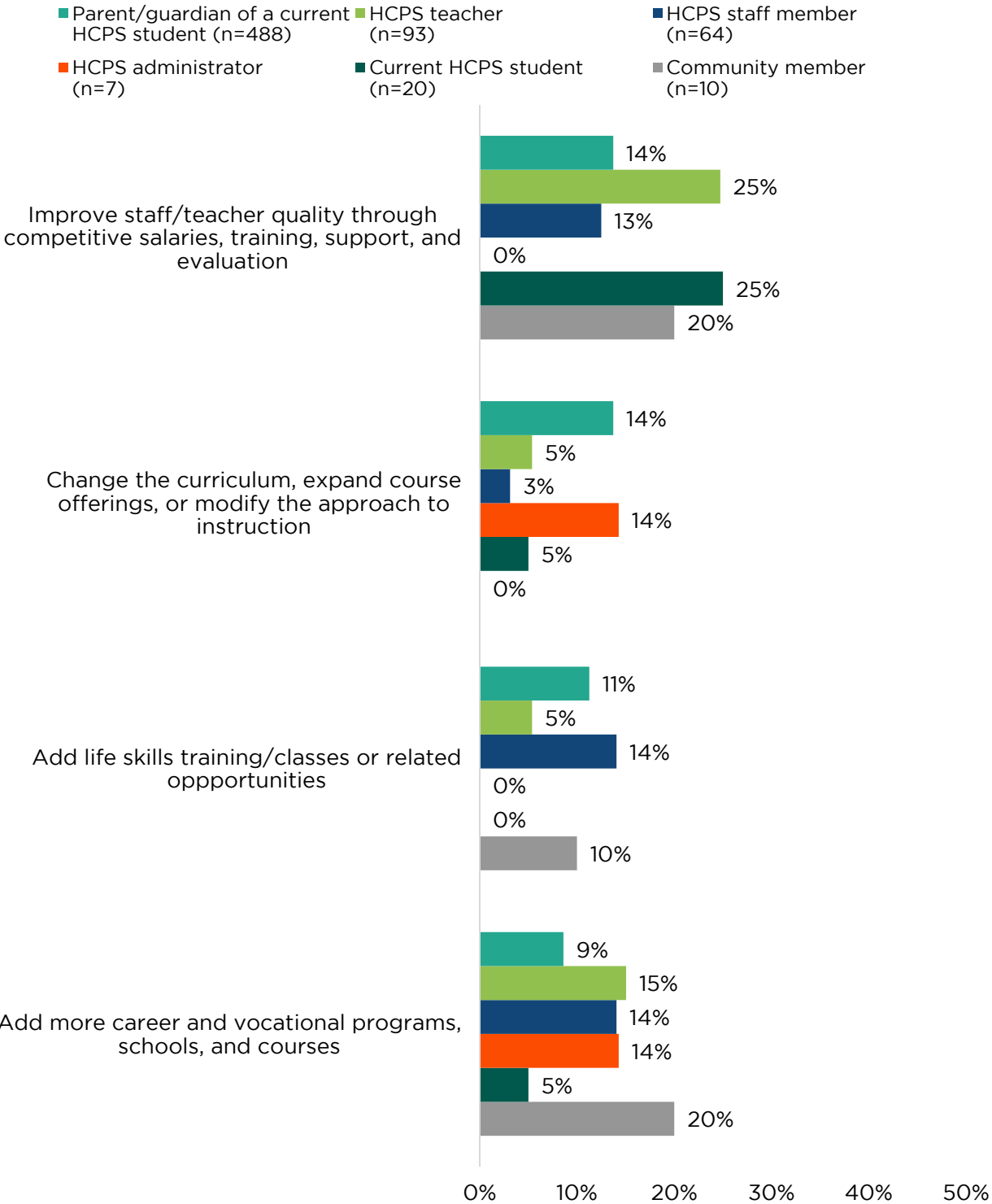
# OPEN-ENDED RESULTS

What other priorities or programs should HCPS include in its future operating budget to achieve the goal of ensuring all HCPS students graduate fully prepared for college or career? Response Topics



