

November 10, 2023

A NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

HCMS families,

First, I wanted to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU to our staff and families that are veterans or active-duty service members. We appreciate your courage, dedication, and hard work. We thank your families for their support, resilience, and sacrifice.

We are at the beginning of the 2nd 9 weeks. Please make sure to talk to your children about their assignments, and continue to use Canvas as a way to not only monitor your child's grades but also as a way to help your child communicate with their teachers by using the Canvas inbox. According to the HCPSS Secondary grading and reporting policy teachers are required to update grades at least every three weeks. Many teachers update more frequently than that, so a weekly check of grades is helpful. Do you want to learn more about that? If so, please stop by and see Ms. Cathirell (our Media Specialist) in the Media Center on Monday, November 20, during parent conferences. She will be available to give tips and tricks to make sure you are taking advantage of all the features Canvas has to offer.

I also wanted to take a moment to address concerns that have been brought to HCMS's attention about some behavior that is happening near Longfellow Elementary School between our dismissal and theirs. We expect that our HCMS students follow the same expectations we have for them at school. Unfortunately, some students have not been using appropriate language and behavior, which has made others feel unsafe. We are working with Longfellow, the Office of Safety and Security, and the Howard County Police Department to make sure all continue to be safe as students wait for their siblings to be dismissed from Longfellow Elementary School.

We are a community and we want to work together to make sure all in our community feel safe and valued. If you have concerns please reach out.

Alexia K.S. Couch

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

QUARTER 1 REPORT CARDS

Quarter 1 report cards are available to view in HCPSS Connect. Please use this [link](#) for instructions on how to access report cards. If you need any assistance, you may call the front office at 410-313-6929.

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK IS NOVEMBER 13 - 17!

American Education Week is observed annually to garner parent involvement in the education of their children. This year's theme is "Together for Safe, Just and Equitable Schools". We are excited about the opportunity for you to visit your child's class to experience their learning day. Although we enjoy meeting our students' siblings, American Education Week is not the best time for their participation, so we ask that they not attend. They are welcome to attend our evening family activities that are sponsored throughout the year. Along with the excitement of having you as an

integral part of your child's education during American Education Week, we also want to ensure school safety and minimal distractions to the learning environment.

Below is the visitor criteria and procedures necessary to ensure that valuable instruction continues at HCMS during American Education Week.

- All visitors must provide photo identification.
- All visitors must check in at the front office before visiting classrooms.
- Please place cell phones on vibrate and pictures and videos are not permitted.
- Please be an observer of great teaching and learning.
- Prior to leaving the building, please check out at the front office so that we are aware of any visitors in the building at all times.
- Intended for Family Guardians over 18 years old.
- Please refrain from using your cell phone/smartwatch within the classroom
- Follow the teacher's lead regarding participation. Some activities are designed for families to actively engage with and some are for students while families observe.
- No photos of other students may be taken.
- Hold individual concerns until Conferences.

On Thursday, November 16, there will be Coffee with the Administrators from 8:45-9:30 in the cafeteria if you would like to come and have a time to get to know our administrators.

COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR - NOVEMBER 11

Join us for a vibrant and informative Health Fair. Everyone is welcome to this free event. Discover a wide array of booths that will share health information, conduct preventive screenings, raise awareness of health risks, and demonstrate healthy habits. Annual Flu shots will be available for 6 months old and up. See this [flyer](#) for more information.

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.

MIDDLE SCHOOL MARCH 2 FUTURE

Did you know that high school students can earn college credit while in high school. Or that students can participate in a state approved apprenticeship during their senior year? Or that students can earn industry certifications through our Career Academies? HCPSS offers extensive and varied opportunities for students in high school. It's never too early to start learning about all of these opportunities. See this [flyer](#) for the latest College and Career Readiness Newsletter.

Come to our kickoff March2Future for Middle Schools on Wednesday, November 15 and hear from Dan Rosewag, Coordinator of Career and Technology Education, Ms. LaRee Siddiqui, Coordinator of Dual Enrollment (JumpStart) and Stephanie Discepolo, Resource Teacher for Apprenticeship Maryland. Presenters will provide an overview of their programs AND help students understand

what they can do NOW to prepare for one of these amazing opportunities. We look forward to seeing you online November 15 at 7:00 p.m. for this informative session. Click [here](#) to register.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE SCHEDULING WINDOW

Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled for November 20-22 and will be held in person on Monday, November 20 and virtually on Tuesday November 21 and Wednesday, November 22. The scheduling window for parents to schedule conferences opened on Monday, November 6 and will be open thru Thursday, November 16. To schedule conferences, parents/guardians can log into [HCPSS Connect](#) to select available times to meet with teachers. Please refer to these [directions](#) for assistance. If you need additional support, please contact the front office at 410-313-6929.

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 64% 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](#)

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.

UPCOMING DATES

11/13/2023-11/17/2023 American Education Week
11/14/2023 Absentee/Re-take student photo
11/16/2023 Conference scheduling closes for parents
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

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](#)

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.

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.