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CONTINUITY OF LEARNING INNOVATIONS
Advancements from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Analysis of Stakeholder Feedback

FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared by

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BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY

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Secondary School-Based Administrators (Principals, Assistant Principals)
Secondary School-Based Staff

Job Titles/Positions of All Stakeholders Who Participated in the Interviews

Admin Support Coordinator - Education Services	ESOL Teacher - HTHS
Admin Support Specialist - Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment	ESOL Teacher - RFES, HWES
Admin Support Specialist - Operations	Gifted & Talented Teacher - CCES, RWES
Admin Support Specialist - Procurement	Gifted & Talented Teacher - MVES, HIES
Admin Support Specialist - Technology	Grants Accountant
Elementary Assistant Principal - BAES	Paraeducator - RWES
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Middle School Assistant Principal - EDMS	Elementary Principal - CCES
Middle School Assistant Principal - HDMS	Elementary Principal - CVES
Assistant Principal - Swan Creek School	Elementary Principal - PMES
Budget Analyst	School Nurse - DAES
Building Manager	Supervisor - Equity & Cultural Proficiency
Client Administrator	Supervisor - Health Services
Communications Specialist	Supervisor - Transportation
Coordinator - Supplemental Instruction	Teacher - EDHS
School Counselor - ABHS	Teacher - HDHS
Curriculum Specialist - World Languages	Teacher - HDHS
Curriculum Specialist - Fine Arts	Teacher - MVES
Supervisor - Personalized Learning and Leadership Development	Teacher - NHHS
ESOL Teacher - ABHS	Teacher - PMHS
ESOL Teacher - ABMS, BFES, HXES, SCS, CEO	Teacher - Swan Creek School

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) seeks to identify innovative ideas across the district that occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and brought about constructive changes for students, staff, and families. To conduct this research, the HCPS Office of Strategic Initiatives collaborated with the HCPS Office of Research and Program Evaluation. Under the vision and leadership of Katie Ridgway, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Ashley Bowley from the Office of Strategic Initiatives conducted interviews with several staff members and stakeholders and collected data on the innovations. The Office of Strategic Initiatives set out to identify diverse stakeholders in HCPS schools and offices to provide their unique perspectives and feedback. The specific goal was to have an array of positions from different locations, bargaining units, and job functions. The overall goal was to analyze which ideas and adaptations are most important to stakeholders and which innovations meet the Board of Education Strategic Plan Goals:

- **Goal 1:** Prepare every student for success in postsecondary education and career.

- **Goal 2:** Engage families and the community to be partners in the education of our students.

- **Goal 3:** Hire and support highly effective staff who are committed to building their own professional capacity in order to increase student achievement.

- **Goal 4:** Provide safe, secure, and healthy learning environments that are conducive to effective teaching and learning, creativity, and innovation.

The HCPS Office of Research and Program Evaluation worked with internal and external researchers to analyze and synthesize the results of these efforts. The analysis will be used as a tool to highlight innovations that stakeholders found to be effective during COVID-19 recovery and may play an important role in meeting future strategic goals, including those outlined in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Results will be shared with staff and all stakeholders via the Continuity of Learning Plan, HCPS website, and any other venue where organizational change or strategic planning is being discussed.

This report details the results of that analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to interview participants:

- **What innovations, adaptations, and changes occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that had a positive impact on students, staff, and families?**

- **What HCPS Strategic Plan Goals do the identified innovations, adaptations, and changes relate to and support?**

- **How important do stakeholders feel these innovations are to their role and to supporting HCPS's goals, and in what ways?**

METHODOLOGY

Following the staff and stakeholder interviews conducted by the Office of Strategic Initiatives, HCPS pre-coded the interview data to identify innovations and provided the results to the Office of Research and Program Evaluation in an Excel spreadsheet and Microsoft Word document. Researchers analyzed the quantitative results of the respondent interviews based on several priorities. First, researchers cleaned the data by consolidating similar innovations under a single code as appropriate. For example, researchers combined the data from "Increased Teacher Planning Time" and "More Planning Time for Teachers" under a new single code. Researchers retained records of all original codes and final codes.

To answer the second and third research questions, researchers used a cleaned version of the original dataset, where the unit of analysis was a unique *respondent–innovation–aligned strategic goal*. Ratings of importance were given based on strategic goal alignment; thus, analyses involving those ratings were also performed using the original, cleaned dataset. However, to address the first research question, researchers created a modified dataset. Specifically, because some *respondent–innovation* pairs are recorded several times in the original dataset because participants aligned them with multiple strategic goals, this modified dataset removed those "duplicates" and kept only the unique *respondent–innovation* pairs. Wherever this report discusses the number of times each innovation was mentioned, researchers used that modified dataset wherein the unit of analysis is *respondent–innovation*, not *respondent–innovation–aligned strategic goal*.

Researchers also provided comprehensive tables of counts (overall and by stakeholder group), strategic goal alignment, and average importance rating for all innovations named by the participants in the Excel data.

Additionally, because the list of innovations is long, researchers selected a subset of innovations to highlight in this written report. Researchers created a series of data visualizations, including tables and figures as appropriate, and have written light narrative that incorporates insights from a holistic review of the open-ended comments. Researchers selected the subset of innovations to highlight based on the following criteria:

- List of pre-identified innovations provided by HCPS: *Teams, ESSER substitutes, electronic approvals, 1:1 technology, LMS, lunchroom hires, customer services central office hire, telework, Swan Creek, and new methods of communication with families (videos and e-newsletters)*
- Innovations mentioned by at least 20 participants
- Top twelve (12) innovations by average rate of importance (1-5) with at least 5 mentions
- The top six (6) innovations most frequently described as supporting each strategic goal
- Top six (6) innovations most frequently mentioned by each of the following stakeholder groups:
  - Elementary staff
  - Secondary staff
  - Administrators

Researchers also reviewed up to 25 percent of the extended interview facilitator notes, provided by the Office of Strategic Initiatives, associated with the prioritized responses listed above. Researchers did not systematically code these supplemental interview meeting materials. Instead, the materials were used to glean greater context and additional insights that were woven into the narrative of the overall analysis, sometimes as direct quotations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this report, HCPS should consider implementing the following recommendations:

I.   **Invest in the expansion, formalization, and further integration of technology initiatives in the district beyond the pandemic.** Many staff members at all levels named innovations such as 1:1 technology, virtual meetings, remote learning, and remote work opportunities as particularly impactful and good candidates for sustainment beyond the pandemic. All four of those innovations were cited by multiple respondents as supportive and directly aligned to all four of HCPS' strategic goals.

II. **Explore more permanent funding strategies to keep extra daily substitute teachers at school sites.** Stakeholders appreciated the addition of extra substitutes teachers funded by Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) and believe the change supports all four of HCPS' strategic goals—particularly in building staff capacity and healthy learning environments.

III. **Codify HCPS' commitment to prioritizing student and staff health and wellbeing.** Throughout COVID-19, stakeholders recognized the district's increased prioritization and awareness of the importance of mental and physical health. Staff members believe that providing and maintaining resources for stakeholder wellbeing will further support the district's progress towards its strategic goals.

IV. **Continue to explore opportunities to increase planning time for teachers.** Throughout COVID-19, teachers utilized their planning time to provide individualized support to students, to plan lessons and to provide outreach supports to families. Many teachers said that the dedicated time and space are good for their own wellbeing.

KEY FINDINGS

Of the innovations pre-identified by HCPS, virtual meetings, 1:1 technology, and remote learning and work flexibility are the most frequently mentioned by stakeholders. Staff respondents particularly noted the improvements that telework brings to their work efficiency, work-life balance, wellbeing, and job satisfaction. Several participants believe students have experienced similar improvements in their learning experience due to the flexibility of remote learning. On the other hand, fewer stakeholders identified innovations of Swan Creek School, the customer services position, and lunchroom hires.

More than any other innovation, respondents mention technology workplace initiatives as positive adaptations during COVID-19. More than 70 percent of stakeholders mentioned virtual meetings and/or 1:1 technology, while 50 percent of stakeholders cite remote learning and work flexibility. Staff at every level agree that virtual meetings and 1:1 technology allow students, staff, and families easier and more equitable access to learning and communication resources.

