

April 5, 2024

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

It was a great, but rainy and chilly, week back from Spring Break! Hopefully, the weather will warm up soon and it will start to feel a little more like spring! I would like to take this opportunity to SHOUT OUT our AMAZING assistant administrators this week, as we celebrate Assistant Principals week! Ms. Nunley, Dr. Nunez, and Mr. Lombardi do so much to ensure the smooth running of the school. They have wonderful relationships with our students and their families, help facilitate lunches, collaborate with teachers and staff, and do so much behind-the-scenes work. Harper's Choice wouldn't be the amazing school it is without their hard work. THANK YOU to all of them!!!

We have many important dates coming up in the next weeks. We are starting our Reading MCAP tests next week. Please make sure your child brings a charged laptop and charging cord, gets a good night's sleep, eats breakfast at home or at school, and is on time. While there will be an opportunity for makeup testing, it would be best if they were able to take the tests when scheduled. Also, since the 9 weeks ends on Tuesday, please make sure that your child is up-to-date with their assignments.

Finally, we hope we see many of you at our 50th Anniversary celebration on Saturday, April 13 from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. We will have many former staff members and community members join us as we celebrate the 50th year of Harper's Choice Middle School. Come join us for student presentations, a chance to look around the building, and help us to celebrate the past as we move toward the future.

Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

TESTING SCHEDULE

Please see this [link](#) for the testing schedule.

ELA MCAP TESTING 4/8-4/12

Reminder that ELA MCAP Testing starts next week. Attached is the testing schedule and the student's testing location. Please remind your child to:

- Bring a charged computer to school every day of testing.
- Get a restful sleep before testing.
- Eat a balanced breakfast.
- Have your phones off and away.
- Try your hardest to have a successful testing session!

Links

- [Schedule](#)
- [Testing Groups](#)

LAST DAY OF SCHOOL SCHEDULED

HCPSS used three inclement weather days this school year, and as such, the [last day of school](#) for

students in full-day Pre-K through grade 11 is now scheduled to be Friday, June 14, with June 12-14 being three-hour early dismissals. The last day for half-day Pre-K/RECC students is currently Tuesday, June 11. Separately, the [last day for all high school seniors](#) is May 22.

IMPORTANT BUS REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Parents/guardians whose children are eligible for bus transportation are asked to register to receive bus service each year to help the school system plan for student transportation needs. **The transportation registration process will open at 9 a.m. Monday, April 8 through May 31, and will be completed online via HCPSS Connect Synergy.** Registration must be done for each eligible child.

To be eligible for bus service, your child's home address must be outside of a school's walk zones. You can verify address eligibility in the [HCPSS School Attendance Area Locator](#). After inputting your address, a window will appear that will indicate either bus or walk for each school level. Please note, the attendance area locator also includes a link for the bus stop locator, which is set for the current school year. Bus stop information for the 2024-2025 school year will be available in August.

You do not need to take any action if:

- Your child is not eligible for bus transportation
- Your child receives transportation as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan, or
- Your child is a graduating senior

[Details on bus transportation registration](#), including a guide to register and scenarios families may see when registering, can be found online.

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PICTURE DAY IS COMING ON APRIL 23!

To order spring photos, **you must return** the flyer/order envelope on Picture Day. Online pre-ordering is **NOT** available for spring photos – the envelope **MUST** be returned on Picture Day.

Only students who bring in their envelopes on Picture Day will be photographed. Please look for the flyer/order envelope that will be sent home with your child the week of April 15th.

HEART & SOLE SPRING SEASON

Registration for the Spring 2024 Season for the Heart & Sole program is open now! This is a fun and inspiring afterschool program that helps participants in grades 6-8 to be joyful, healthy, and confident by using running to teach valuable life skills. Volunteer coaches blend movement based activities with life skill development, including managing emotions, fostering friendships, and expressing empathy. At the end of the season, the team completes a service project and a 5K together, which provides a tangible sense of accomplishment and sets a confident mindset into motion. The program registration fee is \$185, which includes lessons, all program materials, 5K and program shirts, water bottle, and more. No girl will be turned away! Financial assistance is available! Register today - the

season starts soon: <https://bit.ly/GOTRCenMDSpring2024Reg>. Questions? Call 443-864-8593.

