2007 – 2008
year in REVIEW
Established in 2002, A+ Partners in Education℠ provides Howard County students the best possible chances of overall academic success. The initiative soared to new heights this past year as Howard County Library and Howard Community College (HCC) announced the creation of a formal partnership, and the Library and Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) launched a five-year master plan for its partnership. In addition, the Library and school system introduced the immensely successful Battle of the Books reading competition for fifth grade students. Read more about the event on page six.

HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Faculty
Howard County Library staff met with HCC library staff, faculty members, and department heads to discuss the partnership’s goals and structure a communication network between Library and college liaisons. These meetings created momentous enthusiasm and new ideas, as well as requests from HCC for collaborative presentations and for the exchange and distribution of information.

Library information specialists provided instruction to English and World Language Division faculty on how to access the Library’s print and online resources, emphasizing those of most benefit to college students, especially speakers of foreign languages. Library staff also met with a professor of Teacher Education, who provided information about her students and curriculum. Arts and Humanities Division faculty members heard an overview of electronic databases, learned about upcoming events and seminars, and received student and educator library card applications. At a meeting with Health Sciences Division faculty, Library staff highlighted the Health Information Center. Library staff met with HCC division heads in the following departments: Math, Business and Computer Systems, Science and Technology, Continuing Education, and Workforce Development. Library staff also served on HCC’s Early Childhood Development Curriculum Advisory Committee. In conjunction with Choose Civility, Library staff presented a Civility in the Workplace workshop to faculty and staff.

Additionally, the Library extended its A+ Educator card to Howard County faculty, giving them extended borrowing privileges for materials used in preparing lessons or assisting students with assignments.

Students
Library staff met with personnel from HCC’s library, First Year Experience office, admissions department, and financial aid office to plan Library classes that will aid high school students in the college search process.

In the Continuing Education, Workforce Development, and ESOL Divisions, Library staff gave an extensive tour of the Central Library to students and teachers, distributed library cards, source, and Homework and Research Resources brochures.

In conjunction with faculty, Library instructors developed the following classes, held at the Library, to assist new college students:

- College Bound: Research Remedies – included instruction about research resources and a tour of HCC’s library.
College Bound: First Year Experience – faculty presented tips on studying, time management, and social skills.

Community
Library and HCC staff collaborated on a variety of classes and workshops for the community throughout the year. Faculty from the Business Computer Division taught classes for adults and children at the Library. Intended to teach participants how to explore and discuss the basic concepts of turning a creative idea into a business opportunity, the line-up included:

- All About eBay
- Starting a Home Based Business
- Technology Transfer – Taking an Invention to the Marketplace
- Building the Bridge as You Walk on It: An Exploration of Personal Change
- You Can Be an Inventor, Too!

The most visible component of the partnership is Howard County Book Connection, which brings people together through the reading and discussion of a selected book. Staff and faculty worked together to promote this “one book” project and present a schedule of related events. The goal of Book Connection is to connect the community through shared learning experiences that promote productive dialogue, critical thinking, and intellectual enrichment.

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

During the sixth year of the A+ Partnership with the Howard County Public School System, the Library began implementing the five-year master plan with the goal of continuing to strengthen excellence in education. The plan includes curriculum-related initiatives, events, classes, workshops, and seminars intended to support the academic needs of students, teachers, and parents. Focuses include reading, spelling, art, government, civility, ESOL, American Sign Language, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and financial literacy.

Teacher Development
Throughout the year Library staff led presentations on topics such as primary and secondary sources for reading teachers, Library resources for new foreign language teachers, and an overview of Library services — ranging from Live Homework Help to Project Literacy — for staff in the Department of Student, Family and Community Services. Library staff promoted new books with “high kid appeal” to elementary, middle and high school teachers and media specialists, and conducted an Hispanic literature presentation for above-grade-level middle school students to a group of secondary language arts teachers. Library instructors also taught a research class with tips for middle school students, to reading and media specialists. Staff presented Library resources at all three secondary school language arts in-service trainings, connecting with more than 100 teachers, many of whom invited Library staff into their classrooms. At the HCPSS Staff Development Day, Library staff introduced books that appealed to students and promoted Library resources (e.g., Live Homework Help) to K-12 teachers.