The focus of improving operations and culture at all levels, including creative communications, increased engagement, extra support for staff, prioritization of health, was emphasized by stakeholders. Respondents mention innovations that relate to improving internal operations and

culture at the classroom-, school-, and district levels. These include creative communication and increased engagement with families, extra daily substitutes (ESSER), and increased mental health awareness and prioritization of student and staff health.

- **Administrative Staff:** Like the overall stakeholder trends, administrative staff frequently reference virtual meetings and remote learning and work flexibility. Notably, electronic approvals are the third most frequently mentioned innovation with eight responses; however, neither secondary nor elementary staff mention this innovation.

- **Elementary Staff:** Like administrative staff, elementary staff highlight technology innovations that have increased efficiency and flexibility for students and staff. The top two innovations for this stakeholder group include 1:1 technology and virtual meetings. Staff also highlight remote learning and work flexibility. Other emphasized innovations related to improving internal operations, such as improving communication and engagement with families, having extra daily substitutes (ESSER), and focusing on staff wellbeing.

- **Secondary Staff:** 1:1 technology and virtual meetings are again the top two innovations for secondary staff. Notably, secondary staff also mention several innovations related to professional development and online learning. Some respondents find the Learning Management System (LMS) to be helpful for student success, particularly by increasing ease of access and streamlining the consistency of resources. Other respondents named professional development choices, Flex Fridays, and increased planning time supports staff development and performance among the positive adaptations that came out of the pandemic.

Stakeholders identify several innovations that align with specific HCPS strategic goals. Notably, stakeholders also identify additional objectives beyond the formal strategic goals with which innovations are aligned: improving organizational efficiency, staff wellbeing, student wellbeing, organizational culture, job satisfaction, and environmentally friendly initiatives.

- **Strategic Goal #1:** Stakeholders overwhelmingly identify 1:1 technology as the most significant innovation that supports students' postsecondary success. Respondents say the innovation provides students with equitable access to resources and "real-world experiences."

- **Strategic Goal #2:** Stakeholders list both virtual meetings and 1:1 technology as the top innovations that support family and community engagement, particularly for families who might otherwise lack access to technology or ability to attend in-person meetings.

- **Strategic Goal #3:** Stakeholders report that extra daily substitutes and increased communication contributed to creating a healthier, more transparent, and less stressful work environment. Additionally, respondents also emphasized virtual meetings and remote learning and work flexibility as highly supportive of building staff capacity.

- **Strategic Goal #4:** Stakeholders highlight the increased mental health awareness and prioritization of student and staff health as supportive of Strategic Goal #4. 1:1 technology and virtual meetings again were named as the top contributors to a healthy environment, particularly for students.

When asked to rate the importance of innovations on a scale of 1 to 5, stakeholders tended to rate most innovations as 5s. Over two-thirds (68 percent) of all importance ratings were a 5; nearly all ratings were either a 4 or 5. This skewness toward the top of the scale, together with the abundance of innovations with only one or two ratings each, mean that the difference between average ratings may not be meaningful.

- Many of the most important innovations relate to improving internal operations at the school- or district level. Highly rated innovations mentioned by at least five stakeholders include electronic approvals, increased overall communication, and extra daily substitutes (each rated 4.8-4.9 out of 5.0). Additionally, many stakeholders affirm the importance of 1:1

technology and virtual meetings (rated 4.7 out of 5.0), perhaps due in part to their alignment with all four HCPS strategic goals.

Several innovations support multiple strategic goals. Those multi-goal innovations also tend to have high mean ratings of importance. For example, innovations that support all four goals include 1:1 technology, extra daily substitutes, and virtual meetings (each rated 4.7-4.8 out of 5.0). Other highly-rated innovations that support multiple goals include increased mental health awareness, remote learning and work flexibility, and creative communication and engagement with families.

RESULTS

This section of the report provides the analysis and the results of the staff and stakeholder interviews based on several priorities noted in the methodology section above. When included, all open-ended responses are quoted verbatim with minor modifications for clarity if needed.

TRENDS RELATED TO HCPS INNOVATIONS

Researchers reviewed the following innovations pre-identified by HCPS and offered as examples during the interviews to determine the frequency of response rates. As part of data cleaning, researchers may have adjusted HCPS's original terminology to combine similar topics. For example, "New methods of communication with families" is now titled "Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families" to better encompass the range of responses related to this concept. The following table details the specific instances of terminology changes.

HCPS INNOVATIONS	FINAL, COMPREHENSIVE INNOVATION NAME
"TEAMS"	"Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)"
"ESSER substitutes"	"Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Substitutes)"
"Electronic approvals"	"Electronic approvals"
"One-to-One Technology"	"1:1 Technology"
"LMS"	"LMS"
"Lunchroom hires"	*N/A*
"Customer services central office hire"	"Customer Services Position"
"Telework"	"Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff"
"Swan Creek"	"Swan Creek School"
"New methods of communication with families (videos and e-newsletters)"	"Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families"

Of the 10 pre-identified innovations developed by HCPS, participants mention all but one ("**Lunchroom Hires**") in their responses. The innovations referenced by the greatest number of people include **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** (32 responses), **1:1 Technology** (29 responses), and **Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff** (21 responses). Staff respondents particularly noted the improvements that telework brings efficiency, work-life balance, wellbeing, and job satisfaction to their work. Several participants believe students have experienced similar improvements in their learning experience due to the flexibility of remote learning. Other frequently referenced innovations tend to enhance internal operations at the school- and district level: **Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families** (13 responses)**, Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER)** (11 responses)**, Learning Management System (LMS)** (9 responses), and **Electronic Approvals** (9 responses)**.

Fewer respondents mention the other pre-identified innovations. Five participants mention **Swan Creek School**, while only two participants mention the addition of the **Customer Services Position.**

The chart below highlights the frequency of stakeholder survey responses about HCPS's ten pre-identified innovations.

MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED HCPS INNOVATIONS

Innovation	Count
Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)	32
1:1 Technology	29
Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff	21
Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families	13
Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs)	11
LMS	9
Electronic Approvals	9
Swan Creek School	5
Customer Service Position	2
Lunchroom Hires	0
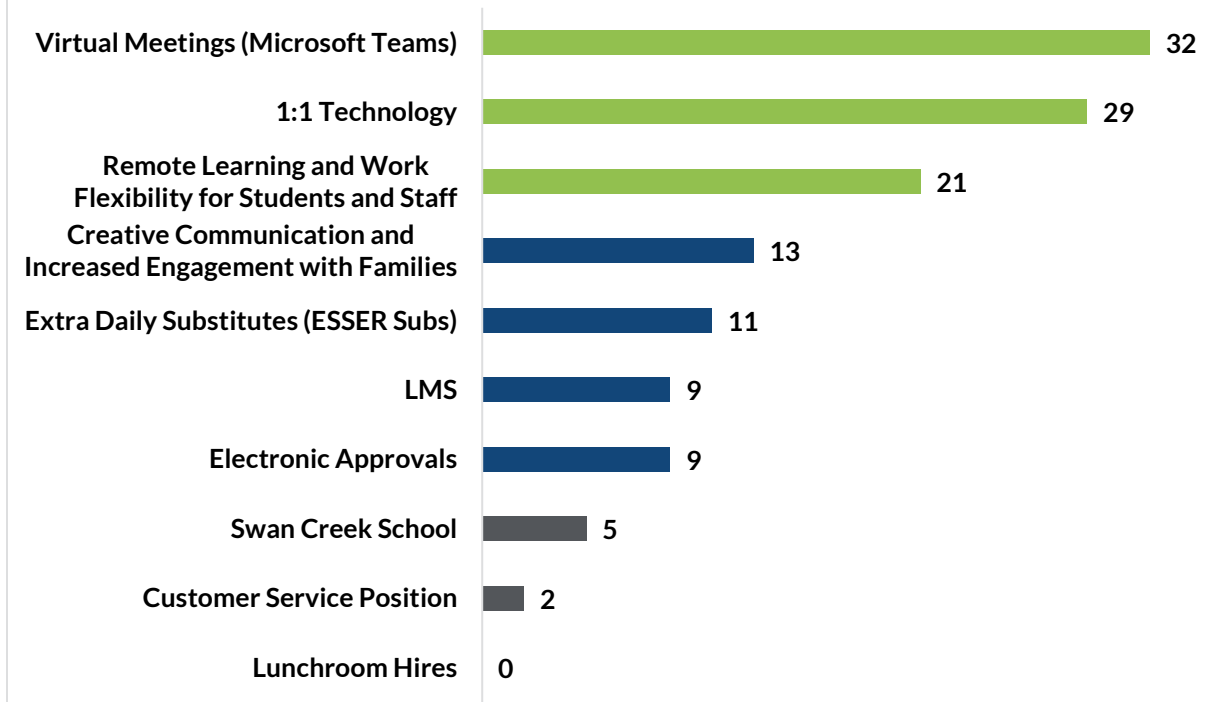
Note: This figure indicates the counts that mention a particular topic pre-identified by HCPS. Total number of responses include 306 from the modified dataset with unique *Respondent–Innovation* pairs.

MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS

Respondents most frequently mention *technology initiatives* as positive innovations during COVID-19. **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** is the most frequently mentioned innovation with 32 unique responses. **1:1 Technology** closely follows with 29 responses. Finally, 21 staff members cite **Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff** as an innovative change that should stay following COVID-19.

Other popular innovations that respondents mention include **Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families, Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs),** and **Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student and Staff Health.** Each of the innovations received 10 or more responses from staff members. Additional innovations that received 8-9 responses include **LMS, Electronic Approvals, Increased Communication, Virtual Professional Development,** and **Focus on Staff Wellbeing, Appreciation, and Morale.**

The chart below highlights the top 11 most frequently mentioned innovations for stakeholder survey responses to this question. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than seven responses. Researchers used the modified dataset and removed duplicate occurrences of innovations when named by a single stakeholder. Therefore, each count of an innovation represents one stakeholder response.

MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS

Innovation	Count
Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)	32
1:1 Technology	29
Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff	21
Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families	13
Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs)	11
Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student/Staff Health	10
LMS	9
Electronic Approvals	9
Increased Communication	9
Virtual Professional Development	8
Focus on Staff Wellbeing, Appreciation, and Morale	7

Note: This figure indicates the top eleven counts that mention a particular innovation of the 306 responses from the modified dataset with unique *Respondent–Innovation* pairs.

INNOVATIONS MENTIONED BY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Similar to the **Most Frequently Mentioned Innovations** report section, the following section bases its data on the *unique* counts of innovations from the modified data set.

Notably, all staff stakeholder groups agreed on two innovations: **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** and **1:1 Technology.** Stakeholders mention how both technology initiatives allow students, staff, and families easier and more equitable access to learning and communication resources.

Note: Researchers excluded responses from the School-Based/Multi-stakeholder group in this sub-section, as there were only two participants.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Administrative staff most frequently mention innovations related to technology. The top two innovations include **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** (15 unique responses) and **Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff** (13 unique responses). **Electronic Approvals** are the third most frequently mentioned innovation with eight responses; however, neither secondary nor elementary staff mention this innovation.

Other innovations include **1:1 Technology** (eight responses), **Increased Communication** (five responses)**,** and **Virtual Professional Development** (four responses). Administrative staff appreciate the flexibility and

efficiency of virtual professional development, and they highlight the increased communication both internally with district departments and externally with the community and other districts.

The chart below highlights the top six, most frequently mentioned innovations for Administrative Staff stakeholder survey responses to this question. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than four responses.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF: MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS

Innovation	Count
Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)	15
Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff	13
1:1 Technology	8
Electronic Approvals	8
Increased Communication (including Overall, with Co-Workers, Families, SDE, Supervisors)	5
Virtual Professional Development	4
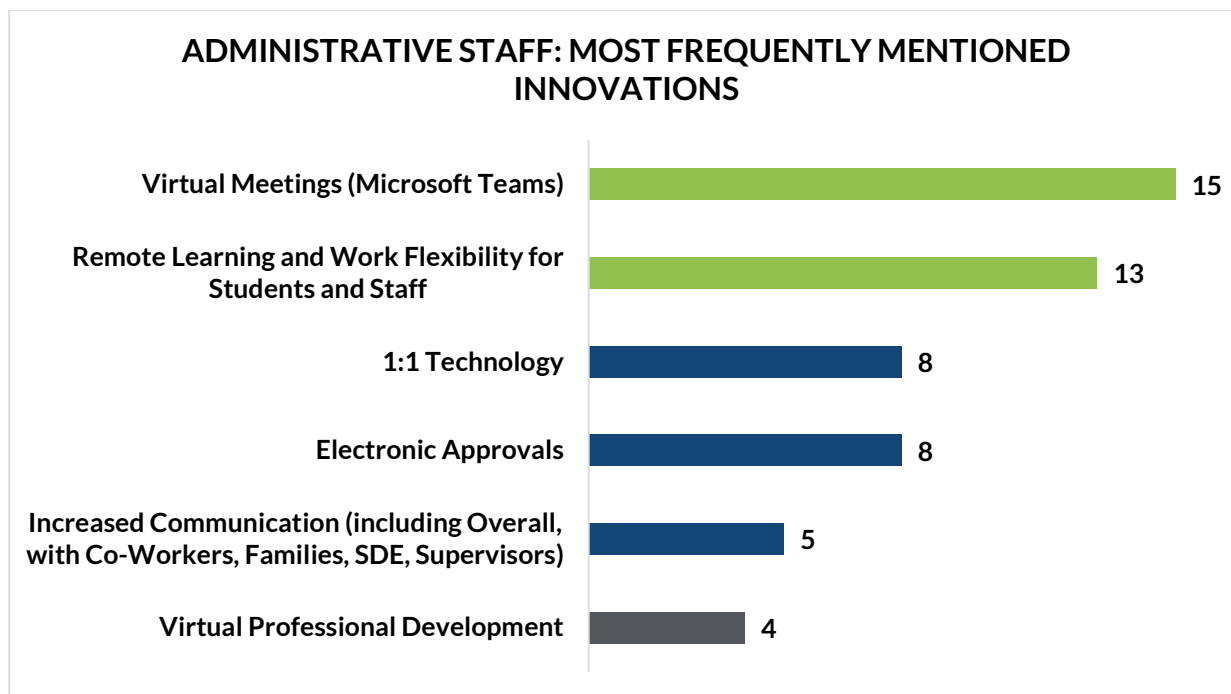
Note: This figure indicates the top six counts of administrative staff that mention a particular innovation across the 306 responses from the modified dataset with unique *Respondent–Innovation* pairs.
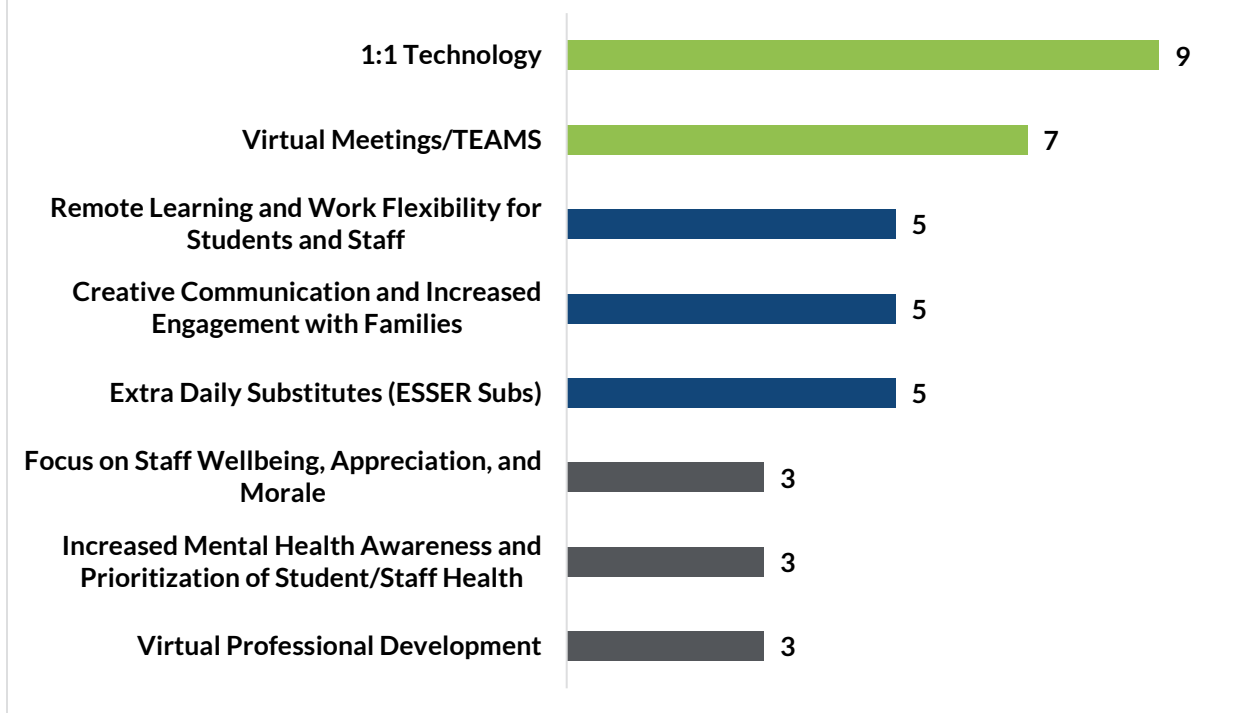
ELEMENTARY STAFF

