



# Hillsborough County Public Schools **2023–2028** Strategic Plan

# School Board of Hillsborough County

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***Preparing Students For Life***

# Together We Are Hillsborough Strong

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A strategic plan is critical for all successful organizations, providing the foundation on which to grow, thrive, and transform.

For Hillsborough County Public Schools, our strategic plan was crafted with deep consideration, as it must encompass the needs of more than 220,000 students in our public schools. The plan is centered around four key pillars: Academic Excellence, Supportive Organizational Culture, Exceptional Talent, and Fiscal and Operational Responsibility.

When we cultivate a supportive organizational culture, where students learn from world-class teachers, and we operate with fiscal responsibility, academic excellence will follow.

Our strategic plan must be visionary. We are preparing students not only for life now but for what the world may be like two decades from now. This preparation includes readiness for higher education, the workforce, the military, and becoming outstanding members of their community.

I am incredibly grateful to our educators, support staff, administrators, district leaders, school board members, community and business partners, and every stakeholder who is committed to our mission. Your dedication and collaboration are essential to our success.

I look forward to working together, guided by our strategic plan, to continue growing and strengthening our great district.

We are Stronger Together!  
Van Ayres

***Visit this website to view the details and scorecard:  
[HillsboroughSchools.org/StrategicPlan](https://HillsboroughSchools.org/StrategicPlan)***

# Mission and Vision

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## Mission

To provide an education and the supports that enable each student to excel as a successful and responsible citizen.

## Vision

“Preparing Students For Life”

## A Core Belief

Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS), in partnership with the School Board, is dedicated to fostering a community-centric approach that extends beyond traditional education. This commitment is reflected in our Core Belief, which emphasizes the importance of wrap-around services for students, ensuring that every child receives comprehensive support tailored to their unique needs. By engaging the School Board, staff, and stakeholders in this mission, HCPS aims to deliver a diverse curriculum that not only equips students with the necessary skills for academic success but also prepares them for life beyond graduation. This strategy underscores the district’s dedication to nurturing well-rounded individuals who are ready to contribute positively to society.



# School District Profile

## Who We Are

218,000+

Student enrollment in 2024-25

- 3rd largest school district in state
- 7th largest school district in the nation
- Largest employer in the county with **23,000+** employees including over **13,000** teachers



## 233 K-12 Schools

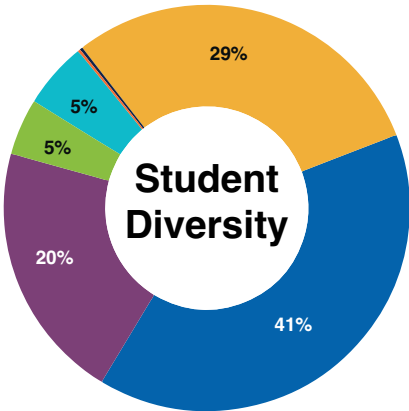
- 131 K-5 Elementary
- 39 Middle
- 14 K-8
- 29 High Schools
- 8 Exceptional Student Education Centers
- 3 Career Centers High Schools
- 2 Success Centers
- 1 Hillsborough Virtual School
- 6 Youth Services
- 56 Charters

- +12 Post Secondary
- 4 Technical Colleges
- 8 Adult & Community Centers

- +5 Programs
- Teen Parent East
- Teen Parent South
- Home Education
- Hospital Bound
- Nature's Classroom



25 Purple Star Schools of Distinction



- White
- Hispanic/Latino
- Black
- Asian
- Multi-Racial
- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

194 Languages Spoken



78,000 Students transported to school each day

# Organizational Pillars

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## Academic Excellence

Provide a high-quality educational experience to ensure that all students are prepared for postsecondary success.



## Supportive Organizational Culture

Maintain safe, healthy, working environments for all students, staff, and visitors.



## Exceptional Talent

Recruit, retain, and develop a highly effective workforce.



## Fiscal and Operational Responsibility

Utilize district resources efficiently to enhance the learning environment and ensure financial sustainability.



# Hillsborough Reads—Rise in 5!

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One of the top priorities for Hillsborough County Public Schools under the leadership of Superintendent Van Ayres is early childhood education and literacy. As part of the 5-year strategic plan, Superintendent Van Ayres is launching **Hillsborough Reads—Rise in 5!**; a literacy campaign where the primary goal is to increase the number of at and above grade-level students reading within five years.