Library staff also served on the following committees: Healthy Families Howard County Advisory Board, Early Childhood & Child Care Coalition Committee, Month of the Young Child Committee, and Howard County Transition to Kindergarten Workgroup.
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Kindergarten Field Trips
Kindergarten field trips to the Library began three years ago, with seven full-day Kindergarten schools. This year, the number of visiting schools rose to 33. Each trip was preceded by instruction about what students would experience and learn while at the Library, and was followed with classroom discussion. The Library posted maps of each branch on its web site so teachers could access them before their trip. The field trips included reading maps to locate various collections, computers, and study areas. In addition, the students borrowed books and experienced the behind-the-scenes workings of the bookdrop. Part of the full-day Kindergarten curriculum, the field trips connect all students with the Library at the beginning of their twelve years of required education.

Kindergarten, Here We Come!
Kindergarten, Here We Come! classes seek to lessen anxiety of children who are attending school for the first time by mimicking a typical day in Kindergarten – from leaving parents in the morning to being picked up in the afternoon. With funding from the Friends of Howard County Library and HCPSS, the Library added a “school bus experience” to several classes, allowing students to practice boarding a school bus and waving goodbye to their parents.

“This was a great idea. My daughter was so excited about being able to get on the bus. I was more worried about her riding the bus than she was. When the bus came on the first day of school, she had no qualms getting on it. Having the bus at the class eased both our transitions.”
— mother of Kindergarten student

Movin’ Up to Middle School
Designed to alleviate the stress from the elementary to middle school transition, Movin’ Up to Middle School classes targeted sixth-grade students. Led by Library instructors and school faculty members, discussion topics ranged from study skills, bullies, and locker combinations to questions about specific schools. Students came away with a sense of camaraderie, relevant Library materials, and new friends.

Curriculum Enhancement Classes
A boost in the number of curriculum enhancement classes taught at the middle and high school levels indicates that the partnership continues to gain recognition and value among upper level students and teachers. The Homework and Research Remedies class, with special concentrations on Career Resources and Literature Research, was the most requested by high school teachers.

- **Stories 101: More Than Just Reading the Words**, a new class for high school students interested in early education, was taught by Library instructors at Howard High School.
- Library staff taught **Research Remedies** with an emphasis on science fair projects to Gifted and Talented classes at Patuxent Valley Middle School. As a result, the teacher asked all 30 students to visit the Library to access online research databases and books on their assigned topics.
• Library instructors taught **Live Homework Help** and **Literature Research** curriculum enhancement classes to Oakland Mills High School students.

• Guidance counselors at Gorman Crossing Elementary School asked Library staff to teach the **Kindness Counts** class to Kindergarten, first, and second grade students.

• The Teen Specialist at the Library’s East Columbia Branch visited Oakland Mills High School English Language Learner students each month, registering them for library cards and lending materials. Inspired by her visits, one fifteen-year-old boy visited the branch and proudly announced to staff that he had inaugurated his first library card.

   “**Wow! I just have to tell you how impressed we all were with your Multicultural Medley presentation. The kids loved it, and many of the parents who were there talked about what a great class it was! Thanks for taking time out of your day to come out and get kids excited about different cultures.**” — third grade team leader at Northfield Elementary School

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**Financial Literacy Classes**

In partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank, Library instructors taught financial literacy classes to students in the Library and in the schools. Classes included **All About Money** for elementary school students (students designed their own currency), **Banking Basics** for middle school students (students learned the difference between savings and checking accounts), and **Sound Cents** for high school students (students learned the pros and cons of credit cards, saving for college, buying a car, etc.).

