

March 7, 2025

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

I want to start this message by thanking our students for doing a great job with the new personal technology (cell phone) policy and consequences. We've had a few students who have forgotten what the rules are, but overall, I appreciate the way they have made the transition of keeping phones off and away all day. As a reminder, the HCPSS consequences for violating this policy is as follows: First violation-phones will be collected and held in the Front Office until the end of the school day (unless phones are taken after lunch and then they can be picked up at the end of the day and turned in the next day). For the first offense, a student may collect the phone. For any violation after that, a parent/guardian or someone on the student's emergency contact list will need to pick up the phone from the school. Phones must be picked up between 8:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. when the office is open.

We would also like to take a minute to welcome Mr. Justin Rhymes as our new Black Student Achievement Program Liaison. He has been meeting our students this week in the cafeteria and around the school. We are excited to have him join us at Harper's Choice.

Dr. Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

HCMS is currently running a Joe Corbi's and Claire's Gourmet Fundraiser. Please see the [attached letter](#) for all important information, dates, and your ORG ID #.

Packets were distributed to all students, so please make sure you look for it and check it out.

Ready to get started? [CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

[View Brochure Here](#)

We appreciate your support of this fundraiser.

Everyone who sells 10 items or more will be entered into our Bonus Drawing for a chance to win a \$50 Amazon Gift Card and one free hour jump pass to Skyzone Trampoline Park (Columbia).

Fundraiser will run thru March 20. **Delivery will be on April 10 to HCMS for pick up.**

HC DRUGFREE UPDATES

Free Parenting/Grandparenting Classes - Open to parents, guardians and grandparents residing in Howard County or with school-age children/grandchildren residing in the County. Evidence-based, interactive prevention program that provides families with the skills and knowledge to reduce the risk that their children will use drugs and alcohol or engage in other dangerous behaviors. The curriculum was written for families with children 9-14 years olds, but we believe it is appropriate for K-12 families. Class dates: **March 18, 21, 25, 28 and April 1 from Noon to 1:30 p.m. on**

Zoom. Visit HC DrugFree's website for more information and register at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2025GGC>

Drive-Thru Medication and Sharps Disposal – Saturday, April 26 in the Wilde Lake Village Center Parking Lot near the Swim Center from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Safely dispose of prescription and over-the-counter medication, EpiPens and other sharps, vitamins, pet meds, vape devices, inhalers, and more! Need student, adult, and medically-trained adult volunteers. Giving away 100 medication lockboxes.

For more information: <https://hcdrugfree.org/drug-take-back-day-1/>

To sign up to volunteer: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/4-26-25TakeBack>

Teen Advisory Council - Open to Howard County students in grades 8-12. Earn Community Service Hours and make meaningful contributions to the community. Next meeting: **Monday May 19, 2025, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. on Zoom.** For more information, visit: <https://hcdrugfree.org/teen-advisory-council/>

HCPSS 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR UPDATES

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) 2024-2025 school year calendar included five inclement weather days, June 12–13 and June 16–18. As of Feb. 28, HCPSS has used six days. In order to meet the State-mandated 180 days for students, HCPSS must add a day to the school year calendar.

At the February 27 meeting, the Board of Education approved making Monday, March 31, a full day for students, shifting the scheduled Professional Work and Development Day for school staff to Monday, April 14, which is the first day of spring break. HCPSS did request a waiver for the sixth inclement weather day from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), but it was not approved.

The Board also approved moving the end of the third marking period from March 28 to April 4, which accounts for inclement weather days and better balances the number of days in each marking period.

Barring any additional inclement weather days, the last day of school will be Wednesday, June 18, 2025. Updates to the June calendar include the following:

- Friday, June 6: Schools dismiss three hours early; No half-day pre-K/RECC
- Monday, June 9-Friday June 13: Full school day
- Monday, June 16-Tuesday, June 17: Schools dismiss three hours early
- Wednesday, June 18: Last day of school; schools dismiss three hours early

An updated [HCPSS calendar](#) can be found online.

[Español](#) | [中文](#) | [한국어](#)

UPCOMING DATES

03/14/2025 Schools close 3 hours early, Professional Work/Wellness Day
03/31/2025 **Schools are now OPEN**
04/02/2025 Student Spring Pictures, am
04/04/2025 End of 3rd Quarter
04/09/2025 Empowerment Night 5:30 p.m.
04/14/2025 - 04/21/2025 Schools closed for Spring Break
04/25/2025 Report cards available at 4:00 p.m.