LOCAL CHILDREN'S BOARD AND HC DRUG FREE TRAINING

The link below will take you to information about the "Parenting Strategies and How to Talk about Drug Use in Popular Media" webinar being held by the HC Office of the Local Children's Board and HC DrugFree.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F054AACAF2FA4FB6-47076829-parentin>

MARYLAND SCHOOL SURVEY-DATE CHANGE

Students will take the Maryland School Survey during regular school hours on Wednesday, April 17. Please see the attached [letter](#) for more information.

SUMMER MATH SCHOLARS

Please see this [flyer](#) for more information!

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

04/09/2024 End of 3rd quarter marking period
04/10/2024 Schools closed for students, Professional Work Day
04/11/2024 Quarter 4 begins
04/13/2024 HCMS 50th Anniversary Celebration, 9:00 a.m.
04/17/2024 Report Cards available [online](#) after 4:00 p.m.
04/23/2024 Individual Student Spring Pictures, 8:45 a.m.

CONTINUING ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTRAMURALS

We are excited to announce that our Winter/Spring Intramurals are starting up at HCMS. Please see below for permission slips:

[Art Club](#)

[Boys Basketball](#)

HC DRUGFREE OPPORTUNITIES

HC DrugFree's Teen Advisory Council

Free Online Parenting Classes - Tuesdays, March 12 to April 16. HC DrugFree's Guiding Good

Choices parenting classes can equip parents/guardians and grandparents with the knowledge and skills to reduce the risk that their children will engage in dangerous behaviors including using drugs and alcohol. Learn more and register: tinyurl.com/HCDrugFreeGGC

8th to 12th Grade Leadership and Community Service Hours Opportunities. All HoCo 8-12 graders are invited to join the HC DrugFree Teen Advisory Council (TAC). TAC members are leaders who develop life skills to make healthy choices. Volunteer in the community and make a difference while building a powerful resume for job and college applications! Learn more and register: tinyurl.com/HCDrugFreeTAC or email admin@hcdrugfree.org

Looking for Creative Students to Make PSAs – Films due by Sunday, April 14. Educate the community by entering the HC DrugFree Public Service Announcement (PSA) category in the HoCo Student Film Festival. Submission deadline is Sunday April 14. Learn more: tinyurl.com/HCFilmFest

Medication & Sharps Disposal and 100 Free Medication Storage Boxes to be Given Away – April 27. 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! Wanted: Medically-Trained Adult Volunteers to handle the collected items and other Adult Volunteers to assist as needed. Youth Volunteers can earn Community Service Hours. Adult/student volunteer registration will open by April. Learn more: tinyurl.com/HCDFTakeBack

Know What's Happening in Howard County . Sign up for HC DrugFree's free newsletter at tinyurl.com/HCDFNews or follow us on social media to get updates on events as well as information to keep your family safe and informed:

Facebook : facebook.com/HCdrugfree

X : twitter.com/hcdrugfree

LinkedIn : linkedin.com/company/hc-drugfree

IMPORTANT BULLYING INFORMATION

As we approach the second half of the school year, we wanted to remind you that HCPSS is dedicated to providing a safe and supportive environment that focuses on student well-being. We are taking this time to uplift the importance of reporting any type of bullying that has occurred. We will be reviewing this with our students and staff as we start the second half of the school year, and hope that you too can uplift this at home.

For children facing the emotional toll of bullying, a supportive individual can make all the difference. Please encourage your children to reach out to a trusted staff member at school should they need to report anything. As parents and guardians, you will use the same reporting form as students by following the steps outlined below.

How do I report bullying?

1. When you believe bullying has taken place, you should report it through the Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment and Intimidation (BCHI) reporting form. Reporting can take place in one of three ways:

- Complete a [BCHI online reporting form](#)
- BCHI paper reporting form (available in the main office, staff workroom, school counseling office, media center, and health services office)

- An oral report to a staff member

2. It is important to note that policy states “in the event the reporting party does not complete a BCHI Reporting Form, school administrators/supervisors will take the appropriate steps to address and document the incident.” Therefore, if you or someone else makes an oral report, it then must be documented (i.e. through a BCHI reporting form) by the administrator.

Thank you for your partnership and attention to this important topic.

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.

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 8:20 - 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. We appreciate your support!

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.