

December 11, 2023

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

Two weeks to go until Winter Break! As we enter the winter holiday season, we have much to be thankful for at HCMS. I would like to thank our Family Involvement Team for planning a fun night of Bingo this week, and our PTA for providing the hot chocolate and cookies. We are going to have more family nights coming up, so we hope to see many of you there.

Please continue to have conversations with your children about making good decisions on their way to and from school. We have had businesses from the Village Center reach out and ask that families reinforce students' respect for their establishments. We are also asking that you remind your children that school starts at 8:30 a.m., which means they need to be at school by 8:25 a.m. to ensure they are in the 1st period class by bell at 8:30 a.m. We are starting to have Administrative after-school detentions for students who have excessive tardies to school. If your child has more than 10 tardies to school, you will be getting a letter with the next steps to help get them to school on time.

We are also celebrating many of the successes that are happening at Harper's Choice. We have increased our attendance to 93.6% this year. The number of D's and E's for 1st quarter decreased from 16% last year to 8% this year. Our discipline data has also improved greatly from last year to this year with the number of referrals decreasing by 87% from this time last year. We appreciate your support as we continue to work towards our continued improvement.

Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

WLHS WINTER MUSIC EXTRAVAGANZA THIS WEEK!

View this flyer [WLHS Winter Music Extravaganza.pdf](#) for more information!

COME SUPPORT THE HCMS MUSIC DEPARTMENT!

On Thursday, December 14, the HCMS Music Department is having a fundraiser at Maiwand Kabob from 11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Please see this [HCMS MUSIC SUPPORT.png](#) for more information.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

Click [here](#) to stay up to date on future Middle school events including our event on December 13 that is focused on career academies.

ATTENTION ALL 8th GRADERS - HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULING EXTRAVAGANZA

On January 4 at 6:30 p.m, Wilde Lake High School is hosting a Scheduling Extravaganza to learn about course options for the 2024-2025 school year. You may view this flyer [Scheduling Extravaganza Jan 4 2024.png](#) for more information.

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/>

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.

MLK CELEBRATION AND POP UP FOOD PANTRIES

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

UPCOMING DATES

12/13/2023 Schools close 3 hours early, Professional Work and Wellness Day
12/14/2023 Music Department Fundraiser at Maiwand Kabob - Harper's Choice Village
12/19/2023 Band Winter Concert, WLHS-JRT, 7:00 p.m.
12/21/2023 Chorus and Orchestra Winter Concert, WLHS-JRT, 7:00 p.m.
12/25/2023 - 01/01/2023 Schools and offices closed
01/09/2023 2024/2025 New Student/Parent Orientation/Information Night
01/10/2023 PTA Meeting - Media Center, 7:00 p.m.

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.

INTRAMURALS

We are excited to announce that Intramurals are starting up at HCMS.

Please see below for permission slips:

[Girls Basketball](#)

[Boys Basketball](#)

[Jazz Band](#)

[Rainbow Alliance Club](#)

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

[Cheerleading](#)

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.

CAREER ACADEMY INFORMATION SESSIONS

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](#).

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.

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.

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.