

October 27, 2023

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

Happy Friday Harper's Choice families! We are looking forward to the beginning of 2nd quarter next Wednesday. This is a reminder that Tuesday, October 31, is an early release day. Students will be dismissed at 12:15 p.m. Tuesday also marks the end of Breast Cancer Awareness month. We will be having a school-wide Pink Out Day on 10/31/23 for our school to show support for our staff, family, and other members of the community who have been affected by this disease. Students are encouraged to wear pink, however full face paint or masks are not permitted.

We are also asking that students keep their extra candy at home and not share it at school. This is to minimize disruption to the school day of friends trying to share candy in school. It also is to ensure that we are supportive of our Building Services team by not having extra candy wrappers around the school. Thank you for your cooperation with this.

As we start a new quarter, we encourage you to talk to your child about the new start they get in each class. This is a great time to review your expectations with your child about homework and classwork completion. We would also like to review the technology expectations. Students' phones and listening devices (headphones, earbuds, Air Pods) all need to be turned off and out of sight from 8:30-3:15 each day. Students will be given one reminder. If it is seen again, it will be held in the Front Office until the end of the school day. If it continues to be a distraction, the school will work with parents to determine the next steps, which could include holding the cell phone in the office during the school day, having a parent pick up the cell phone, or an agreement that the cell phone will be kept at home. Please refrain from texting them during the school day, as they should not be using their phones for any reason. As a reminder, we do have a dedicated student phone in the Front Office for students to use during the day. You may call the school at 410-313-6929 if you must speak with your child.

Harper's Choice Staff are here to support your students, but it takes a partnership with home and families. Please let us know if there are any ways that we can support you and your child as we continue to work to make sure all students are supported and are successful at Harper's Choice.

Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

WELL-BEING SURVEY FOR ALL 7th and 8th GRADE STUDENTS

On Wednesday, November 8, all seventh and eighth grade students at Harper's Choice MS will be taking a county provided well-being survey during SEL Flex Time. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about student's experiences at school, and better understand

student skills, strengths, and challenges. Students will be asked to self-reflect on self-management skills, emotional regulation, positive and challenging feelings, and supportive relationships. Survey results will be used to help guide county/school level SEL focus for future. Parents will be given the option to opt-out of survey participation. Please read the [attached letter](#) for more information - [Spanish Version](#).

A NOTE FROM THE HEALTH ROOM - REGISTRATION CLOSES TONIGHT

Each year, the Howard County Public School System partners with the Maryland Partnership for Prevention to bring flu immunizations into our schools for students. This year, they will also be offering the latest Covid vaccine. The clinic at Harper's Choice Middle School will be held on **November 3** during school hours. If you would like your child to be vaccinated against the flu and/or Covid at this clinic, please register at this link: [Harper's Choice vaccine clinic](#).

You are not required to provide your child's insurance information. It is perfectly fine to receive both vaccines on the same day. If you have any concerns about the new Covid vaccine, you are advised to speak with your child's pediatrician. All in-school clinics will be closed to registration **one week before** the clinic date to allow our health room staff time to review and prepare the consents and make sure enough vaccine is ordered. If you have any questions, please call your school's health room at 410-313-6934.

Cada año, el Sistema de Escuelas Públicas del Condado de Howard se asocia con la Asociación para la Prevención de Maryland (Maryland Partnership for Prevention) para llevar las vacunas contra la gripe a nuestras escuelas para los estudiantes. Este año, también ofrecerán la vacuna contra Covid más reciente. La clínica en Harpers Choice MS tendrá lugar el Friday November 3 durante el horario escolar. Si desea que su estudiante se vacune contra la gripe y/o Covid en esta clínica, Por favor regístrese utilizando el siguiente enlace: <https://www.marylandvax.org/appointment/en/reg/7961620602>

No está obligado a proporcionar la información sobre el seguro de su estudiante. Está perfectamente bien recibir ambas vacunas el mismo día. Si tiene alguna inquietud sobre la nueva vacuna contra Covid, se le recomienda que hable con el pediatra de su estudiante. La inscripción a todas las clínicas en las escuelas se cerrará una semana antes de la fecha de la clínica para permitir que nuestro personal de la sala de sanidad tenga tiempo para revisar y preparar los consentimientos y asegurarse de que se encarguen vacunas suficientes. Si tiene alguna pregunta, llame a la sala de sanidad de su escuela al 410-313-6934.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE SCHEDULING WINDOW

The Parent/Teacher conference scheduling window for parents to schedule conferences will open on Monday, November 6 and will be open thru November 16. For assistance, you

may view this [video](#) or use this [link](#) for additional instructions.

