

HCEA WORK-TO-RULE



RESPONSES & TEMPLATES

E-MAIL TEMPLATES

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Unpaid clubs or voluntary activities

Many staff serve as advisors to clubs, or on committees that do not pay a stipend. During work-to-rule, HCEA is asking members to **refrain from participating in these voluntary commitments**. If you have already made a commitment or want to know how to decline a future request, please use the language below to rescind or decline that commitment.

Sample Email to Administrator	Sample Email to Students/Parents
<p>Dear [Administrator],</p> <p>As you know, I currently volunteer my time [before/after school] with [Club/Voluntary Activity]. Although I enjoy volunteering my time with students in this [Club/Voluntary Activity], I wanted to let you know that I [am/will be] temporarily suspending my participation while work-to-rule is in effect. This isn't my preference, but HCPSS' decision to return educators to buildings without a plan to keep us all safe has led our union's members to adopt a work-to-rule resolution. This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon so that I can return to volunteering my time with [Club].</p> <p>Respectfully, [Your Name]</p>	<p>Dear [Students/Parents of Club Name],</p> <p>It's with a heavy heart that I must inform you that I will be suspending my role as [role title; i.e. advisor] to [Club/Voluntary Activity]. It's my sincere hope that this will be only temporary until the Board of Education can provide us with vaccines and a plan to keep educators like me and my students safe. This is a truly frustrating position for all of us, and I want you to know that I hope to return as your advisor as soon as it is safe to do so.</p> <p>Respectfully, [Your Name]</p>

Substituting, Coverage, and PIP

“Covering” vs. “Substituting”: What’s the difference? When an administrator approaches you to provide class coverage for one or more periods, it’s sometimes hard to know if the request being made is for temporary coverage or as a substitute. Ask the following question: “Is this request being made to substitute for an employee on sick, personal, or long-term approved leave”? If the answer is yes, you are being asked to substitute.

What about during my planning period? Great question. Under our contract, you cannot be required to provide coverage or to substitute during your planning period. If your administrator insists, comply with the request and contact the union.

What about during PIP time? Under Article 18.F of the HCEA Teacher contract, the scheduling of PIP periods shall be determined by the principal. However, the contract language also stipulates that principals will support teacher-initiated collaboration among educators during PIP time. ***Our advice is to “claim” your PIP time by scheduling collaborative planning with colleagues during your PIP period time, utilizing the template email provided below.*** If your administrator insists, comply with the request and contact the union.

What about paras? Article 11.5[C](1) of the HCEA-ESP Master Agreement indicates that paraeducators must agree to participate as a substitute; your administrator cannot force you to accept the assignment. If your administrator insists, comply with the request and contact the union.

Sample Email for ESPs/Paras:	Sample Email for Certificated Staff:
<p>Dear [Administrator],</p> <p>Since HCPSS has decided to return staff and students to the buildings without a plan to keep us safe, and without ensuring most of us are vaccinated against COVID, I respectfully decline to provide sub coverage for employees out on approved leave. Specifically, Article 11.5[C](1) of the HCEA-ESP Master Agreement indicates that paraeducators must agree to participate as a substitute.</p> <p>We are committed to work-to-rule until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting educators the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and</p>	<p>Dear [Administrator],</p> <p>I’m writing to let you know that during my scheduled PIP time on [date/time] my colleagues [include names] and I will be collaborating on [insert specific collaborative effort and connection to curriculum]. As you may know, Article 18(F)[4] of the Master Agreement provides that administrators will support teacher collaboration during PIP time, so I appreciate your adherence to the contract language by not assigning other trainings or duties, such as substituting for another colleague, during this window.</p>

healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

Respectfully,
[Your Name]

This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

We are committed to work-to-rule until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting educators the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

Respectfully,
[Your Name]

After your duty day auto-reply

Here is a sample response you can use to communicate with parents or administrators who email you after the duty day is done. You may also want to use this language as an 'out of office' response each day when your duty day has concluded.

EMAIL 1

Hello,

Thank you for reaching out to me. I will respond to your email when my contractual duty day resumes tomorrow. Currently, HCPSS staff are only working during our paid duty day until the Howard County Board of Education agrees to delay reopening until those who want vaccines have gotten them, to stand up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and to abide by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

I want to be in the classroom with my students, but we must do so safely and sustainably. We need to do more to ensure that there are adequate safety measures, reasonable educator workloads, and sufficient funding to make sure that inequities are addressed.

Thank you for your patience as we work to make our schools as safe as possible for students and staff to help eliminate the spread of COVID-19. This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Meeting request after hours

Here is a sample response you can use to communicate with administrators or parents who ask you to participate in voluntary unpaid meetings outside your duty day.

EMAIL 1

Dear **[Administrator/Parent]**,

Since HCPSS has decided to return staff and students to the buildings without a plan to keep us safe, and without ensuring most of us are vaccinated against COVID, I can only participate in meetings during my paid duty day.

We are committed to work-to-rule until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting educators the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

End-of-Day Duties Remaining

Educators may need to communicate with their administrators about the work remaining after each paid duty day is done. A sample message like this helps prioritize what can and cannot be done within the time limits of the duty day, and puts that responsibility back on your administrator. Similarly, you can use it to communicate with elected Board of Education members, if HCEA asks you to do so.

