

January 5, 2024

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

We had a great first week back from winter break. We were excited to see our students back after the break. We only have a few weeks until the end of the quarter, which ends January 19. Please make sure to take time to review grades with your child on Canvas. If you have concerns, please reach out to the teachers as soon as possible.

We also have many events coming up in the next few months. Wednesday, January 10 at 7:00 p.m., we have our next PTSA meeting. We will be meeting in the FACS room, which is the first room when you come in the building. We will be discussing events for the rest of the school year, including planning for Harper's Choice Middle School's 50th anniversary celebration in April. If you would like to be part of that please make sure you join us on Wednesday, January 10.

In the past few weeks we have started to get food deliveries from services like Door Dash, GrubHub, and UberEats, etc. While we recognize that on occasion students forget their lunch, we have no way to monitor who is actually ordering and who the orders are for. We also do not have the staff in the front office to manage this. If a student forgets lunch, we will ensure they have an opportunity to acquire and eat lunch from Food Services. You might also want to talk to your children and their accounts. We have found out that some parents were surprised to hear food was being delivered and then noticed a volume of money being spent on their accounts they were unaware of.

Finally, as we might have our first chance of wintery weather this year, please make sure to check the HCPSS status webpage for the daily status of the school system. You can find that information here: <https://status.hcpss.org/>

Have a great weekend,
Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

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 will be **donated on Monday, January 8, 2024.**

BSAP SATURDAY MATH ACADEMY

The HCPSS Black Student Achievement Program Saturday Math Academy Fall Session is approaching!

This year, the BSAP Saturday Math Academy will offer an in-person enrichment program for Howard County Public School System students in all levels of math for grades 3-12 based on course availability. Registration will take place online Saturday, January 6, 2024 from 9:00 a.m.- until capacity is reached. Class space is limited. Families can register by accessing the [HCPSS Connect Website](#)

For more information, please

visit: <https://news.hcpss.org/news-posts/2023/12/black-student-achievement-program-bsap-saturday-math-academy-spring-2024-program/>

NEW STUDENT/PARENT INFORMATION NIGHT

On Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 6:00 p.m., HCMS will be hosting a parent information night for students who will be entering Harpers Choice for the 2024-2025 school year. This informational session is an evening geared as an introduction to the HCMS school community and Navigating Middle School. During the evening we plan to discuss the middle school experience, which includes: the middle school schedule, academics, staff, and the middle school learner. We hope that you are able to join us so we can meet each other and build a positive partnership as you begin planning for your child to join us next school year!

MLK CELEBRATION

- [Save the dates](#) (MLK Celebration and Day of Service)

HC DRUGFREE OPPORTUNITIES

HC DrugFree's Teen Advisory Council

Next meeting: Monday January 8 • 5:30 - 7 p.m.

Howard County Teens! Are you ready to stand out? HC DrugFree invites all Howard County students in grades 8-12 to join the HC DrugFree Teen Advisory Council (TAC). TAC members are student leaders who earn community service hours while developing life skills to make healthy choices and prepare for life after middle and high school. TAC provides a meaningful way for students to volunteer in the community and MAKE A DIFFERENCE all while building a powerful resume for job and college applications! Now accepting registrations for the this school year. Learn more and register: <https://tinyurl.com/HCDrugFreeTAC> or email admin@hcdrugfree.org

Free Life Skills Classes for HoCo Kids (grades 6-9)

January 16, 23, 30, February 6, 13, 20, 27, and March 5, 2024 • 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

HC DrugFree is providing another series of *FUN* and interactive skills-based classes designed to **promote positive health and personal development**. This curriculum was designed for students in **grades 6 to 9**, but for slightly younger or older students, we will consider each request. Taught by college students with assistance of high schoolers who act as mentors and role models, this innovative series uses developmentally appropriate, collaborative learning strategies so students will learn skills that have been shown to help **resist high-risk behaviors**. The curriculum is designed to strengthen student's social skills, personal self-management skills, substance resistance skills, and more! Learn more and register: <https://tinyurl.com/LifeSkillsSpring24>

Know What's Happening in Howard County

Sign up for HC DrugFree's free newsletter at <https://hcdrugfree.org/enews-signup/> or follow us on social media to get updates on events as well as information to keep your family safe and informed: [Facebook](#) [X](#) [LinkedIn](#)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION/RESOURCE FAIR COMING SOON

On Thursday, February 15 from 5:30 - 8:30 p.m, we will be hosting our annual Black History Month Celebration/Resource Fair. During this time, we will enjoy food, performances, community resource

and workshop for parents/guardians/community members. To best serve the needs and interests of our families we would like to know the type of workshops you're interested in attending. Please fill out this quick survey to let us know your thoughts. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and we look forward to sharing with you at "A Taste of Soul: Celebrating the Strength Within Our Community".

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSerLKjov3-TtfJ6ZCQs4dJn1eqE8sx2BLL_-jaa1Ei63c2q2Q/viewform

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 65% completion. If you haven't had time to complete, please take the time this weekend. If you need assistance, please call the front office.

UPCOMING DATES.

01/09/2023 2024/2025 New Student/Parent Information Night
01/10/2023 PTA Meeting - Room 201, 7:00 p.m.
01/15/2023 Schools closed, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
01/17/2023 Schools close 3 hours early, Professional Work and Wellness Day
01/22/2023 Schools closed for students, Professional Work Day

CONTINUING ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

FAN EXPECTATIONS AND SAFETY AT HCPSS ATHLETIC 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:

- 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.

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.