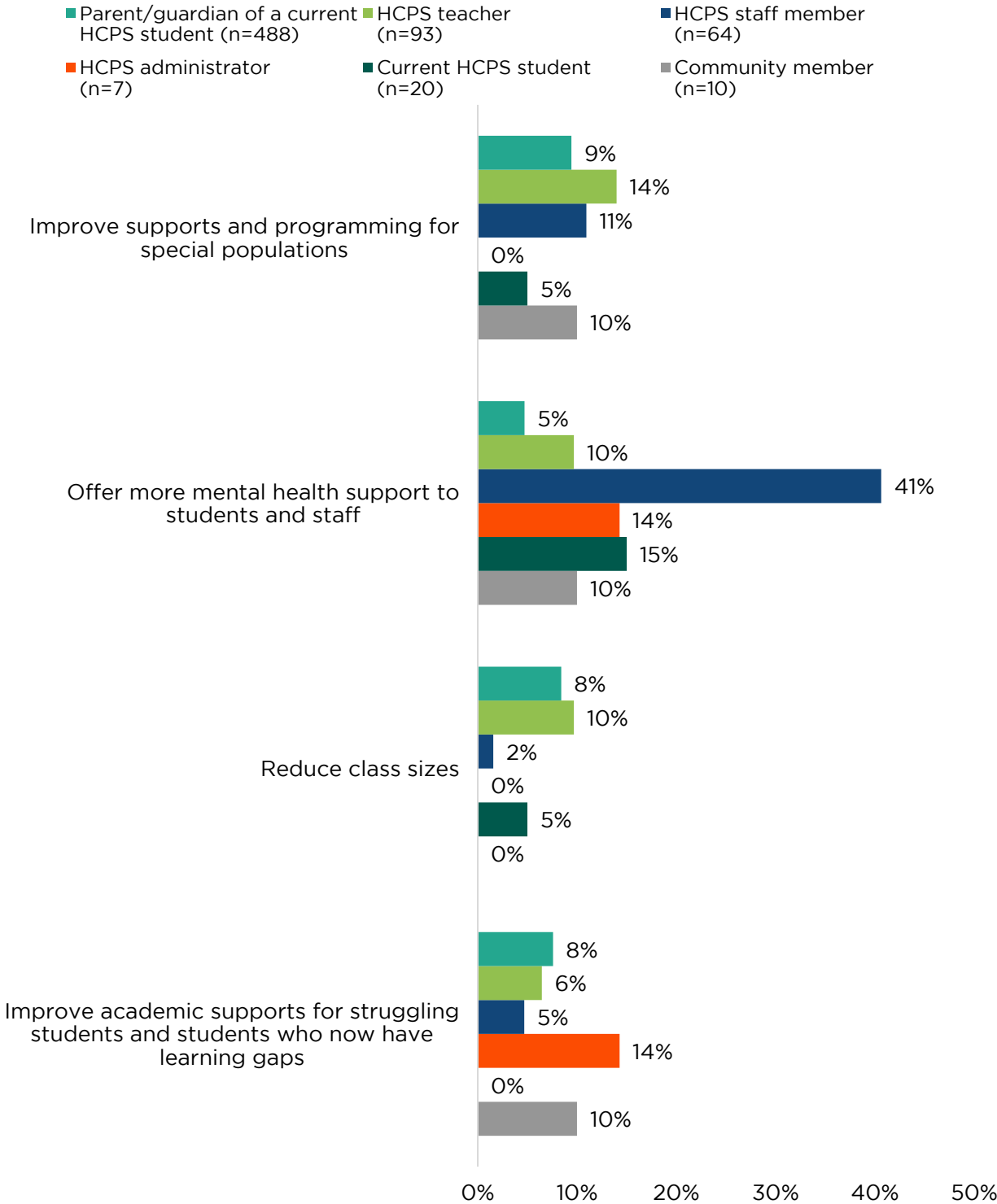
Note: This figure indicates the percentage of the 682 coded responses that mention a particular topic. Percentages sum to greater than 100% as some coded responses referenced more than one topic.