## **Improving reading proficiency and ensuring that more children read at grade level is critical for several reasons:**

- Reading is a foundational skill that affects a child's ability to succeed in school across all subjects. Children reading at the appropriate grade level are more likely to comprehend and engage with the material, fostering a love of learning and an inquisitive mindset.
- Proficiency in reading by the third grade is a significant predictor of future academic success and high school graduation. Children not reading at grade level by this critical juncture are more likely to fall behind in other subjects as they struggle to understand the increasingly complex texts and concepts presented to them.
- Improving reading proficiency can help close the achievement gap experienced by students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Early and effective literacy education can be a great equalizer, providing all children with the skills necessary to access opportunities and reach their full potential.
- Literacy is linked to better employment opportunities, higher earning potential, and improved health outcomes.

Investing in this campaign to improve reading proficiency is an educational imperative and a strategic move that will strengthen communities and our economy in the long term.

This multifaceted campaign will integrate traditional and digital media with strong community engagement to successfully launch and sustain the **Hillsborough Reads—Rise in 5!** plan and substantially increase the percentage of students reading at and above grade level by the end of the five years, coinciding with this 5-year strategic plan.

# Academic Excellence

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***Objective 1. Ensure students graduate from high school fully prepared for college and career success, equipped to pursue a wide range of post-secondary opportunities.***

## Key Initiatives:

- Align district systems and structures of accountability to ensure all students master learning, at the depth and breadth of the standards in all classes.
- Develop a system where all high school students complete the FAFSA application and Bright Futures Scholarship Applications where applicable.
- Increase student participation and performance in accelerated courses such as IB, AP, AICE and industry certification to expand the access to colleges and career pathways after graduation.



# Academic Excellence

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***Objective 2. Increase literacy proficiency for all students, with a particular focus on closing achievement gaps and accelerating learning for our most struggling students.***

## Key Initiatives:

- Implement data-informed, evidence-based literacy instruction with fidelity, across all grade levels, including systematic phonics instruction in the early grades, direct vocabulary and comprehension strategies for students at all levels.
- Reduce the number of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) designated schools and persistently low performing schools by strengthening instructional quality, leadership effectiveness, and data-driven student interventions.



# Academic Excellence

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***Objective 3. Create cohesive, aligned and valued unique instructional programs at schools, across feeder patterns, and the District to ensure that Hillsborough County Public Schools provides opportunities to meet the needs and interests of students.***

## Key Initiatives:

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) by gathering input from students, families, educators, and community partners to identify gaps, misalignments, and potential opportunities in current instructional programs.
- Create a cross-divisional team to analyze programming across all schools and offer recommendations for new, innovative programming that aligns instructional offerings, student needs and interests, and available financial and human resources.
- Implement a system by which programs and/or support offered by our community-based organizations and non-profit entities are vetted and focused to align support to meet the needs and interests of our students.



# Academic Excellence

## Key Performance Indicators and Targets to Meet Our Objectives

Key Performance Indicators	2022–23 Baseline	2023–24 Target	2024–25 Target	2025–26 Target	2026–27 Target	2027–28 Target
▶ Increase the percentage of District schools (excluding Charter) rated A, B, or C in the State Accountability System	84%	96%	98%	100%	100%	100%
▶ Increase the percentage of students in grades 3–10 demonstrating at or above level grade level expectation in reading as measured by the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST)	48%	54%	55%	56%	58%	60%
▶ Increase the percentage of students demonstrating readiness for kindergarten as measured by the Star Assessment PM1 in HCPS Pre–K programs	39%	49%	50%	51%	52%	53%
▶ Increase the percentage of kindergartners demonstrating at or above grade level expectation in early literacy on the Star Assessment PM3	42%	59%	60%	63%	65%	66%
▶ Increase the percentage of 10th grade students demonstrating at or above grade level expectation in <b>reading</b> on the FAST Assessment PM3	46%	55%	57%	59%	61%	63%
▶ Increase the percentage of 3rd grade students demonstrating at or above grade level expectation in <b>math</b> on the FAST Assessment PM3	55%	60%	62%	64%	68%	70%
▶ Increase the percentage of 8th graders demonstrating at or above grade level expectation in <b>reading</b> as they exit middle school on the FAST Assessment PM3	44%	48%	49%	50%	52%	54%
▶ Increase the percentage of high school students that are enrolled and pass the Algebra and/or Geometry Math State End of Course (EOC) Assessment prior to exiting middle school	36%	38%	39%	40%	41%	42%
▶ Increase the overall HCPS acceleration rate	–	–	70%	72%	74%	77%
▶ Decrease total number of ESSA subgroups under 41%	–	–	290	260	230	200
▶ Increase the percentage of high schools seniors obtaining a standard diploma	86%	91%	93%	94%	95%	96%
▶ Increase the percentage of students completing the FAFSA application	45%	50%	55%	60%	65%	70%

*\*Results will be updated fall 2025.*

# Supportive Organizational Culture

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***Objective 1. Create a supportive and respectful teaching and learning environment by implementing intentional practices that promote a positive atmosphere, ensure access to learning resources, and foster a strong sense of belonging—where every student feels valued, respected, and connected to their school community.***