Like administrative staff, elementary staff highlight technology innovations that have increased efficiency and flexibility for students and staff. For example, the top three innovations that elementary staff mention include **1:1 Technology** (nine responses), **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** (seven responses)**,** and **Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff** (five responses)**.**

Elementary staff also highlight innovations that support internal operations and culture at the school- and classroom levels. Five staff members mention how COVID-19 inspired an increase in **Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families.** Additionally, five elementary staff members mention how the **Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER)** supported both student success and staff wellbeing. Finally, three responses highlight the increase of **Focus on Staff Wellbeing, Appreciation, and Morale, Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student and Staff Health,** and **Virtual Professional Development.**

The chart below highlights the top eight most frequently mentioned innovations for Elementary Staff stakeholder survey responses to this question. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than 3 responses.

ELEMENTARY STAFF: MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS

Innovation	Count
1:1 Technology	9
Virtual Meetings/TEAMS	7
Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff	5
Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families	5
Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs)	5
Focus on Staff Wellbeing, Appreciation, and Morale	3
Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student/Staff Health	3
Virtual Professional Development	3

Note: This figure indicates the top six counts of elementary staff that mention a particular innovation across the 306 responses from the modified dataset with unique *Respondent–Innovation* pairs.
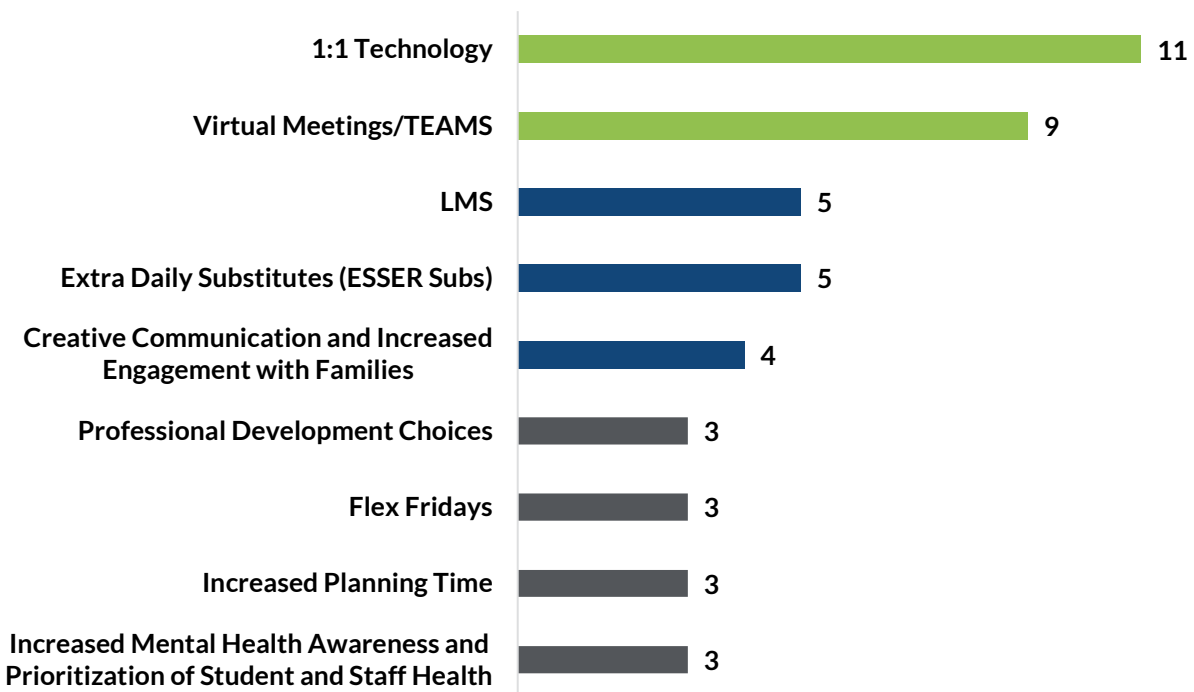
SECONDARY STAFF

Secondary staff similarly mention innovations related to technology and internal operations. The top two innovations include **1:1 Technology** and **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)**, with 11 and nine responses, respectively. Staff also mention **Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Substitutes)** (five responses) and **Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families** (four responses).

Notably, secondary staff also mention several innovations related to professional development and online learning. Five respondents find the **Learning Management System (LMS)** to be helpful for student success, particularly by increasing ease of access and streamlining the consistency of resources. Three respondents also mention **Professional Development Choices, Flex Fridays,** and **Increased Planning Time** as supporting staff development and performance.

The chart below highlights the top nine, most frequently mentioned innovations for Elementary Staff stakeholder survey responses to this question. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than 3 responses.

SECONDARY STAFF: MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS

Innovation	Count
1:1 Technology	11
Virtual Meetings/TEAMS	9
LMS	5
Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs)	5
Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families	4
Professional Development Choices	3
Flex Fridays	3
Increased Planning Time	3
Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student and Staff Health	3

Note: This figure indicates the top six counts of secondary staff that mention a particular innovation across the 306 responses from the modified dataset with unique *Respondent–Innovation* pairs.