# What other priorities or programs should HCPS include in its future operating budget to achieve the goal of ensuring all HCPS students graduate fully prepared for college or career? Response Topics



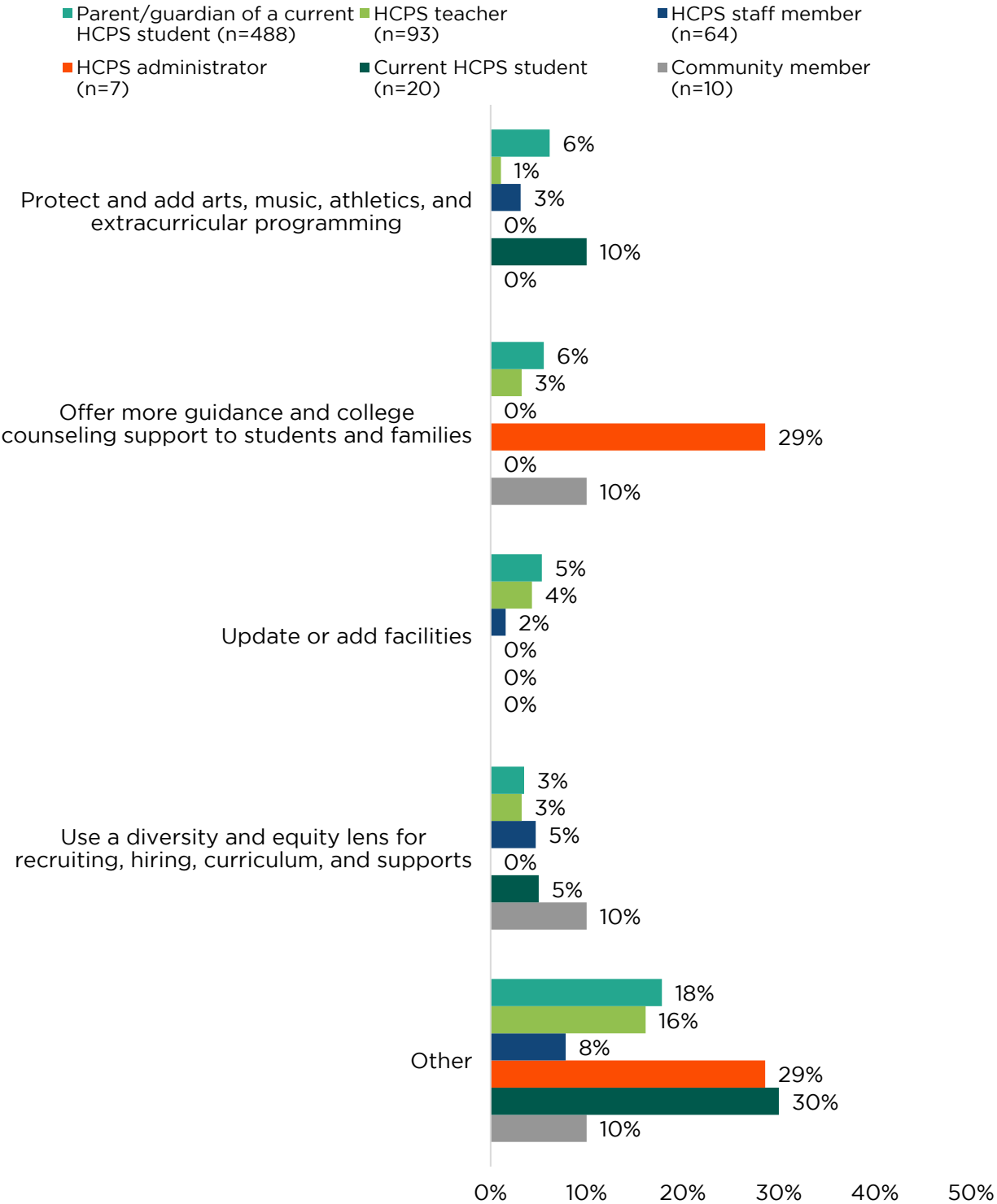
Note: This figure indicates the percentage of each stakeholder group's coded responses that mention a particular topic. Percentages sum to greater than 100% as some coded responses referenced more than one topic.

# What other priorities or programs should HCPS include in its future operating budget to achieve the goal of ensuring all HCPS students graduate fully prepared for college or career? Response Topics



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# What other priorities or programs should HCPS include in its future operating budget to achieve the goal of ensuring all HCPS students graduate fully prepared for college or career? Response Topics



Note: This figure indicates the percentage of each stakeholder group's coded responses that mention a particular topic. Percentages sum to greater than 100% as some coded responses referenced more than one topic.