## Key Initiatives:

- Engage with school leaders and staff on the implementation of the Purple Star Schools of Distinction to foster a supportive school environment equipped to respond to all the needs of our military-connected students.
- Cultivate partnerships that support families, education, and student achievement through community resources, collaboration, and in kind donations, to include: community partners in education; food pantries; clothing closets; technology and digital access; literacy resources and incentive programs.
- Promote a districtwide culture of shared responsibility for student success by creating an educational environment where every stakeholder feels invested in the outcomes of students.
- Develop a collaborative framework for RTI/MTSS, with evidence-based practices, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process to help ensure fidelity and address any emerging challenges.
- Expand early childhood education and Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) to enhance kindergarten readiness by providing access to high-quality programs that focus on early literacy development.
- Support schools with effective proactive systems to reduce the number of discipline referrals and consequences for students implementing restorative practices, which focus on a positive learning environment.
- The district will implement the High Reliability Schools (HRS) framework as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the effectiveness of our district systems and procedures at both the district and school levels.

# Supportive Organizational Culture

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## ***Objective 2. Supporting the whole child – mental and physical wellness.***

### **Key Initiatives:**

- Train all school district employees in Youth Mental Health Awareness training.
- Enhance the completion rate of the district student survey, create awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of student feedback and share the data to improve the all-around school environment.

## ***Objective 3. Strengthen student access and accessibility by creating a supportive educational environment ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, have equal opportunities to learn and succeed.***

### **Key Initiatives:**

- Identify community partners to provide opportunities for students and families to engage in a variety of reading and literacy activities and awareness events/resources both in and out of school time.
- Develop strong community relationships to foster student success, effective parenting, and advocacy, as well as promoting personal growth and wellness.
- Create a robust attendance plan with positive reinforcements and educational support strategies by collaborating with parents and community organizations to emphasize the importance of regular attendance and foster a culture where attendance is valued as a key component of academic success.

# Supportive Organizational Culture

Key Performance Indicators	2022–23 Baseline	2023–24 Target	2024–25 Target	2025–26 Target	2026–27 Target	2027–28 Target
▶ Decrease the number of Out Of School Suspension days	29,526	24,388	23,168	22,010	20,910	19,865
▶ Decrease the number of students who are chronically absent	64,633	54,162	28,940	28,072	27,229	26,412
▶ Increase the number of schools that have an active PTSA	148	200	205	210	215	220
▶ Increase the number of Purple Star Schools of Distinction designated campuses	9	21	25	28	31	34
▶ Increase the number of elementary students reporting positive (respectful) peer relationships as measured by the Panorama survey	62%	61%	63%	65%	67%	70%
▶ Increase the percentage of secondary students reporting positive (respectful) peer relationships as measured by the Panorama survey	31%	32%	35%	37%	39%	41%
▶ Increase the percentage of students with IEPs in the general classroom environment for 80% or more of the school day (data will be designated 1st semester)	76%	78%	80%	82%	84%	86%
▶ Increase the average percentage of favorable responses on Panorama HRS related questions.	—*	—*	65%	70%	80%	90%

*\*Results will be updated fall 2025.*



# Exceptional Talent

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## ***Objective 1. Recruit, retain, and develop a highly effective workforce.***

### **Key Initiatives - Recruit:**

- Support the whole employee in the four areas of wellbeing which include physical, emotional, social, and financial.
- Recruit and retain a diverse and qualified team of educators, leaders, and support staff utilizing strategies such as offering competitive salaries, creating positive workplace cultures, and providing opportunities for professional growth.

### **Key Initiatives - Retain:**

- Design and oversee a comprehensive onboarding process for new employees. Create resources and materials to facilitate effective onboarding.
- Train employees to provide all students with access to learning experiences that are relevant, respectful of differences, rich, and engaging.
- Create pathways for paraprofessionals/instructional assistants to become certified teachers.
- Create pathways and training for the instructional support personnel to become certified teachers.



# Exceptional Talent

## ***Objective 2. Develop high quality leaders through a consistent succession plan.***

### Key Initiatives:

- Explicitly expand the Preparing New Principal (PNP), Assistant Principal Induction Program (APIP), and Future Leaders Academy (FLA).
- Develop a highly effective administrative workforce by providing opportunities for training, engagement, and support using performance management tools.

