September 1, 2023

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

What an amazing opening week it has been at Harper's Choice! The excitement and positive energy have made it a joy for us to see your children in our building! As a reminder, the doors open for students at 8:27 a.m. and 1st period starts promptly at 8:40 a.m. This means students need to be here by 8:35 a.m. to ensure they are ready to start class when the bell rings. If you need assistance with creating morning routines to ensure your child gets to school on time, please reach out to the school counselor or the grade level administrator. With routines in place, we know that our students will be able to arrive to school on time and have a successful day.

I also wanted to take this time to thank the 42% of our families who have completed their Family File updates for this school year! This is important information that needs to be updated every year to ensure that we have the most accurate information to be able to communicate with you and our student's emergency contacts. Details on Family File are available online. Please complete this important task so we may best support your child and your family.

We were very excited to meet with all of our students this week both in grade level meetings and by going into individual classes. We reviewed our behavioral and academic expectations for our students. We introduced our new school motto, "I Matter! You Matter! We Matter!" and highlighted how important it is for us to support everyone in our community. We also highlighted the HCPSS Responsible Use of Technology policy. This includes that middle school students may not use their phones during the school day at any time. This includes hallways, bathrooms, and cafeteria. We realize there might be times when students need to contact home. We now have a dedicated phone in the Front Office for students to use if they need to contact someone. Likewise, we ask that if you need to get in touch with your child during the school day to please call the school at 410-313-6929. We can make sure that you are able to connect with your child when you call.

We can't wait to see our families at our Back to School Night on Thursday, September 7 at 6 p.m. This is a great chance for you to come, follow the schedule of your child, and get to know their teachers. There is additional information below and we hope to see many of you at Harper's Choice next Thursday. We are making a few tweaks to schedules to balance class sizes and ensure students are in classes where they can be successful. To know which teachers to see which period we will have updated schedules printed for your child when you arrive. The presentation will start promptly at 6 p.m. and then we will start the class rotations after that.

Finally, we appreciate your patience as we have continued to work through the transportation challenges this week. We appreciate you following the directions of our staff at arrival and dismissal so we can ensure all of our students get to and from school safely. Again, thank you for a wonderful start to the 2023-2024 school year. We can't wait to see how much our students and community grow!

Dr. Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PHOTOS
Student photos will be taken on the morning of Wednesday, September 13.
All students will be photographed. These photos will be used for their school ID and the HCMS yearbook. Please see this flyer for more information. The pre-order code for online order is HCMSF23. Order envelopes will be distributed the end of next week.

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT and GT INFORMATION NIGHT
Save the date, September 7! GT Information Night will be from 5:30 - 6:00 p.m. Back to School Night will be held from 6:00-8:00 p.m. We look forward to meeting our HCMS families and working together for a positive and productive school year.

SCHOOL DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES - (please read)
It is very important to us that we make sure everyone is safe getting to and from school. We are asking everyone to be patient and respectful of each other when dropping off and picking up your student. We will have staff outside to help support the process. We are asking you to remain in a single file line, do not park in the staff lot next to HCMS. This will help keep our students safe and the traffic flowing. Please see the map for dropping off. You will follow the red arrows in to drop off and exit following the white arrows. Please have your children exit as quickly and safely as they can in the mornings and in the afternoons to wait on the side of the building next to the line pick up so we can expedite the process. Thank you for your support as we help our new families learn this process.

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 42%. If you haven't had time to complete, please take the time this weekend. If you need assistance, please call the front office.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT
This week in classes we reviewed the Student Code of Conduct. You may view this information here.

IMPORTANT IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS FOR 7th GRADE STUDENTS
Effective the first day of school for the 2023-2024 school year, all students entering the 7th grade are required by the State of Maryland to have one dose of the Tdap vaccine and one dose of the Meningococcal vaccine (MCV4). If your student has started the vaccines, please send an updated immunization record to the health room. The Howard County Health Department is offering a free Back to School Vaccine Clinic. Please see these flyers for more information (English version)(Spanish version).

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 thier 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 8:30 - 8:45 a.m. All outside breakfast items (including drinks) are prohibited from being consumed in school during this time.

UPCOMING DATES
09/04/2023 Schools and offices closed for holiday
09/07/2023 GT Information Night, 5:30 - 6:00 p.m.
09/07/2023 Back To School Night, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
09/13/2023 Individual student picture day
09/14/2023 PTA Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

09/15/2023 Schools and offices closed for holiday
09/25/2023 Schools and offices closed for holiday

CONTINUING ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

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

SCHOOL SUPPLY LIST
View the School Supply List for 2023-24 school year. If you need assistance with school supplies, please call the HCMS front office at 410-313-6929.

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

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.

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, simple 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.