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)**

In addition to collaborating with representatives from University of Maryland Baltimore County and HCPSS’ STEM liaison to participate in STEM-related community events, Library instructors also taught a number of STEM-related classes at the Library. For example, **Go Figure!**, a class for preschool students, teaches basic math concepts inspired by children’s literature and routine activities. **Everyday Engineering** teaches middle school students basic engineering concepts using household objects (e.g., building toothpick towers and spaghetti bridges).

**Live Homework Help**

Through the Library’s web site, students in grades four and up can connect with a live tutor — for free — for assistance with math, science, social studies, and English assignments. Students who create a login can also connect with their favorite tutors and review previous sessions. Tutors are available from 2 pm to midnight seven days a week. Spanish-speaking math and science tutors also are available Sunday through Thursday, from 2 until 10 pm. Live Homework Help functions on Apple and Windows-based computers.
Live Homework Help is provided at no cost to students; the Library and school system share the expense. Nearly 9,000 students used Live Homework Help last year. Student comments included:

- Live Homework Help definitely helped me pass chemistry with a B last year – much higher than I had expected. It’s also very useful to have someone look over essays and point out problems I wouldn’t have seen.
- Algebra II always has given me little trouble spots. I can get concepts, but there are a few problems that elude me. Live Homework Help has helped me fill in the gaps, and teach me new things at the same time! The tutors know what they are doing and are always nice. I have used this service many times and always use it whenever I can! Thank You SO MUCH!
- In high level math and science classes, this service really helps me do the homework so I can understand what we learn in class.
- Amazing service. This helps me edit things my parents, who are not native to the country, cannot since English is not their primary language.
- Even my mom couldn’t figure out my grammar question! It’s like having a teacher at my house.
- This is very good. My mom had just found this out. I finished my homework. My teacher gave me an A+ (100%).
- Helped me develop an amazing thesis and uncovered new ideas for me to dig through. Helped so much, I cannot wait to turn in my paper. Thanks!
- This is really great! It helps me do much better in school, and helps me understand my school work much better. Instead of getting B’s and D’s, I’m getting A’s and B’s!

Dogs Educating and Assisting Readers
One of most rewarding A+ partnership components, Dogs Educating and Assisting Readers (DEAR) elevates student reading skills effectively and consistently—thanks to an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance by a “best friend.” This year, struggling third graders from Bollman Bridge, Bushy Park, Clemens Crossing, Dayton Oaks, Guilford, Phelps Luck, Swansfield, and Triadelphia Ridge elementary schools were paired with therapy dogs and handlers from Fidos for Freedom at the East Columbia, Glenwood, and Savage branches. Library instructors select books for the children to read. What are the consistent results? Upon completion of the nine-week session, students read at or above the third grade reading level. DEAR is sponsored by Friends of Howard County Library.

SIGNATURE INITIATIVES

BumbleBee
A companion initiative to the Spelling Bee begun two years ago, the BumbleBee inspires students in grades one through three to improve their spelling and vocabularies. This past year, 19 school champions, the BumbleBees, received trophies at their own BumbleBee Awards Ceremony, and again on stage at the Spelling Bee.
Spelling Bee

More than 800 people flocked to Howard High School for the 2008 Howard County Library Spelling Bee, which has become an all-time favorite A+ signature event. Fifty-eight students in grades four through eight from public and private schools competed. Patapsco Valley Middle School eighth-grader Andrew Risinger won, advancing to the National Spelling Bee in Washington, DC. In addition to the opportunity to represent Howard County at the national level, Risinger won a $1,000 scholarship, trophy, and copy of Webster’s Third New International Dictionary. Shourjya Mookerjee, a seventh grade student from Patuxent Valley Middle School, was the second place finalist, winning a $750 scholarship, trophy, and dictionary.