CONTINUING ANNOUNCEMENTS

DONATION REQUEST FOR TISSUES

As the winter months are among us, we would appreciate and accept any donations of tissues! We thank you for your support in advance.

INTERNET RESOURCE

Project 10Million's [Direct to Parent/Guardian program](#) provides internet access to eligible families that have a student who meets the eligibility criteria. Approved families receive 200GB of mobile data per year for 5 years and a FREE mobile hotspot, plus the opportunity to purchase additional Wi-Fi devices at a low cost.

- New and existing T-Mobile (including Metro by T-Mobile and Assurance) as well as Non-T-Mobile customers are eligible to apply.
- Available to residents of the United States and Puerto Rico. Not currently available in the US Virgin Islands.
- One free T-Mobile hotspot device and 200GB/year data line per household, max one per student.
- Data service ends when allotment is reached until the yearly renewal date (additional data passes are available for purchase).
- May purchase up to five select, at-cost Wi-Fi-only tablets and laptops for use with the hotspot device.

Website linked here:

https://www.t-mobile.com/support/account/project-10million-direct-to-parent-guardian-eligibility?icid=MGPO_TMO_U_20TENMM_6BRGAVTKUD4AUN8W23252

UPDATE FAMILY FILE TODAY!

As field trips are quickly approaching, please make sure that you have submitted your Family File. We are currently at 93% completion. All families must update their emergency contact information annually. While we recognize that many of you may not have any changes, you must transition through each screen and click submit at the end for this task to be completed. **The completion of the Family File is essential to your students' participation in field trips, dances, and other fun activities throughout the year.** Please visit [HCPSS Connect](#) today and click submit on the final screen! If you need assistance, please call the front office.

Family File Directions

[FAMILY FILE USER GUIDE \(ENGLISH\)](#)

[FAMILY FILE USER GUIDE \(SPANISH\)](#)

Thank you to all of the families who have completed their Family File!

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 2025. 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.

HCPSS POLICY 9400 - STUDENT BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) is committed to providing a safe, engaging, and supportive school environment that fosters the social and emotional safety, dignity, and well-being of all students. HCPSS acknowledges the need for employees

1. to use an array of research-based positive behavior interventions, strategies, and supports to address student behaviors and keep students safe.
2. to minimize the practice of exclusion from the classroom environment
3. to minimize the practice of physical restraint (which may only be used when necessary to protect a student or other person from imminent, serious, physical harm and only after other less intrusive, nonphysical interventions have failed or been determined inappropriate).

It is an expectation that HCPSS employees will be responsive to all incidents of exclusion or physical restraint and appropriately case manage impacted students to minimize unsafe behaviors and maximize instructional engagement.

Additional information can be found at [HCPSS Policy 9400 - Student Behavior Intervention](#). If you have any questions regarding this policy or its implementation, please contact a school administrator.

HCPSS POLICY 9460

The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all students. Preventing bullying is an important part of this goal. [HCPSS Policy 9460](#) states that bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation are prohibited in HCPSS. Our administration and staff have been trained and made aware of this policy as well as preventative and responsive measures.

We know how important your role is in not only supporting your children, but also reporting possible incidents as you become aware of them. The BCHI Reporting Form should be used to report all alleged incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation that occur at school or have a connection back to the school setting that create a risk of harm to other students while they are at school or interfere with the educational environment. An [online version](#) is available and can easily and confidentially be used by students, staff, and family members. Hard copies of this form are available in the main office, staff workroom, school counseling office, media center, and health services office. If you believe your child has been bullied, please complete and submit this form as soon as possible and/or assist your child in doing so.

Once the form is submitted, school administrators will ensure the parent/guardian of both the alleged target and alleged offender are aware of the report and will begin an investigation within two school days of receiving the report. Parents/guardians can expect a school administrator to reach out to them during the investigation. Once the investigation is completed, parents/guardians will be provided written notice of the outcome of the investigation within fifteen days of receiving the complaint, excluding extenuating circumstances.

CAR LOOP REMINDERS

Please remember that anyone dropping off students in the morning should use our designated drop-off location which is located at the back of our bus line in the large parking lot. We are asking parents to refrain from dropping off students in the small parking lot as it causes congestion. Our concern is the safety of our students, parents and staff. Thank you for using our [designated student drop-off location](#).

WILDE LAKE HIGH SCHOOL SPECTATOR RULES/GUIDELINES

Please view this [flyer](#) for more information.

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 2024-2025 Calendar](#)
[2024-2025 School Year](#)
[HCPSS News Site](#)
[HCPSS Help Site](#)

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. We appreciate your support!

Please remember to follow these [guidelines](#).

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.

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.