



HCSPA Outstanding School Psychologist of the Year 2026-2027: Call for Nominations!

The Howard County School Psychology Association (HCSPA) is seeking nominations for its Outstanding School Psychologist of the Year! Please consider nominating a colleague who embodies the qualities of an outstanding school psychologist whose practices align with the [National Association for School Psychology Practice Model](#).

Complete and submit the [nomination form](#) and TWO letters of recommendation no later than December 11, 2026. Email your letters to kevin_hughes@hcpss.org. The letters should address all nomination criteria below:

Nomination Criteria

Nominee must be a practicing school psychologist who works directly with students and:

- **Provides a full range of psychological services** (e.g., assessments, IEP/504, crisis teams, counseling, individual, group, consultation, collaboration, academic/behavioral interventions, school wide practices, mental health support)
- **Makes data-based decisions** (e.g., collects and interprets student, classroom, school wide data, progress monitoring, goal setting, behavior intervention plans, problem solving teams, assessments)
- **Consults and collaborates with home, school, and community stake-holders** (e.g., helps families, teachers, staff, community stakeholders understand students' learning and mental health needs, assists in navigating special education process, connects families with community services when needed)
- **Supports the development of students' cognitive/academic skills** (e.g., Instructional Intervention Team [IIT], assessment/data collection, consultation with general and special educators)
- **Embraces student diversity in development and learning** (e.g., assesses diverse learning needs, provides culturally responsive services to students and families from diverse backgrounds, effectively communicates with families, helps staff understanding and responsiveness to diverse cultures and backgrounds)
- **Possesses knowledge of school and systems organization, policy development, and climates** (e.g., school improvement team, Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [PBIS], team leadership)
- **Provides a full range of prevention, crisis intervention, and mental health services** (e.g., counseling, crisis/behavioral response, PBIS, behavior intervention plan development)
- **Performs job in an exemplary manner** (e.g., goes above and beyond what is required, stands out as a leader in the building, is sought for support, consultation, and expertise by staff, admin, parents, students)
- **Earns respect of others** (e.g., takes initiative, gets along well with others, is responsive, builds trust, has demonstrated leadership)

Tips for A Successful Nomination

Here are some things we have noticed over the years that lead to great nomination packets:

- **Think of ways to make your nominee stand out.** Every year we get lots of excellent nominations, so anything you can do to make your packet stand out goes a long way.
- **Show don't tell.** It's a Writing 101 cliché, but it's always more impactful to read a (short) story that illustrates the nominee's qualities than to read something vague like, "She is great with students."
- **Write it yourself.** We get it, AI is revolutionary and nomination letters are the exact type of thing you would want to use them for. The thing is that ChatGPT tends to describe people in the same ways and with the same phrases, and then they no longer stand out. (See again Tip #1.)
- **Involve other schools.** Many psychologists are split between schools or recently moved from another school. Don't be shy, reach out to staff at the other school(s) to collaborate!
- **Involve your nominee!** Schools like surprising their psychologists with a nomination, but they don't always know about the things the psychologist does outside of the school building. Are they part of a county work group? Co-chair of a psych department committee? Teaching a class at a local university? If you still want to be sneaky about it, we made [a questionnaire](#) you could give them to fill out. Tell them it's for a School Psychology Week activity or something, we don't care.
- **Consider revising a previous nomination.** We get incredible nominations every year but can only select one. If you weren't successful last year, you might have better luck this year! Be sure to make any necessary updates and boost any areas of weakness. If you didn't involve your nominee last time, they might have great suggestions for how to do so. (See again Tip #5.)

Process and Timeline

1. Complete and submit the [nomination form](#) and TWO letters of recommendation (emailed to kevin_hughes@hcpss.org) no later than **December 11, 2026**.
2. HCSPA's Outstanding School Psychologist of the Year will be announced in late January/early February, 2027.
3. The individual will work with his or her colleagues to complete the remainder of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA) nomination packet **by March, 2027**. This will include two more letters of recommendation, an updated CV, and a letter of support.

In an effort to recognize as many colleagues as possible, the committee is committed to recognizing a winning candidate only once in their career. Note that the following individuals have previously received the award:

Prior HCSPA School Psychologists of the Year

1995 Andrew Elgort*	1999 Sue Garner*	2001 Cynthia Schulmeyer*	2004 Amy McMillion*
2010 Keren Kreitzer*	2011 Lenore Schiff*	2013 AnnMarie Kasuda	2015 JT Ridgely
2020 Katie Burkhouse	2021 Jonathan Solomon	2022 Jeff Leard	2023 Chandra McKnight-Dean
2024 Laura Smith-Grose*	2025 Kevin Hughes		2026 Nicki Meshbesh

**Also named Maryland School Psychologist of the Year*