2026 - 2027 Press Releases

PGCPS Launches 2026-27 School Year 'Forward by Design'

August 20, 2026

New Superintendent, new three-year strategic plan set the stage for accelerated progress for every student.

UPPER MARLBORO, MD — Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) will welcome students back to classrooms on Tuesday, August 25, marking the beginning of a new chapter for one of the nation's largest school districts — one defined by new leadership, a new strategic plan and long-term planning to shape the future of the district's facilities and learning environments.



Thousands of PGCPS staff came together for a first-ever Staff Fest to connect and build momentum for the year ahead.

"**This is a new chapter for PGCPS**, one in which we are being **intentional about designing the future** our students deserve," said Superintendent Dr. Shawn Joseph. "**The goal** of our new three-year strategic plan is clear: we will **stabilize the instructional core** of the district **and improve the overall culture and feel of our organization for staff, families, and students**. For staff, that means clearer priorities, stronger support, better communication, and systems that make it easier to focus on students. For families and students, it means schools that feel welcoming, responsive, safe, and academically ambitious."

A New Strategic Direction



Forward by Design: Acceleration 2029 focuses on accelerating student achievement, strengthening staff development, expanding access to advanced programs, and deepening community partnerships.

"At the heart of our plan is a simple but demanding belief: All must mean all," Joseph said. "The student with a disability deserves our best. The student learning English deserves our best. The student who is chronically absent deserves our best. The student who is reading below grade level deserves our best. The student who is gifted, talented, and ready for more deserves our best. The student preparing for college, career, military service, public service, the arts, skilled trades, entrepreneurship, or a future still being imagined deserves our best. Every child who enters our care deserves a school system that does not ration excellence by zip code, program, language, disability, income, race, or circumstance. That is what *Forward by Design* means."

Academic Momentum & The Work Ahead

With the launch of *Forward by Design: Acceleration 2029,* which focuses on accelerating achievement in mathematics and literacy, PGCPS enters the 2026–27 school year with encouraging academic momentum and a clear focus on building on that progress.

PGCPS students demonstrated continued academic progress on the 2026 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP), with mathematics proficiency gains in every grade from 3 through 8 outpacing statewide improvement. Black students in PGCPS outperformed the statewide Black student average in English Language Arts and nearly matched the statewide Black student average in mathematics. The district also recorded gains across nearly every ELA and mathematics assessment.

Additionally, students with disabilities and multilingual learners saw notable gains across multiple grades and assessments in English Language Arts and mathematics, and several Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools posted strong gains among historically underserved student groups.



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The 2026–27 school year also underlines the district's continued investment in the future of its schools, as it prepares to open new state-of-the-art facilities while launching long-term planning to guide the modernization, expansion and replacement of schools across the district.

PGCPS will open the doors to two brand-new elementary schools on the first day: Margaret Brent Elementary School in New Carrollton and Templeton Elementary School in Riverdale Park, through a public-private partnership that cuts school construction timelines nearly in half. Brent and Templeton are the first two of eight schools to be delivered through Blueprint Phase II.

The district will also launch an updated Educational Facilities Master Plan (EFMP) to guide capital investments across the district's more than 200 schools and facilities over the next decade. The plan comes as the district reaches the 10-year mark of its current facilities planning cycle and will help identify priorities for new schools, major renovations and modernizations, overcrowding relief, and other facility needs.

"This is an opportunity for our entire community to help shape what the future of PGCPS looks like," Joseph said. "Our EFMP is about more than buildings. It is about making thoughtful, long-term decisions about where we invest and what our students and communities need from their learning environments for years to come."

PGCPS will engage students, families, educators, staff, community members and local partners through listening sessions and other opportunities for input. Community feedback will help inform the plan and the district's next generation of capital priorities.