Officials for the Bee included Howard County Council member Mary Kay Sigaty; Frank Aquino, Ellen Flynn Giles and Diane Mikulus from the Howard County Board of Education; Economic Development Authority CEO Richard Story; and Howard County Library Deputy Executive Director Brian Auger. County Executive Ken Ulman and his daughter, Maddie, welcomed the crowd. Title Sponsor BB&T and Media Sponsor The Baltimore Sun made the event possible.

Battle of the Books

Battle of the Books, a fifth-grade-level competition designed to increase reading comprehension and build vocabularies, launched this year. Initially planned for 15 teams of students who would read the same books, 66 teams ultimately participated—before a crowd of 1,000 attendees. The 15 books each team read covered a range of reading levels and a wide variety of interests, including adventure, folk tale, memoir, poetry, biography, science, and civics.

A series of 50 questions, the “Battle” began when Board of Education member and moderator Ellen Flynn Giles read a question, then hit a bell. The student teams had 30 seconds to work on their answers. A second bell signaled “Stop!” Arms shot up with the group’s answer. Runners in each aisle collected the answer sheets, giving them to the judges for scoring.

The battle went off without a hitch, even with sweltering temperatures in the gymnasium and a nail-biting tiebreaker round. The students were energized, student volunteers enthusiastic, and Library and HCPSS staff fully prepared for all possible outcomes.

The Triadelphia Ridge Reading Warriors took first place. The Rockin’ Readers from Forest Ridge Elementary School came in second. Four teams comprising students from Centennial, Clarksville, Dayton Oaks, Hammond, Forest Ridge, and Manor Woods (the Dolphin Readers, 3Rs, Reading Wonders, and Dragons) tied for third place. The ShishkaBobs (students from Hammond and Guilford) won the Best Name Award. County
Council member Calvin Ball bestowed the Civility Award to the **Radical Reading Ravens** (Centennial). The **Book Bugs** (Pointers Run) and **Pickeral’s Page-Turning Penguins** (Bushy Park) tied for the Best Team Spirit Award.

Observers were pleasantly surprised to watch the gracious and celebratory atmosphere that encompassed the Marriotts Ridge High School gym as the awards ceremony took place. All came away feeling like winners.

This A+ event represents an ideal integration of teamwork. Most importantly, participants valued the educational component:

- “The girls on my team came home from school after the initial presentation excited to participate. They pulled their team together, and started scheduling meetings, coordinating the dates with the parents, and independently getting the ball rolling for their team. They put agendas together for their meetings, sometimes even with PowerPoint presentations. The night of the Battle was a great wrap-up to months of work. Not knowing what to expect, I was impressed with the flow you all had set up to receive the registrants and coaches, and the physical set-up of the gym. The evening seemed to run flawlessly. The girls on my team walked away with a great sense of a job well done, having fun without the need to walk out with the grand prize. Thank you so much for the hours of work put into coordinating this fabulous event for our students. *Please know that your efforts will have a lasting impact on all the students who participated.*”

- “The kids I coached worked really hard from December through April 18 and they persevered. While not placing in the top three spots, they did walk away winners in my book. They met weekly from January. We got to read and explore books they may have never picked up—15 of them. I am very proud of them as you should be as well. The kids were motivated the entire time! I loved this event.”

Battle of the Books was sponsored by the Friends of Howard County Library and the Georgianna Price Children’s Fund. Students from Howard County’s Future Educators of America chapter volunteered at the event—and were so impressed that they featured Battle of the Books at their national conference in Chattanooga.

**WordUp!**

Two hundred middle and high school students submitted poems for the Library’s eighth annual teen poetry contest, WordUp!. Winners were celebrated at an awards ceremony featuring local poet Truth Thomas, who read from his own work. The judging committee comprised staff members from the Library and HCC, as well as local poet and scholar Karen Arnold, and Susan Thornton Hobby, editor of *Little Patuxent Review*. The winning poems were posted on the Library’s web site. WordUp! was sponsored by the Friends of Howard County Library.
Howard County Library Teen Idol
Howard County middle and high school students sang their way to stardom during the fifth annual Howard County Library Teen Idol in June. Recently incorporated into the A+ Partnership, this competition develops musical talents, builds self-confidence, boosts self-esteem, and teaches performance and communication skills. In preparation for this year’s competition, teen competitors attended vocal workshops with voice coach Mo Dutterer then practiced what they learned at karaoke nights.