INNOVATIONS MOST ALIGNED WITH HCPS STRATEGIC GOALS

When asked to determine how an innovation aligns with the HCPS strategic goals, most stakeholders list the exact strategic goal. However, a significant number of responses reference how innovations support additional objectives above and beyond the strategic goals. As part of data cleaning, researchers adjusted the original terminology in a few cases to combine and incorporate similar codes throughout the survey. For example, "Job Satisfaction" and "Employee Satisfaction" codes are now combined under a single theme title to better encompass the range of responses related to this concept. The following table details the specific instances of terminology changes, and the subsequent bar chart shows the count of responses related to each strategic goal and additional objective.
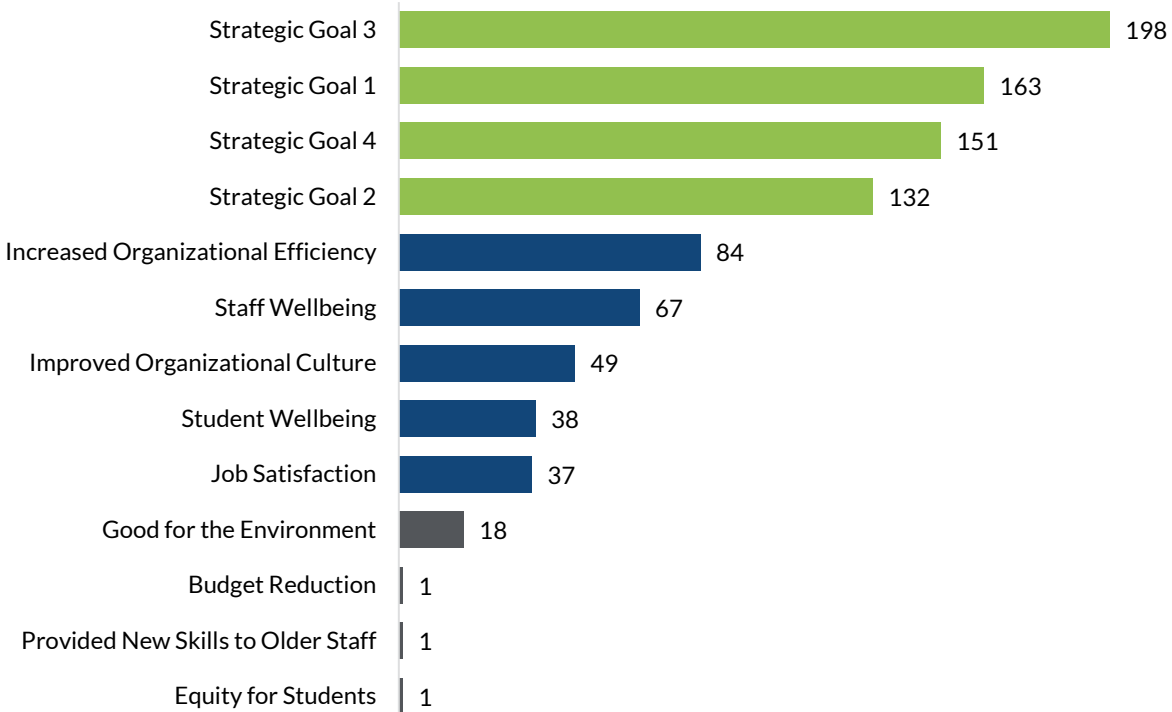
Figure 1: Original and Final Names for Additional Strategic Objectives

ORIGINAL CITED OBJECTIVE NAMES	FINAL, COMPREHENSIVE OBJECTIVE NAME
▪ "Organizational Culture" ▪ "Cultural Change" ▪ "Improves Organizational Culture"	"Improves Organizational Culture"
▪ "Increased Efficiency" ▪ "Organizational Efficiency"	"Increased Organizational Efficiency"
▪ "Environmentally Friendly" ▪ "Good for Environment" ▪ "Good for the Environment" ▪ "Paper Reduction"	"Good for the Environment"
▪ "Employee Satisfaction" ▪ "Job Satisfaction"	"Job Satisfaction"
▪ "Staff Wellbeing" ▪ "Work/Life Balance"	"Staff Wellbeing"

Figure 2: HCPS Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Prepare every student for success in postsecondary education and career.

Goal 2: Engage families and the community to be partners in the education of our students.

Goal 3: Hire and support highly effective staff who are committed to building their own professional capacity in order to increase student achievement.

Goal 4: Provide safe, secure, and healthy learning environments that are conducive to effective teaching and learning, creativity, and innovation.

ALIGNMENT OF INNOVATIONS TO HCPS STRATEGIC GOALS AND ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES

Category	Value
Strategic Goal 3	198
Strategic Goal 1	163
Strategic Goal 4	151
Strategic Goal 2	132
Increased Organizational Efficiency	84
Staff Wellbeing	67
Improved Organizational Culture	49
Student Wellbeing	38
Job Satisfaction	37
Good for the Environment	18
Budget Reduction	1
Provided New Skills to Older Staff	1
Equity for Students	1

Note: This figure indicates the counts of strategic goal alignment and additional objectives across the 942 responses from the original dataset with *Respondent–Innovation–Strategic Goal Alignment* pairs.
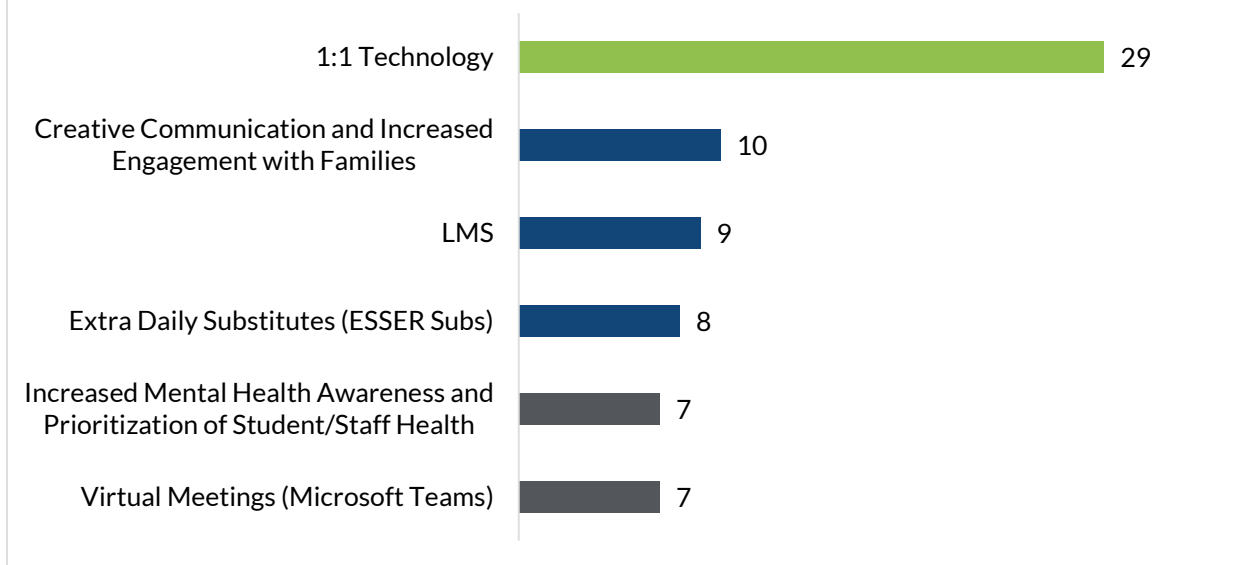
STRATEGIC GOAL #1

Prepare every student for success in postsecondary education and career.

Stakeholders highlight **1:1 Technology** as the most significant innovation that supports HCPS's first Strategic Goal. 29 staff members mention various ways the innovation supports postsecondary student success, such as giving students equitable access to resources and to "real-world experiences." Another innovation that stakeholders highlight is the **Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families** (10 responses). Secondary and elementary stakeholders in particular find that engaging families supports and contributes to student success. Finally, stakeholders find that **LMS** (9 responses) allows students to work better in groups and "encourages students to be creative."

Additional innovations include **Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs)** (8 responses), **Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student and Staff Health** (7 responses), and **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** (7 responses).

The chart below highlights the top six, most frequently mentioned innovations related to HCPS Strategic Goal #1. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than seven responses.

MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS ORIENTED TOWARDS STRATEGIC GOAL #1

Innovation	Count
1:1 Technology	29
Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families	10
LMS	9
Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs)	8
Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student/Staff Health	7
Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)	7

Note: This figure indicates the counts of strategic goal alignment and additional objective across the 942 responses from the original dataset with *Respondent–Innovation–Strategic Goal Alignment* pairs.