CAREER ACADEMY INFORMATION SESSIONS

November 8 and December 12, 2023

Current 8-11 grade students and their parents/guardians are invited to attend in-person information sessions on HCPSS career academies on Wednesday, November 8 or Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023 at the Applications and Research Laboratory, 10920 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City, MD. The evening will include two 15-minute information sessions and a visit to a third academy beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Participants will learn how Career and Technical Education (CTE) career academies provide high school students with opportunities to earn college credit, scholarships, and industry certifications, participate in worksite and mentorship experiences, and become creative problem solvers by participating in hands-on project-based learning.

Complete [information on all career academies](#) is available online. Students/parents are encouraged to review the [Career Academies Overview](#).

Schedule-Agenda

- 6:30-6:45 pm Session I
- 6:50-7:05 pm Session II
- 7:10-7:30 pm Open to visit any academy

Participating academies include:

- Aerospace Engineering: Project Lead the Way
- Agricultural Science
- Animation and Interactive Media
- Apprenticeship Maryland (for current 11th graders)
- Architectural Design
- Automotive Technology
- Biotechnology
- Civil Engineering: Project Lead the Way
- Construction
- Cybersecurity Networking
- Finance
- Graphic Design
- Health Professions
- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning

Parking at Applications and Research Lab (ARL) is limited. Please plan to arrive at the ARL by 6:15 p.m. to ensure time to park at either at the ARL, Homewood School or Board of Education lots next to the ARL.

LOST AND FOUND

We have a large amount of lost and found items. They are on a shelf in the back of the cafeteria. Please remind your child if they have lost something to please check there. Any items leftover after quarter 1 will be **donated on November 3**.

EMERGENCY CARD PROCEDURES - FAMILY FILE

HCPSS utilizes Family File for parents/guardians to supply emergency information. Parents/guardians must verify and/or update information for each child every year. [Details on Family File are available online](#). We are currently at 64% completion. If you haven't had time to complete, please take the time this weekend. If you need assistance, please call the front office.

STUDENT CONTEST AND POP UP FOOD PANTRY

Please see the attached [MLK Contest.png](#) for more information.

- [MLK Application.pdf](#)
- [Save the dates](#) (Celebration and Day of Service)
- [Pop Up Food Pantry](#)

RE-TAKE/ABSENTEE STUDENT PHOTO DAY

Tuesday, November 14 will be re-take/absentee photo day.

If your child is re-taking their photo, they must bring the original portrait package back to the photographer on this day. Students who were absent, should contact the main office for an order envelope.

HCDRUGFREE UPCOMING EVENTS

Free Parenting Classes - As educators, we are well aware of the ever-increasing pressures placed on students. The academic demands, social challenges, and rapidly changing world can be overwhelming. Our [GGCFall2023.pdf](#) parenting classes can equip parents and/or grandparents with the knowledge and skills to reduce the risk that their children will use drugs and alcohol or engage in other dangerous behaviors. These classes are for families with children 9 - 14 yrs. old and held over Zoom.

Medication and Sharps Disposal Take Back Day - October 28 in the Wilde Lake Village Center Parking Lot from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Safely dispose of prescription medication, over-the-counter meds, sharps, vitamins, pet meds, vape devices, inhalers, and more!

Also, 100 medication lockboxes purchased by HCPSS will be given away for FREE!
See [MedsSharps10-28-23 \(D\).pdf](#) for more information.

UPCOMING DATES

10/31/2023 Schools close 3 hours early, end of first quarter
11/03/2023 HCMS Flu Clinic
11/06/2023 Conference scheduling opens for parents
11/08/2023 Report cards available to view in HCPSS Connect at 4:00 p.m.
11/14/2023 Absentee/Re-take student photo
11/16/2023 Conference scheduling closes for parents
11/20/2023 In person Parent/Teacher Conferences
11/21-11/22/2023 Virtual Parent/Teacher Conferences
11/23-11/24/2023 Schools and offices closed for holiday

CONTINUING ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTRAMURALS

We are excited to announce that Intramurals are starting up at HCMS.
Please see below for permission slips:

[Girls Basketball](#)

[Boys Basketball](#)

[Student Leader Mentees](#)

[Jazz Band](#)

[Rainbow Alliance Club](#)

[Boys Mentoring Program - Cougars to Kings](#)

[Cheerleading](#)

Fan Expectations and Safety at HCPSS Athletics Events

High school athletic events serve as a wonderful opportunity for students, friends, families, staff and community members to come together in support of their favorite teams. To ensure these games are able to be safely enjoyed by all in attendance, it is imperative that everyone adheres to the rules, expectations and laws in place to ensure safety.