Key Performance Indicators	2022-23 Baseline	2023-24 Target	2024-25 Target	2025-26 Target	2026-27 Target	2027-28 Target
▶ Increase the retention rate of employees with less than 5 years of service	*	*	50%	75%	90%	94%
▶ Increase the percentage of active open positions filled within the targeted deadline	*	*	43%	65%	75%	85%
▶ Maintain the employee retention rate (less company–initiated transactions)	*	*	*	80%	90%	90%
▶ Increase the percentage of participants in FLA	42%	26%	30%	35%	40%	45%
▶ Increase the percentage of participants in PNP	48%	48%	50%	52%	54%	56%
▶ Improve substitute teacher placement rate	76%	84%	86%	88%	89%	90%
▶ Increase the percentage of schools participating in the Wellbeing 4U Champions program	96%	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%
▶ Reduce bus driver vacancy rate	12%	10%	7%	5%	2%	0%

# Fiscal and Operational Responsibility

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## ***Objective 1. Ensure appropriate use of financial resources.***

### Key Initiatives:

- Maintain and restore bond ratings from major agencies to a level consistent to historical ratings of HCPS at its highest rating standard.
- Realign and identify new sources of revenue from federal, state, and local levels to maximize use of recurring and non-recurring funds for all district operations.
- Maintain school district reserve balance above the 5% threshold as outlined by school board policy.
- Realignment of position control to ensure any positions hired are funded and to ensure every position is allocated in accordance with the district's allocation model.
- Present a visual dashboard to allow for an accurate and transparent view of multiple data sources allowing for precise real-time analytics on financial data.



# Fiscal and Operational Responsibility

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## ***Objective 2. Strengthen operational efficiency.***

### **Key Initiatives:**

- Reduce completion time for submitted work orders at instructional and non-instructional sites.
- Optimize Student Nutrition Services efficiencies by focusing on streamlined point of sale transactions for meals and a la carte offerings.
- Monitor awarding of construction and maintenance work to increase participation of small businesses through the Office of Supplier Development.

## ***Objective 3. Build and enhance technology infrastructure.***

### **Key Initiatives:**

- Implement a hosted business system to streamline workflow and reporting to include Work Force Management, Budgeting, Contracts, and other core financial modules.
- Migrate to cloud-based device management to streamline support, allowing for a reduction in response time and increasing the efficiency of technical services.



# Fiscal and Operational Responsibility

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## ***Objective 4. Ensure transparency through internal and external communication.***

### **Key Initiatives:**

- Maintain a comprehensive communication and marketing plan with annual and tri-annual objectives.
- Organize and focus positive stories on content areas showcasing Exceptional Student Education, Career and Technical Education, Magnet, Advanced Level Courses, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, Literacy, Transformation Network, and Dual Language.
- Implement HCPS brand guidelines throughout the district. Creating a stronger more positive and consistent brand image will support recruitment and retention efforts of students and staff.

## ***Objective 5. Engage stakeholder collaboration.***

### **Key Initiatives:**

- Schedule, coordinate, and facilitate meetings and engagement opportunities in order to cultivate and sustain relationships with our local, state, and federal policy makers.
- Develop HCPS local, state, and federal legislative priorities, in partnership with the Board, Superintendent, and staff.



# Fiscal and Operational Responsibility

- Facilitate and seek support for the HCPS legislative priorities at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Engage in proactive outreach and sharing of district impact and successes with elected leaders and all public officials.

Key Performance Indicators	2022–23 Baseline	2023–24 Target	2024–25 Target	2025–26 Target	2026–27 Target	2027–28 Target
▶ Increase the District's overall Bond Rating	A2/A/A–	A1/A+/A	A1/A+/A+	Aa3/AA–/AA–	Aa3/AA–/AA–	Aa2/AA/AA
▶ Decrease the Debt Principal Ratio to District Revenue	27%	26.50%	26%	25.50%	25%	24.50%
▶ Increase the Fund Balance Ratio Unassigned Fund Balance Ratio	5.06%	5.50%	6%	6.50%	7%	7%
▶ Increase the percentage of total budget allocated for direct classroom support	59%	60%	61%	62%	63%	64%
▶ Communication Engagement – Increase Followers on Spanish Social Media	–	130	260	390	520	650
▶ Communication Engagement – Increase awareness of job opportunities in our district via social media	–	5%	8%	12%	15%	18%
▶ Communication Engagement – Increase awareness of educational opportunities available in our district via social media	–	5%	8%	12%	15%	18%

*Results were not tracked until 2023-24.*





**901 East Kennedy Boulevard  
Tampa, FL 33602  
813-272-4000  
HillsboroughSchools.org**

#### Continuous Notification of Nondiscrimination

Pursuant to Title VI, Title IX, Section 504/Title II and other civil rights regulations, the School District of Hillsborough County(District) does not discriminate nor tolerate harassment on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, genetic information or pregnancy in its educational programs, services or activities, or in its hiring or employment practices; and it will take immediate action to eliminate such harassment, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects. The District also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts and other patriotic youth groups, as required by the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Dr. Pansy Houghton, Executive Officer, Compliance. 813-272-4000; Pansy.Houghton@hcps.net; 901 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, Florida 33602.