STRATEGIC GOAL #2

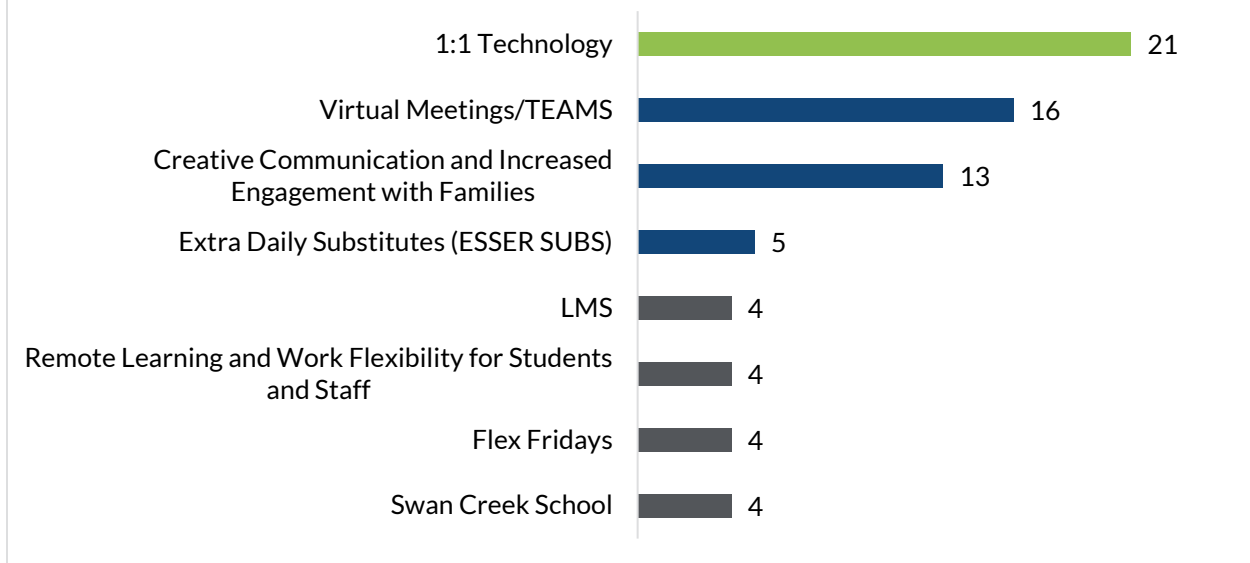**Engage families and the community to be partners in the education of our students.**

Like the previous sub-section, HCPS stakeholders find **1:1 Technology** an important innovation that supports HCPS Strategic Goals. 21 stakeholders indicate that 1:1 Technology can support family engagement, communication, and access—particularly for families who might otherwise lack access to technology. Similarly, 16 respondents identify **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** as supportive of Strategic Goal #2. Several stakeholders mention that Microsoft Teams has improved attendance for family-school meetings, such as for Individualized Education Plan (IEP)/504 plans, because families have greater flexibility to attend virtual meetings than in-person meetings. Other stakeholders praise how Microsoft Teams can help the district "collaborate with the greater community [and] bring community members, composers, and college professors to the classroom."

Stakeholders also associate several innovations with multiple strategic goals. For example, stakeholders place **Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families, Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs),** and **LMS** under both Strategic Goals #1 and #2.

Additional innovations include **Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff** (4 responses), **Flex Fridays** (4 responses), and **Swan Creek School** (4 responses). While these innovations received fewer responses from stakeholders than other innovations, they all emphasize new options for schools to engage families and give flexible opportunities for students' educational approaches.

The chart below highlights the top eight, most frequently mentioned innovations related to HCPS Strategic Goal #2. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than four responses.

MOST FRQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS ORIENTED TOWARDS STRATEGIC GOAL #2

Innovation	Count
1:1 Technology	21
Virtual Meetings/TEAMS	16
Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families	13
Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER SUBS)	5
LMS	4
Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff	4
Flex Fridays	4
Swan Creek School	4

Note: This figure indicates the counts of strategic goal alignment and additional objectives across the 942 responses from the original dataset with *Respondent–Innovation–Strategic Goal Alignment* pairs.
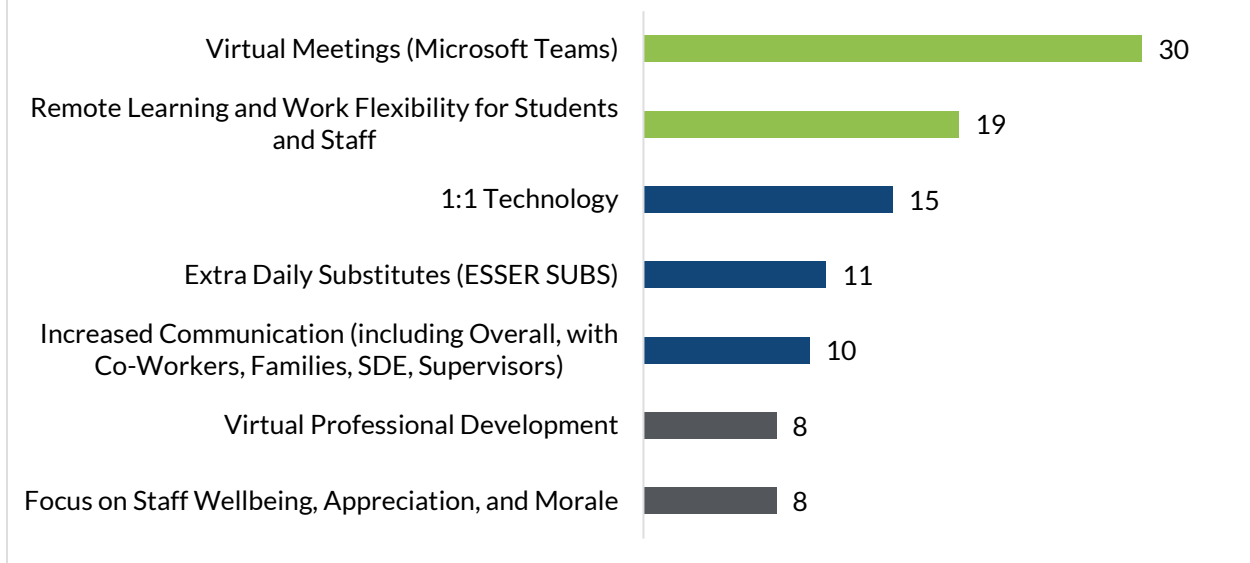
STRATEGIC GOAL #3

> **Hire and support highly effective staff who are committed to building their own professional capacity in order to increase student achievement.**

Stakeholders identify several innovations that support HCPS's third strategic goal. **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** (30 responses) and **Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff** (19 responses) both contribute to staff stakeholders' efficiency and capacity at work. Microsoft Teams supports more efficient internal staff meetings and promotes better communication. Moreover, several staff members find that remote work flexibility "keeps HCPS a competitive and innovative workplace" through an improved work-life balance.

11 stakeholders especially highlight how **Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs)** support staff capacity and student achievement by reducing teacher shortages and providing "relief" for staff. Similarly, **Increased Communication** (10 responses) between co-workers and school leadership improves collaboration and creates a more transparent work environment. Finally, eight respondents each highlight **Virtual Professional Development** and the **Focus on Staff Wellbeing, Appreciation, and Morale.**

The chart below highlights the top eight, most frequently mentioned innovations related to HCPS Strategic Goal #2. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than four responses.

MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS ORIENTED TOWARDS STRATEGIC GOAL #3

Innovation	Count
Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)	30
Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff	19
1:1 Technology	15
Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER SUBS)	11
Increased Communication (including Overall, with Co-Workers, Families, SDE, Supervisors)	10
Virtual Professional Development	8
Focus on Staff Wellbeing, Appreciation, and Morale	8

Note: This figure indicates the counts of strategic goal alignment and additional objectives across the 942 responses from the original dataset with *Respondent–Innovation–Strategic Goal Alignment* pairs.