All children who are in 8th grade or younger must be accompanied by an adult at all HCPSS athletics contests or will be turned away from entry. Adult supervision must continue for the entirety of the athletic contest.

HCPSS AND THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS (TCOE) COMMUNITY ACADEMIES

HCPSS and The Council of Elders of the Black Community of Howard County (TCOE) have partnered to sponsor the following parent workshops series:

- December 16: Social Emotional Well-Being and Substance Abuse
- January 27: Processes for Parent Empowerment
- March 9: Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

SCHOOL MEALS

HCPSS no longer will use Nutrislice for school menus or MySchoolBucks* for meal payments and instead is offering a new parent site for all things food and nutrition. [LINQ Connect](#) is a secure, online portal that allows families to:

View breakfast and lunch menus

Make online payments to their child's meal account

Monitor their child's accounts

Schedule recurring payments and/or low balance alerts

Submit an online application for the Free and Reduced Meals program

Please review [HCPSS meal information](#) and find information on FARMs (Free and Reduced Meals). [Applications](#) must be completed every year. Students whose families do not qualify for the free or reduced lunch program will be required to pay the daily meal price for lunch - \$3.30. Students are welcome to bring their own lunch, however we do not accept food deliveries from other vendors (DoorDash, Grubhub, Uber Eats, etc.).

Breakfast will be provided to all students at no cost. Breakfast will be served from 8:20 - 8:35 a.m. All outside breakfast items (including drinks) are prohibited from being consumed in school during this time.

HCPSS FREE STUDENT RTA BUS PASS PROGRAM

Thanks to a continued partnership between HCPSS, Howard County Government, and Regional Transportation Agency (RTA), all HCPSS middle and high school students have access to free RTA bus passes through summer 2024. Students have full access to the RTA system and are not limited to transportation to and from schools or to school-related activities. If your child is interested, they can visit our front office to request a free pass.

ATTENDANCE REMINDERS

Need to report an absence? Please email your absence notes/questions to: HCMSabsence@hcpss.org or send in a signed parent/guardian note. The email should include the student's name, the parent's name, the date(s) or period(s) (if absence is a partial day) of the absence, and the reason for the absence. The email must be received within 5 days of the absence. Requests for changes to attendance submitted after the 5 day deadline cannot be honored.

Please Note: Absences are unexcused until an email or note is received.

For Discretionary Absences (up to 3 per school year), please complete the linked form and email it to: HCMSabsence@hcpss.org. This form must be completed one week prior to absence.

For Religious Observances, please complete the linked form and email to: HCMSabsence@hcpss.org.

HCMS FOOD PANTRY

HCMS has partnered up with the [LindaBen Foundation](#) and Safeway to help feed our HCMS community. If your family is interested in receiving food boxes or you would like to make donations to our food pantry please call the HCMS front office.

If you would like to make direct donations to the LindaBen Foundation, please view this [information](#).

COMMUNICATION TO FAMILIES

Families may find it useful to bookmark the following webpages where information will be continually updated and posted:

[HCMS website](#)

[HCPSS website](#)

[HCPSS 2023-2024 Calendar](#)

[2023-2024 School Year](#)

[HCPSS News Site](#)

[HCPSS Help Site](#)

GROCERY STORE FUNDRAISING PROGRAMS

HCMS partners with the following grocery stores as a fundraiser for our school. Please consider linking your card and help raise money for our school!

Harris Teeter Together in Education

Harris Teeter's [Together In Education](#) program gives schools a chance to earn funds when you link your VIC card and shop Harris Teeter brands. When you shop Harris Teeter brands, a percentage of your purchase is donated to the school that your VIC card is linked to. There are NO LIMITS to how much a school can earn. Register your VIC card to our SCHOOL ID# 7984.

Weis Markets Weis4School

Through the [Weis4School program](#), you can earn cash for HCMS each time you shop at

Weis. To register, simply scan the HCMS Barcode at checkout. Each time you shop at Weis, be sure to scan your Weis card to earn money for our school.

CLOTHING TO CASH

HCMS participates in the Clothing to Cash fundraising program. Clothing to Cash is a textile recycling program that donates money to the school for every pound of donated items. Look for the white donation bin at the bottom of the Harper's Choice Middle School parking lot. Clothing to Cash will accept items in ALL conditions: new with tags, or torn, stained, worn-out knees, shoes with holes or only one shoe, backpacks, old sheets, towels, blankets, stuffed animals and more. What a great way to help the school and clean out your closets! All donations must be bagged and put in the collection bin.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please visit the [Community News and Programs](#) page on the HCPSS website for announcements of upcoming events and programs sponsored by non-profit organizations.