Forty-four students auditioned and ten finalists were chosen to compete on June 26, where they faced judges Amy Fadool of Fox 45 and Justin Custer of Squaaks. This year’s champion, Alyssa Shouse, an eighth grade student at Elkridge Landing Middle School, won $200 and the opportunity to sing the national anthem at a Bowie Baysox game. Second and third place contestants received $100 and $75, respectively. The event was sponsored by the Friends of Howard County Library.

Teen Time
An ever popular after-school program for middle school students, Teen Time focuses on academic achievement, responsibility, respect, and kindness. Library instructors taught character trait lessons each month. Throughout the year, students participated in activities such as nutrition seminars, book clubs, stress management workshops, art classes, anti-smoking and anti-drug workshops, table manner seminars, craft projects, cooking demonstrations, movie screenings, and field trips. The year culminated in the Teen Time Showcase, which drew 100 people, including local officials, community partners, students, and their families.

Summer Reading Club
Catch the Reading Bug snared nearly 21,000 children and adults this year. The Library offered a Baby Book Worm game for infants and toddlers, Catch the Reading Bug for preschoolers and elementary school students, Metamorphosis for middle school students, and Buzz about Books for high school students and adults.

To bolster participation, the Library awarded trophies to the schools with the highest percentage of students enrolled in the Summer Reading Club. Sixty percent of Northfield Elementary School’s students participated, making them the champion in the Elementary School category. Triadelphia Ridge Elementary School came in second. In the middle school category, Burleigh Manor was the champion, followed by Cradlerock School.

Famous children’s author and entertainer Barry Louis Polisar headlined the Summer Reading Club kick-off, which drew a record crowd of 1,000 people to the Library’s East Columbia Branch. Other activities included FLUMPA the tree frog and his pet human Wendy, who engaged audiences with singing science stunts; the Oregon Ridge Nature Center, who presented “Edible Insects;” a magician and balloon artist, and a variety of craft activities.
Designed to increase student reading over the summer, summer reading serves as an educational bridge between the end of the school year, and the beginning of the next. Sustained reading over the summer continues to build vocabulary and strengthen reading comprehension—critical to not only improved academic success in English, but also in all subject areas, as achievement in all subjects is dependent on students’ ability to read.

“It was the Summer Reading Club that got my son reading... Now he reads at least one book a week!” — mother of a participant

Winter Reading
The Library’s Winter Reading Wonderland, a companion to the Summer Reading Club, inspired K-5 students and their families to read together during January and February. Families kept track of books read and submitted photos or drawings of themselves reading together, which were posted on the Library’s web site.

Choose Civility
Choose Civility Resource Guide. Library staff and HCPSS faculty developed a Choose Civility Resource Guide wiki to assist students in understanding how to “Choose Civility” and how doing so influences their lives and the lives of those around them. The guide, accessible through hclibrary.org, includes activities and discussion questions such as:

- As you begin to consider Civility, Dr. Forni suggests that you make a list of the words you think of when you hear the word “civility.” Think about words that sound like “civility” – civics, civilization. What do these words have in common? Develop a definition of civility.
- Discuss how civility impacts a classroom/school.
- Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden said, “You cannot attain and maintain physical condition unless you are morally and mentally conditioned. I tell my players that our team condition depends on two factors—how hard they work on the floor during practice and how well they behave between practices.”
  - Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
  - What is the role of “civility” in athletics?