STRATEGIC GOAL #4

Provide safe, secure, and healthy learning environments that are conducive to effective teaching and learning, creativity, and innovation.
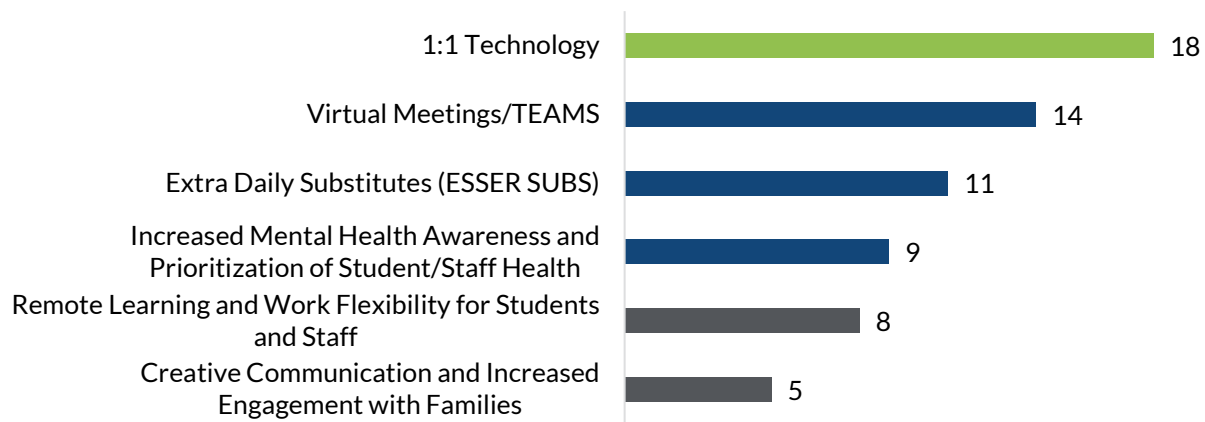
Technology innovations continue to rank highly on stakeholders' lists of strategic goal-oriented innovations. 18 participants highlight how **1:1 Technology** directly supports HCPS' fourth strategic goal by providing students with safe, creative virtual learning environments. Similarly, 14 participants find the same benefits within **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)**, with an added emphasis on the flexibility that virtual meetings provide for staff and students.

Stakeholders also find **Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER Subs)** and **Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student and Staff Health** to support Strategic Goal #4. ESSER substitutes provide consistent staffing, which supports both students' learning environments and staff members' physical and mental health. Relatedly, nine participants find the district's increased prioritization of mental and physical health directly relates to the fourth strategic goal of creating healthy learning environments.

Additional innovations include **Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff** (8 responses) and **Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families** (5 responses).

The chart below highlights the top eight, most frequently mentioned innovations related to HCPS Strategic Goal #4. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than five responses.

MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED INNOVATIONS ORIENTED TOWARDS STRATEGIC GOAL #4

Innovation	Count
1:1 Technology	18
Virtual Meetings/TEAMS	14
Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER SUBS)	11
Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student/Staff Health	9
Remote Learning and Work Flexibility for Students and Staff	8
Creative Communication and Increased Engagement with Families	5

Note: This figure indicates the counts of strategic goal alignment and additional objectives across the 942 responses from the original dataset with *Respondent–Innovation–Strategic Goal Alignment* pairs.

MOST IMPORTANT INNOVATIONS

Researchers reviewed innovations based on average ratings of importance. Using a scale of 1 to 5, stakeholders rated the level of importance an innovation had toward supporting HCPS's strategic goals and objectives. However, over two-thirds (68 percent) of all importance ratings were a 5 on a scale of 1 to 5 (Figure 3). On multiple occasions did an innovation receive a 5 rating from a single individual. The over-identification of 5-ratings results in a skewed scale; for instance, the difference between an average rating of 4.6 and 5.0 may not indicate a significant insight.

Figure 3: Overall Count of Ratings of Importance

Rating of Importance on a Scale of 1 to 5	Count
1	1
2	2
3	52
4	250
5	635
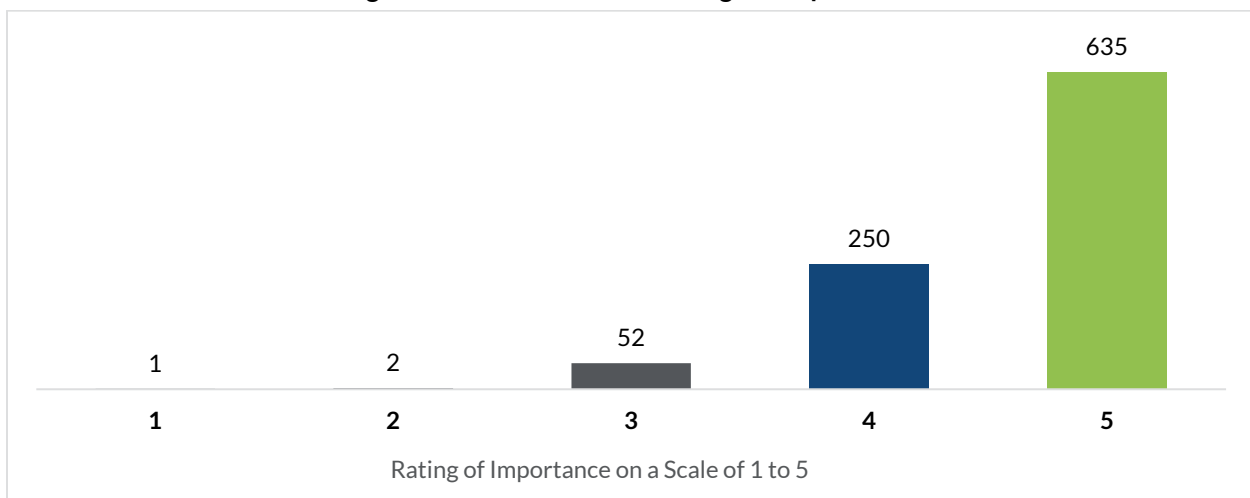
Note: This figure indicates the counts of ratings of importance across the 942 responses from the original dataset with *Respondent–Innovation–Strategic Goal Alignment* pairs.

Therefore, findings from this section should be interpreted with caution. To assist with interpretation, researchers only includes the top-rated innovations that have at least five mentions.

The top innovations relate to improving internal operations at the school- or district level. While only nine stakeholders mentioned this innovation, **Electronic Approvals** are the top-rated innovation at 4.9 out of 5.0. All but one response comes from an administrative staff member. **Increased Communication** and **Extra Daily Substitutes (ESSER)** are both rated 4.8 out of 5.0. While a similar number of stakeholders uniquely mention these innovations (9 and 11 stakeholders, respectively), the **Extra Daily Substitutes** innovation is mentioned a total of 40 times by these stakeholders. The difference in unique counts and number of mentions indicates that a single stakeholder could rate extra daily substitutes highly important and supportive of more than one HCPS strategic goal.

The trend continues with other highly rated innovations related to family engagement and student and staff wellbeing. **Increased Mental Health Awareness and Prioritization of Student and Staff Health, Focus on Staff Wellbeing, Appreciation, and Morale,** and **Creative Communication and Increased Family Engagement** all rank between 4.7 and 4.8 out of 5.0. While only five stakeholders explicitly mention how **COVID Taught Us to Be Innovative,** they identify its importance for supporting several HCPS strategic goals.

