January 10, 2025

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

Happy New Year! We are so excited to have our students back in the school after our scheduled Winter Break, and our unscheduled Snow Days! We know it might take a little longer to walk/drop off at school, but we are still holding students accountable for arriving to the building (and being in their 1st period classroom) prior to the start of school at 8:30 a.m.

Even though we are starting a new calendar year, we are still finishing up the 9 weeks. There are only 7 full days left of the quarter, so it is important to take this time to check Canvas with your student and reach out to teachers about any concerns there might be. The second semester will start on Friday, January 24, 2025. To find your Quarter 3 classes use the following directions: Go to hcpss.me Choose Synergy, Go to Schedule, Choose Q3, and you can see your classes there.

Finally, we are looking forward to having our 2nd Annual Taste of Soul event on February 13, 2025. More information will be shared next week. Please mark your calendars now so you can join us for this very special event.

Dr. Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

HCMS BLACK HISTORY ESSAY CONTEST

Contest will run through January 31. See this flyer for more information.

TASTE OF SOUL EMCEE OPPORTUNITY

Auditions will be held the morning of January 22. See this flyer for more information.

INCOMING 6th GRADE PARENT ORIENTATION

We look forward to hosting the parents and guardians of our Incoming 6th Grade Students on Tuesday, January 28 from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. If you are interested in hearing information about GT Courses, please join us starting at 5:30 p.m.

ATTENTION RISING 9th GRADERS...
WILDE LAKE HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULING NIGHT RESCHEDULED

On Monday, January 13 at 6:00 p.m., Wilde Lake High School is hosting a Scheduling Night in the Jim Rouse Theatre. Students and families will have an opportunity to learn about course options for the 2025-2026 school year.

HCMS PTA NEWS

The January PTA meeting has been moved to Wednesday, January 15. The meeting will take place

in room 201 at 7:00 p.m. Luminous Network will be joining us. Please see this flyer for more information. We hope you can join us!

UPCOMING DATES
01/15/2025 PTA Meeting, 7:00 p.m. - Room 201
01/20/2025 Schools and offices closed, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
01/28/2025 Schools close 3 hours early, Professional Work and Wellness Day
01/28/2025 Incoming 6th grade Parent Orientation, 6:00 p.m.
01/29/2025 Schools closed for students, Professional Work Day
02/07/2025 Schools closed for students, Professional Learning Day
02/13/2025 Taste of Soul, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
02/17/2025 Schools and offices closed, Presidents' Day

CONTINUING ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 88% 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!

HC DRUGFREE UPDATES
Teen Advisory Council: The Teen Advisory Council (TAC) upcoming meeting dates are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Mondays, December 2 and January 13. TAC is open to Howard County students in grades 8 to 12. For the link to sign up for December's meeting and more information, visit: https://hcdrugfree.org/teen-advisory-council/

Free Newsletter: Stay up to date with HC DrugFree's free events offering Community Service Hours, resources, and a variety of substance use and behavioral health information! Sign up for HC DrugFree's free digital newsletter: https://hcdrugfree.org/enews-signup/.

Medication and Sharps Collection: With the help of many students and parents, HC DrugFree's drive-thru site collected 1,169 lbs. (45 bins) of medication and 27 bins of sharps on the most recent national Drug Take Back Day in October. Enjoy the HoCo event slideshow: https://hcdrugfree.org/drug-take-back-day-1/

HoCo Student Film Fest 2025: The 2025 theme of the HC DrugFree Public Service Announcement (PSA) Category is *Make the Call: Help Without Hesitation*. This theme serves as a PSA about Maryland's Good Samaritan Law. Middle and high school students who live in Howard County are eligible to create and submit videos, which are due by midnight on April 1. See the attached flyer for more information and guidelines or visit: http://www.hcdrugfree.org/hoco-filmfest/

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.