## SAMPLE COMMENTS

What other priorities or programs should HCPS include in its future operating budget to achieve the goal of ensuring all HCPS students graduate fully prepared for college or career? Response Topics

TOPIC	SAMPLE KEYWORDS	SAMPLE RESPONSES
<p><b>Improve Staff/Teacher Quality Through Competitive Salaries, Training, Support, and Evaluation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay</li> <li>• Salaries</li> <li>• Benefits</li> <li>• Coaching</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Professional Development</li> <li>• Resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Ensure the teacher to student ratio is appropriate and allows for individual attention to each student. Make sure there is a good mix of new teachers who have enthusiasm and an education in the latest methods and seasoned teachers with many years of experience. Pay them enough that they don’t consider leaving for a neighboring county.”- <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Attracting and retaining effective teachers is critical to student success. HCPS needs to make sure we are remaining competitive with other counties so we can have the best teachers around.” - <b>HCPS Teacher</b></li> <li>• “In order to inspire our students to want to learn and learn all their lives, we need to give teachers the freedom to teach ‘their passion’ and not to tests. We need to hire smart, passionate, creative people that will inspire learning. We need to pay them well and appreciate whatever their unique teaching approach is.” - <b>HCPS Staff Member</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Change the Curriculum, Expand Course Offerings (e.g., More AP Courses, More Foreign Language Courses), or Modify the Approach to Instruction (e.g., Use PBL)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• Courses / Classes</li> <li>• Foreign / Second language</li> <li>• AP</li> <li>• Instruction</li> <li>• Projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Reshape the curriculum so it’s not so outdated.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Provide a large selection of AP classes to take at the high school.”- <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “More foreign language instruction at a younger age.”- <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Project based learning. Get students invested in their learning and take ownership.”- <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Add Life Skills Training/Classes or Related Opportunities (e.g., Volunteering, Internships)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life Skills</li> <li>• Financial Literacy</li> <li>• Internships</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Continue to provide students with educational opportunities that are part of North Star as well as other means by which to experience learning- internships, mentor programs, career shadowing, etc.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “I think one of the required classes for graduation should be a life skills class that includes instruction on banking, filing taxes, job interview skills, communication skills, etc.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “I really think more life skills classes should be incorporated to teach students how to write a check and balance their checkbook. Teach them things to be ready to be an adult.” - <b>HCPS Staff Member</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Add More Career and Vocational Programs, Schools, and Courses</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career</li> <li>• CTE</li> <li>• Trade</li> <li>• Vocational</li> <li>• Tech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Not all students have an interest in attending college. Technical courses should be available outside of vo tech.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Offering more trade programs and opportunities to learn a trade. Not everyone wants to go to college.” - <b>HCPS Teacher</b></li> <li>• “Offer more vocational paths for children who do not want to go to college, but cannot get into HVT.” - <b>HCPS Staff Member</b></li> </ul>

No modifications of sample responses are made. All sample comments are provided as written by respondents.

TOPIC	SAMPLE KEYWORDS	SAMPLE RESPONSES
<p><b>Improve Supports and Programming for Special Populations (e.g., Special Education, Gifted &amp; Talented, English Language Learners, Low Socioeconomic Status Students)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselors</li> <li>• Instructional Aides</li> <li>• Interventionists</li> <li>• ELL / ESOL</li> <li>• Gifted</li> <li>• Disabilities</li> <li>• Special Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There is a huge gap in the equity applied to special education. This population needs more services, more support and a program that allows them to function alongside their peers. Currently, there is the STRIVE program and there is John Archer. There is not an option for students in the middle of those two programs.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “There needs to be greater emphasis on talent development for gifted students, not just in elementary school, but middle and high school as well. Teachers and staff also need more training on how to better meet the needs of gifted students.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Harford County needs to invest in additional ESOL supports and teachers to assist with our growing ELL population and to be able to offer support to teachers.” - <b>HCPS Teacher</b></li> <li>• “Providing a broader range of special education programs.” - <b>HCPS Staff Member</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Offer More Mental Health Support (e.g., More Psychologists, More Programming) to Students and Staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioral</li> <li>• Mental</li> <li>• Social Emotional</li> <li>• Psychology / Psychologist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “HCPS should focus on ensuring that a better student to behavioral health provider ratio is obtained to ensure that children and families are properly looking out for children. This is in response to COVID-19 stressors as well as every-day non-COVID related input.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Mental Health resources in the building. Specifically through via mental health professionals. Create time in student schedules for mental health support services, not just academic support.” - <b>HCPS Teacher</b></li> <li>• “I feel it is also important to invest in social, emotional, and behavioral health and safety of staff. If staff feel they are fully supported in their health and safety, they will be better educators for the children.” - <b>HCPS Teacher</b></li> <li>• “Adding in more school psychology positions in next year’s budget. This would greatly help to ensure HCPS is investing in the social, emotional, and behavioral health of all students, as well as support for teachers and caregivers.” - <b>HCPS Staff Member</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Reduce Class Sizes (e.g., by Hiring More Teachers)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Sizes</li> <li>• Reduce / Lower</li> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Individual / Individualized</li> <li>• Personal / Personalized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Lowering class sizes so the kids can have more individualized help from teachers and kids who are struggling are not left behind. More teachers and portable classrooms if need be.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Whatever it takes to reduce the number of students per classroom. Less students allows teachers to dedicate more time to each student and become more effective educators.” - <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Hiring additional teachers to reduce class sizes. Reduced class sizes have been proven to better grades, better relationships with teachers, and better understanding of the material because it allows the teacher more time to speak individually with students.” - <b>HCPS Teacher</b></li> </ul>