Civility Documentary. In February, 87 students from Cradlerock School came to the Library’s East Columbia Branch to participate in Kindness Counts, a Choose Civility curriculum enhancement class. Canadian production company 90th Parallel Film & Television Productions Ltd. filmed the class for inclusion in a one-hour documentary, “Rude: Where are your Manners?”, which explores ideas of modern civility. Library instructors led the class using the book, Do Unto Otters by Laurie Keller, then involved the students in a lively discussion on civility.
STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Lazarus Foundation
In September, the Library, HCPSS, and the Lazarus Foundation launched PCs4Kids, a pilot initiative to accelerate the academic achievement of 20 students by providing them with home computers and access to the Internet. The Lazarus Foundation provided technical support to the families and trained tech savvy high school students to serve as mentors. The school system assisted with the application process. The Library supplied free Internet access to each participating family via the statewide Sailor VIP Cruise Account program, and provided instruction on accessing the Library’s catalog, Live Homework Help, and other e-resources.

Other Schools
The Library strengthened relations with the Norbel School, the homeschool community, and private schools and began developing partnerships with the Howard County campuses of Loyola University and University of Maryland University College.

PTAs
At the invitation of PTAs, Library staff provided instruction on Live Homework Help and other homework resources to parents at Atholton High School and Burleigh Manor Middle School. A Stories Galore class at the Worthington Elementary School Family Bedtime Stories event drew a crowd of nearly 300 students and parents.

Back to School
Howard County Library staff attended 63 out of the 70 HCPSS Back to School nights, and interacted with 14,373 parents, students and staff. At each session, staff processed library cards applications, and promoted Live Homework Help and other e-resources for assignments and research projects.

PARTNERSHIP
STATISTICS FY 2008

A+ interactions between Library staff and students, teachers or parents: 84,109

A+ Partnership library cards generated: 4,912 (27,663 since the partnership’s inception in 2002)

A+ Educator Cards generated: 544 (2,294 since card first offered in FY 06)

Materials borrowed with A+ Educator Cards: 28,608

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LEADERSHIP
Valerie J. Gross, Executive Director & CEO, Howard County Library (HCL)
Dr. Sydney L. Cousin, Superintendent, Howard County Public School System (HCPSS)
Dr. Katherine Hetherington, President, Howard Community College (HCC)

HCL and HCPSS A+ Advisory Committee for Fiscal Year 2007-2008
Joyce Agness, Special Education Instructional Facilitator for Middle Schools, HCPSS
Carol Fritts, Coordinator of Media and Educational Technology, HCPSS (Co-Chair)
Cari Gast, Head of Children’s and Teen Curriculum, HCL
Ann Gilligan, Deputy Executive Director, HCL
Laura M. Hook, Elementary ESOL Resource Teacher, HCPSS
Cindy Jones, Materials Management Coordinator, HCL
Molly Kelley, Library Media Instructional Facilitator, HCPSS
Christie Lassen, Director of Public Relations, HCL
Phil Lord, Elkridge Branch Manager, HCL
Herb Malveaux, Assistant Branch Manager, East Columbia Branch, HCL
Courtnay Moore, Library Media Specialist, Glenwood Middle School, HCPSS
Mary Schiller, Partnerships Office and Educational Foundation Manager, HCPSS
Kelli Shimabukuro, Community Education and Partnership Coordinator, HCL (Co-Chair)
Rita Snyder, A+ Partnership Liaison, HCL
Sharon Stein, Secondary Reading Facilitator, HCPSS

HCL and HCC A+ Advisory Committee for Fiscal Year 2007-2008
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Lucy Gardner, Director of Teaching and Learning Services, HCC
Ann Gilligan, Deputy Executive Director, HCL
Dr. Tara Hart, Division Chair of English & World Languages, HCC
Patricia Keeton, Executive Director of Workforce Development, HCC
Christie Lassen, Director of Public Relations, HCL
Becky Lessey, Director of Basic Skills & Special Populations Programs, HCC
Tracie Palm, Coordinator of Co-Curricular Programs, HCC
Rebecca Price, Director, ESL & ELI, HCC
Kelli Shimabukuro, Community Education and Partnership Coordinator, HCL