

October 23, 2023

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

Hello Harper's Choice families! Can you believe we only have a little over a week until the end of the first quarter? Make sure to continue to monitor your child's grades through Canvas. You can access that through [HCPSS Connect](https://hcpss.org/connect) (hcpss.org/connect). While you are there, please make sure to update your Family File. This must be done every year so we can have the correct information for your child. This update is extremely important for when we have field trips to make sure we have accurate contact information.

I also would like to take this time to uplift our AMAZING building services team. They are the engine that keeps our school clean, running smoothly, and safe. We celebrated them earlier this month, but wanted to make sure to celebrate them with our community as well. Anthony Burke is our Day Chief who is here during the school day. He works tirelessly to make sure the building is in top shape. We recently welcomed Jacob Nwalal as our Night Chief. He, Debbie Tarwo, and Ivy Acheamong spend many hours making sure our building is ready for our students and staff the next day. Please remind your students to not only thank them when they see them, but to keep them in mind as they make sure to help keep the building clean by cleaning up after themselves in the classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, and cafeteria.

We have noticed that our tardies have been increasing in the past few weeks. The warning bell rings at 8:25, and the bell to start first period rings at 8:30. Students are expected to be in class at that time. We do provide breakfast, free of charge, each day. This is available from 8:17-8:40 in the classroom (science classes eat in the cafeteria). Food must be finished by that time, or stored until lunch. Starting on Tuesday, October 24, outside breakfast food and drink will need to be finished prior to entering the building. Students may finish it in the indoor lobby, but it will need to be consumed or stored prior to coming into the building. Finishing food will not be an excused tardy, so if your child has outside food they will need to plan to have the time to finish it and be in class by 8:30. If you have any questions or concerns about this please reach out so we can work together to find a solution. We appreciate your support in making sure that our students are on time to class, and that we keep our building as clean as possible by finishing outside food and drink before they come in.

We hope you all have a great week!

Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

INTRAMURALS

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

Please see below for permission slips:

[Girls Basketball](#)

[Boys Basketball](#)

[Student Leader Mentees](#)

[Jazz Band](#)

[Rainbow Alliance Club](#)

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

[Cheerleading](#)

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 after quarter 1 will be donated on November 3.

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 62% completion.

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

STUDENT CONTEST AND POP UP FOOD PANTRY

Please see the attached [MLK Contest.png](#) for more information.

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

RE-TAKE/ABSENTEE STUDENT PHOTO DAY

Tuesday, November 14 will be re-take/absentee photo day.

If your child is re-taking their photo, they must bring the original portrait package back to the photographer on this day. Students who were absent, should contact the main office for an order envelope.

HCASC Listen and Learn Session, Oct. 24

Tuesday, Oct. 24, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. - Centennial High School

Howard County Association of Student Councils will host its first Listen and Learn session of the school year on Oct. 24. Open to all middle and high school students, the session will provide opportunities to share actionable and knowledge based feedback with HCPSS leaders. Students may attend in person or virtually. [Details are available online.](#)

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.

Medication and Sharps Disposal Take Back Day - October 28 in the Wilde Lake Village Center Parking Lot from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Safely dispose of prescription medication, over-the-counter meds, sharps, vitamins, pet meds, vape devices, inhalers, and more! Also, 100 medication lockboxes purchased by HCPSS will be given away for FREE! See [MedsSharps10-28-23 \(D\).pdf](#) for more information.

A NOTE FROM THE HEALTH ROOM

Each year, the Howard County Public School System partners with the Maryland Partnership for Prevention to bring flu immunizations into our schools for students. This year, they will also be offering the latest Covid vaccine. The clinic at Harper's Choice Middle School will be held on **November 3** during school hours. If you would like your child to be vaccinated against the flu and/or Covid at this clinic, please register at this link: [Harper's Choice vaccine clinic.](#)

You are not required to provide your child's insurance information. It is perfectly fine to receive both vaccines on the same day. If you have any concerns about the new Covid vaccine, you are advised to speak with your child's pediatrician. All in-school clinics will be closed to registration **one week before** the clinic date to allow our health room staff time to review and prepare the consents and make sure enough vaccine is ordered. If you have any questions, please call your school's health room at 410-313-6934.

Cada año, el Sistema de Escuelas Públicas del Condado de Howard se asocia con la Asociación para la Prevención de Maryland (Maryland Partnership for Prevention) para llevar las vacunas contra la gripe a nuestras escuelas para los estudiantes. Este año, también ofrecerán la vacuna contra Covid más reciente. La clínica en Harpers Choice MS tendrá lugar el Friday November 3 durante el horario escolar. Si desea que su estudiante se vacune contra la gripe y/o Covid en esta clínica, Por favor regístrese utilizando el siguiente enlace: <https://www.marylandvax.org/appointment/en/reg/7961620602>

No está obligado a proporcionar la información sobre el seguro de su estudiante. Está perfectamente bien recibir ambas vacunas el mismo día. Si tiene alguna inquietud sobre la nueva vacuna contra Covid, se le recomienda que hable con el pediatra de su estudiante. La inscripción a todas las clínicas en las escuelas se cerrará una semana antes de la fecha de la clínica para permitir que nuestro personal de la sala de sanidad tenga tiempo para revisar y preparar los consentimientos y asegurarse de que se encarguen vacunas suficientes. Si tiene alguna pregunta, llame a la sala de sanidad de su escuela al 410-313-6934.

UPCOMING DATES

10/26/2023 6th grade field trip to Terrapin Adventures
10/31/2023 Schools close 3 hours early, end of first quarter
11/03/2023 HCMS Flu Clinic
11/08/2023 Report cards available to view in HCPSS Connect at 4:00 p.m.
11/14/2023 Absentee/Re-take student photo
11/20/2023 In person Parent/Teacher Conferences
11/21-11/22/2023 Virtual Parent/Teacher Conferences
11/23-11/24/2023 Schools and offices closed for holiday

CONTINUING ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

Athletic contests are considered extensions of the school day, and behaviors that violate the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct or Board of Education policies are subject to the same disciplinary measures as those that occur during the school day. Any students found to engage in inappropriate, illegal or dangerous behavior, including verbal and physical abuse at games, are subject to discipline, including the forfeiture of the game itself. Non-student spectators who violate event rules may be asked to leave the premises and may be banned for the remainder of the season. Additionally, the Howard County Police Department maintains a presence at games and will ensure all applicable laws are adhered to.

Please note that substances such as tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol are illegal to have on school grounds. Furthermore, no spectators are permitted to be under the influence of these substances upon entering school grounds.

HCPSS schools are welcoming environments for our friends around the county and state. All spectators are expected to display good sportsmanship to the athletes, coaches, officials, members of the marching band, cheerleaders and poms, dance teams, opposing fans, and everyone in attendance. Please show respect for all those around you.

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.

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.

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.