TOPIC	SAMPLE KEYWORDS	SAMPLE RESPONSES
<p><b>Improve Academic Supports for Struggling Students and Students Who Now Have Learning Gaps</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before / After School</li> <li>• Intervention</li> <li>• Remediation</li> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Tutoring</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Implement tutoring sessions for small group support and additional re-teaching for struggling students.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Extra help either before or after school for students struggling to keep up with the rest of the class.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “More remediation sessions - like the summer tutoring program - that really seemed to help give children the help they needed to fill the missing gaps or get a head start on this school year, depending upon their needs.” – <b>HCPS Teacher</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Protect and Add Arts, Music, Athletics, and Extracurricular Programming</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts</li> <li>• Physical Education / Fitness</li> <li>• Sports</li> <li>• Extracurricular Activities / Clubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “In addition to academic priorities, there needs to be a continued appreciation of the specialty classes (like arts) which help to create well-rounded students who are critical thinkers.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Continued investment in the ARTS and PE. We should NOT be sacrificing the creativity and ability to play and exert energy, this is part of a well rounded environment that kids need to succeed.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “The continuation of fine arts programs, physical education, free play and music. Programs that give children a ‘breather’ from vigorous mental work throughout the day.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Offer More Guidance and College Counseling Support to Students and Families</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career</li> <li>• College</li> <li>• Prepare / Prepared / Preparedness</li> <li>• Ready / Readiness</li> <li>• Counselor / Counseling</li> <li>• Mentor / Mentoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Programs that provide students more opportunities to learn about careers and jobs by partnering with the community. Mentorship from recent graduates. More funding for school counselors more in the area of college prep and career counseling.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “We need to invest in making sure our children have the support they need to be fully prepared for college and career choices. In high school, we need support staff to work with each student on a plan that will support college and career readiness goals.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Giving access to experience different career paths in the real world for high school students before they have to commit to a college.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> </ul>

TOPIC	SAMPLE KEYWORDS	SAMPLE RESPONSES
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Update or Add Facilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility / Facilities</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Clean</li> <li>• Maintain</li> <li>• Repair</li> <li>• Update</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The school facilities need to be modern and maintained properly. The ‘Environment’ is everything. When you go to school, it needs to feel nice, modern and CLEAN. That will improve teacher performance and attrition of effective staff. Students will also respond accordingly. Motivation and desire to achieve will improve.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Advocate for more funding for school structure updates so prioritization on building updates does not have to be so contentious - we should be able to update/rebuild every structure in need of it.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Rebuilding or maintaining buildings that are in need of repair or aging.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Use a Diversity and Equity Lens for Recruiting, Hiring, Curriculum, and Supports</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Equity</li> <li>• Cultural Responsiveness</li> <li>• Restorative Justice</li> <li>• Sensitivity</li> <li>• Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Programs should be widely available to all and not just the wealthier portions of the county.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Restorative Practices trainings and resources and Culturally-responsive curriculum.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> <li>• “Investing in diversifying the teacher workforce across the district and implementing equity training for district leadership, administrators and teachers.” – <b>Parent/Guardian of a Current HCPS Student</b></li> </ul>

No modifications of sample responses are made. All sample comments are provided as written by respondents.