EMAIL 1

Dear **[Administrator/BOE Member]**,

My paid duty day has ended, and I am stopping for the day. Because I had to complete **[list priority task(s) here]**, I did not have time to complete **[list lower-priority task(s) here]**. Howard County educators recently voted to begin a work-to-rule action, so therefore I am no longer volunteering to complete these items after my paid duty day is done.

We are committed to work-to-rule until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting educators the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

Special Educator IEP workload

Special Educators may want to know how to navigate the legal requirements to provide services outlined in an IEP while completing all required special education paperwork, which is simply not possible within their paid duty day. Please remember the obligation to provide those services is not yours personally, but rather HCPSS' legal obligation as a local education agency under Maryland law. You may find a message like the one below helpful.

EMAIL 1

Dear **[Administrator]**,

Due to the amount of paperwork related to the IEPs that are assigned to me, I have been unable to complete all of them within my duty day. It is HCPSS' responsibility to make sure that the system complies with the legal requirements of the IEPs. Howard County educators recently voted to begin a work-to-rule action, and therefore I am no longer volunteering to complete these items after my paid duty day is done.

We are committed to work-to-rule until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting educators the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

IEP Meetings

IEP meetings cannot occur during your lunch or planning periods. They can, however, occur during PIP time or instructional time.

During planning Time: If you are asked to attend an IEP meeting during your lunch or planning period, you may respectfully decline. If your administrator insists that you attend the meeting, comply with their request, and contact the union immediately.

During Instructional/PIP time: If you are asked to attend during instructional or PIP time, utilize the collaborative PIP time language above, but your administrator must provide sub coverage if you are teaching.

What about Paraeducators?

IEP meetings cannot occur during your lunch or break periods, but you are otherwise required to attend IEP meetings when asked to do so.

Sample Email for Certificated Staff:

Dear **[Administrator]**,

I'm writing to let you know that during my scheduled PIP time on [date/time] my colleagues [include names] and I will be collaborating on [insert specific collaborative effort and connection to curriculum]. As you may know, Article 18(F)[4] of the Master Agreement provides that administrators will support teacher collaboration during PIP time, so I appreciate your adherence to the contract language by not asking me to attend IEP meetings during this window.

This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

We are committed to work-to-rule until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting educators the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

Respectfully,
[Your Name]

Counselors: “Other Duties as Assigned”

Counselors are often asked to take on “additional duties as assigned” that have made it extremely difficult to meet the needs of their students during their paid duty day. Here is a sample email counselors can use to decline those additional assignments under HCEA’s work-to-rule action.

EMAIL 1

Dear **[Administrator]**,

Since HCPSS has decided to return staff and students to the buildings without a plan to keep us safe, and without ensuring most of us are vaccinated against COVID, I respectfully decline additional assignments that would require me to work beyond my duty day. As a counselor, I must prioritize my students’ needs during my paid duty day, and there is not enough time for me to serve them while taking on additional duties, like **[insert task you are being asked to do]**.

We are committed to work-to-rule until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting educators the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

Respectfully,
[Your Name]

Secretaries

Secretaries should prioritize your secretarial duties over requests to cover classes, to serve as lunch/recess monitors, or to perform other duties. We have provided sample language that you can utilize when asked to perform duties that you feel are outside of your core duties.

If your administrator insists that you complete the assignment, comply with the request and contact the union.

As a special note for Teachers Secretaries, under the Certificated Agreement, “Teachers’ work shall have priority over administrative work.”

EMAIL 1

Dear **[Administrator]**,

Since HCPSS has decided to return staff and students to the buildings without a plan to keep us safe. As a secretary, I must prioritize my core duties during my paid duty day. There is not enough time for me to fulfill those responsibilities while taking on other duties, such as **[insert task you are being asked to do]**. How would you like me to proceed?

We are committed to work-to-rule until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting staff the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

This is a frustrating position for us all, and I hope that HCPSS changes its decision soon.

Respectfully,
[Your Name]

Letters of Recommendation

Many educators write letters of recommendation to help students applying to colleges, programs, or other institutions of learning. This voluntary unpaid student support is time consuming, and you may not be able to complete these during the paid duty day. Feel free to use a message like the one below when communicating with students and parents.

EMAIL 1

Dear **[Student/Parent Requesting Letter of Recommendation]**,

It's with a heavy heart that I must inform you that I cannot complete letters of recommendation for my students because I am focused on completing my core job function during the paid duty day. Letters of recommendation are a voluntary, unpaid activity that many teachers provide, but currently we are in a work-to-rule status until the Board of Education acts responsibly by permitting educators the option to delay returning until vaccinated, ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for students and educators that are returning, standing up against bullying behavior by the Governor and State Superintendent, and abiding by the metrics the Board set for making decisions about reopening buildings and returning to virtual learning.

It's my sincere hope that this will be only temporary until the Board of Education can provide us with vaccines and a plan to keep educators like me and my students safe. This is a truly frustrating position for all of us, and I want you to know that I hope to provide your letter as soon as I can.

Respectfully,
[Your Name]