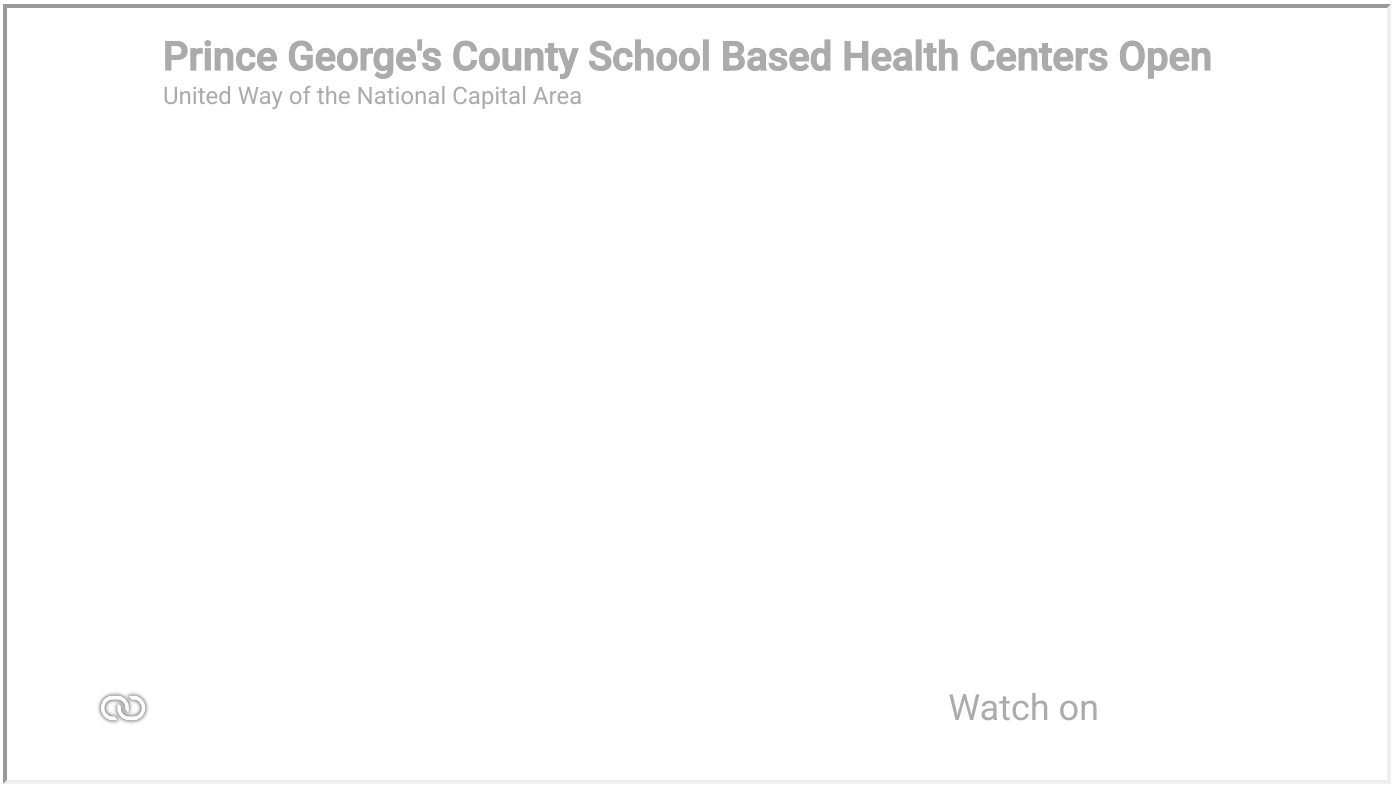
Expanding Opportunities and Support for Students

The 2026–27 school year also brings new initiatives designed to connect students to college, careers and wellness.

PGCPS is strengthening early college opportunities through new Dual Enrollment partnerships with the University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC) and Bowie State University, while bringing its Dual in the Schools model to every high school.

At the same time, the district is increasing access to health and wellness services.

Through a $2 million investment with Children's National Hospital, seven school-based health centers are now available to any enrolled PGCPS student, regardless of their home school. This new initiative builds on the continued availability of Hazel Health, which provides students with free virtual medical visits and teletherapy.



The centers provide primary and urgent care, behavioral health services, preventive care and health education. By reducing barriers such as transportation, cost,

appointment availability and time away from work or school, they help students access timely care in a safe, familiar setting.

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CONTACT

Prince George's County Public Schools
Sasscer Administration Building
14201 School Lane
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

301-952-6000

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