Rated 4.7 out of 5.0, **1:1 Technology** and **Virtual Meetings (Microsoft Teams)** are mentioned frequently by stakeholders as supporting several strategic goals. For example, 29 respondents find Strategic Goal #1 supported by **1:1 Technology**; 21 respondents find it supports Strategic #2; 15 respondents list Strategic Goal #3; and 18 respondents list Strategic Goal #4. Lastly, online learning and professional development round out the top 11 important innovations: **Professional Development Choices** (4.6 out of 5.0), **LMS** (4.6 out of 5.0), and **Virtual Professional Development** (4.5 out of 5.0).
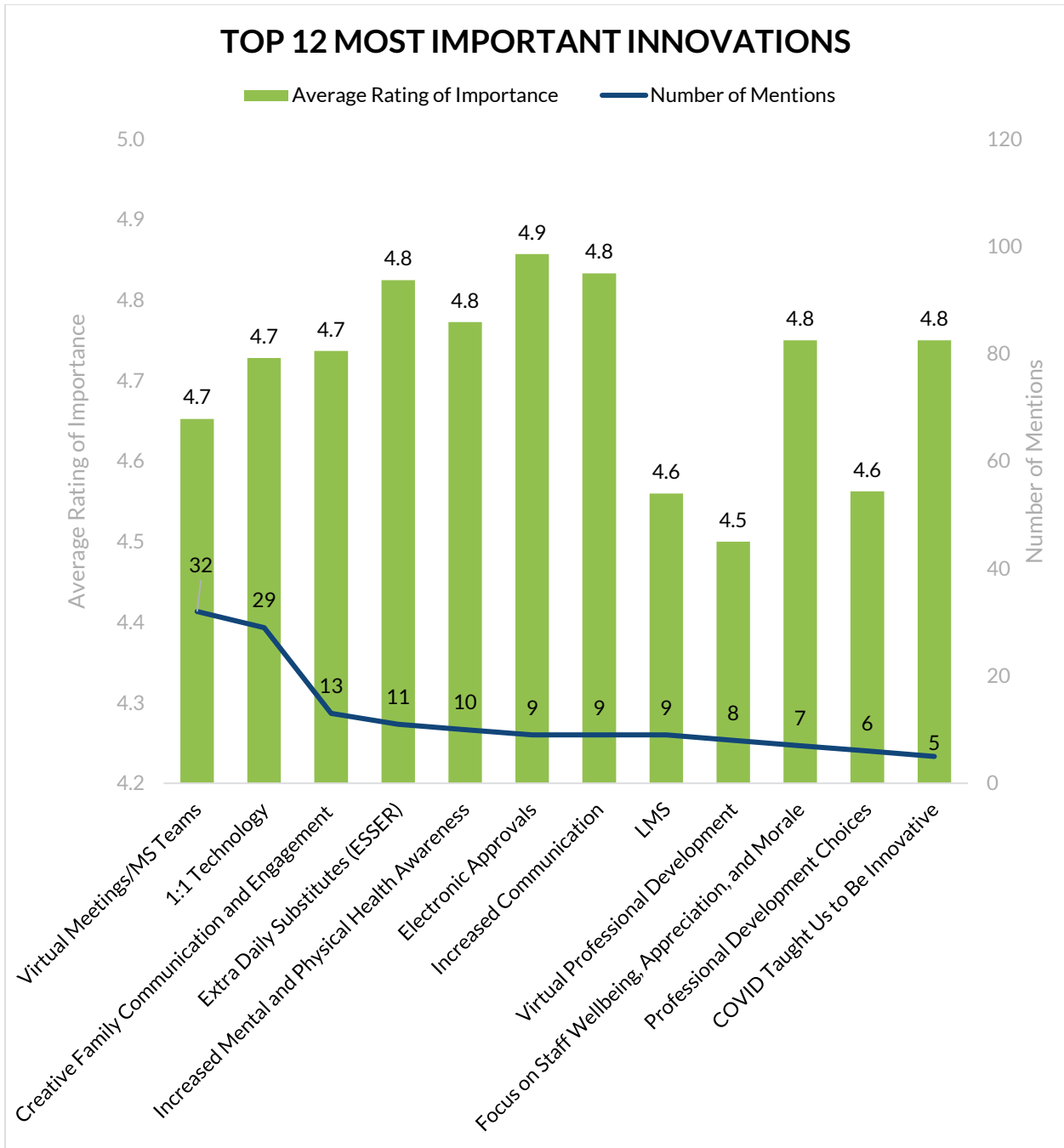
The charts below highlight the top 12 innovations as determined by mean ratings of importance. Researchers excluded all responses with fewer than five unique responses from inclusion in this list because the low number of ratings would have an outsized influence on the means.

Figure 4: Top 12 Important Innovations – Sorted by Average Rating of Importance
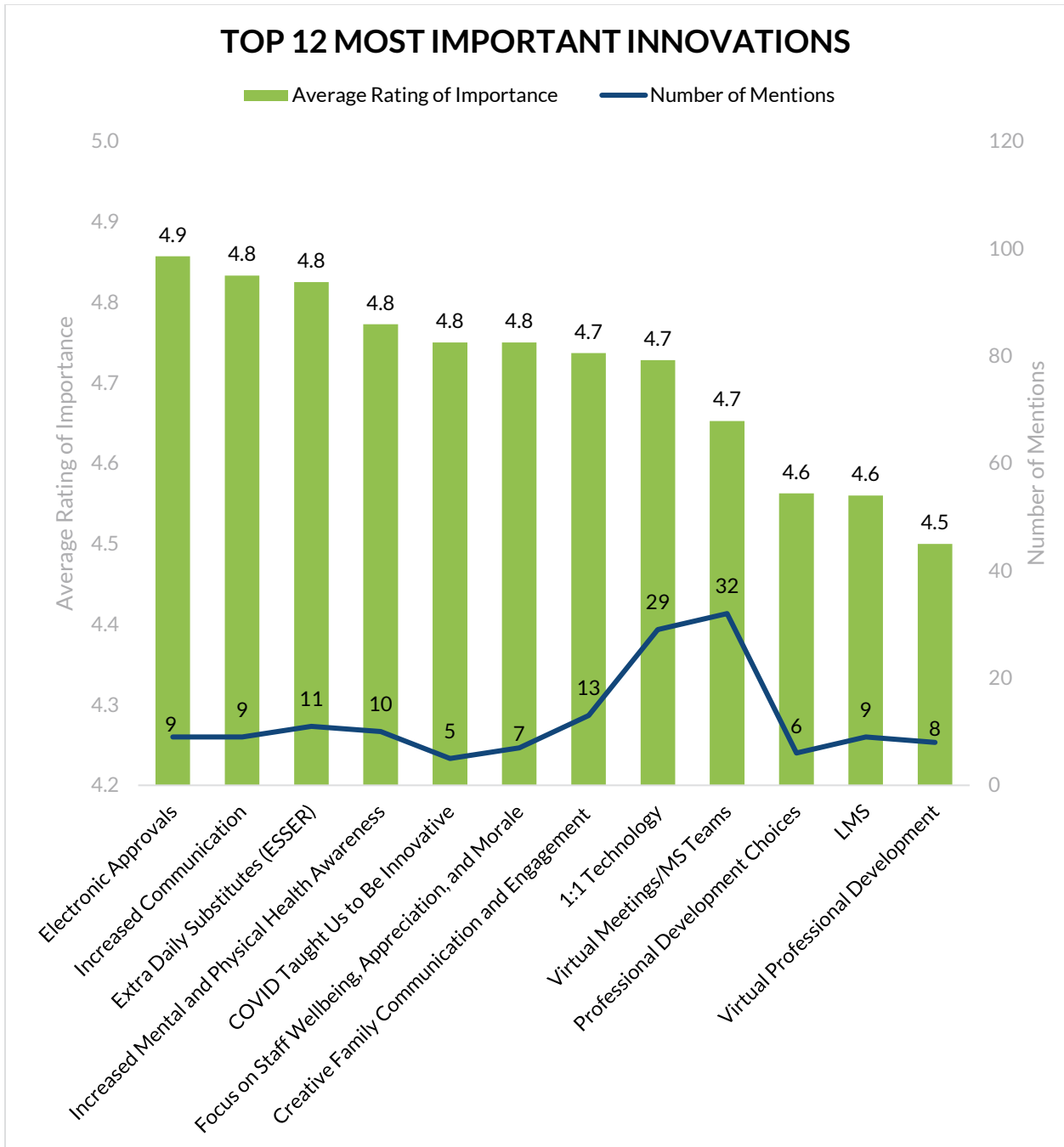
Note: This figure contains data from both the original and modified datasets. The green data series represents mean ratings of importance across the 942 responses from the original dataset with *Respondent–Innovation–Strategic Goal Alignment* responses. The blue data series represents the count of innovations mentioned across the 306 responses from the modified dataset with unique *Respondent– Innovation* pairs. The figure is shown in descending order by mean importance rating.

TOP 12 MOST IMPORTANT INNOVATIONS

Average Rating of Importance ──── **Number of Mentions**

Note: This figure contains data from both the original and modified datasets. The green data series represents mean ratings of importance across the 942 responses from the original dataset with *Respondent–Innovation–Strategic Goal Alignment* responses. The blue data series represents the count of innovations mentioned across the 306 responses from the modified dataset with unique *Respondent–Innovation* pairs. This figure is presented in descending order by number of mentions.