

The COUGAR Chronicle

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HARPER'S CHOICE MIDDLE SCHOOL

COLUMBIA, MD

DECEMBER 2018

Reading in and beyond the required curriculum *How can students get the "right" books in their hands?*



Lindsey Sands,
8th Grade
Editor

Pretty much anyone will tell you that reading is important. Yet, for so many students, reading is a task they avoid or don't enjoy.

Every year in the English Language Arts classes at Harper's Choice, middle school students read and analyze multiple books, short stories, and poems. According to the HCPSS website, students use these texts to learn about universal themes.

Sixth graders learn about the themes of coming of age, courage, and heroes. Seventh graders study perseverance, facing injustice, and "thrills and chills." Eighth graders analyze love and friendship, freedom, and exploring the unknown.

However, students often complain that the literature they are assigned to read is "boring" or "useless". Sophia Sapp, an 8th grader, went so far as to say that the book *Wait Till Helen Comes* by Mary Downing Hahn, assigned to her in 6th grade, made her want to "crawl into a hole and die."

The problem is that teachers aren't given much choice when it comes to required reading. According to Nancy Czarnecki, a secondary language arts coordi-

nator for HCPSS, "All units have a selection of anchor texts from which teachers can choose to use with their students." Teachers may choose to include the students in the choice, but not all teachers do.

Jaime Hanafourde, an 8th grade ELA teacher at HCMS, said there is more choice in short stories and poems than in novels. For example, the only choices for the Shakespeare unit in 8th grade are the plays *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar*. In addition, all Howard County 8th graders are required to read *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley.

Unfortunately, the limited options make it hard for teachers. In an interview, Kathleen Keck, a 7th and 8th grade ELA teacher at HCMS, said that kids that start G/T English in 8th grade are immediately forced to read *Frankenstein*, one of the hardest books to read in middle school. She said that for students who struggle with liking reading, it can be discouraging.

Research has shown that students can develop a love of reading more when they are offered books that are "mirrors" and "windows" for them. According to Rudine Sims Bishop, professor emerita of Ohio State University, all children need books that they can relate to personally, and books that help them to understand the lives of others.

Jane M. Gangi, a professor at Mount Saint Mary College, states,



photo by Lindsey Sands

On November 6th, G/T resource teacher Cindy Six led the Book Club seminar students in a discussion about Kwame Alexander's *Rebound*, one of eight books HCPSS chose for Book Club this year.

"Book lists used by many teachers and schools to select books predominantly suggest titles that depict white or animal characters written by white authors. This is even true of the Common Core State Standards list of recommended texts, in which only 18 of 171 texts are by nonwhite au-

thors."

At Harper's Choice, the students are very diverse, but are they given books to read that reflect their cultures and backgrounds? Currently, our students are 50% Black/African American, 18% White/Caucasian, 16% Hispanic/Latino, 8% Asian, and

7% two or more races.

Czarnecki said that this issue is being addressed using the county policy, with a committee of teachers, students, and parents who recommend and review texts for use in instruction. The members

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HCMS sixth graders compare reality with expectations



Geleisi Li,
6th Grade
Editor

When 5th graders envision what their middle school will be like, they might imagine a scene out of *Diary of Wimpy Kid*, where the weaker students are constantly bullied by the more popular. Or, maybe they envision middle

school as a sort of paradise, where they can finally escape the confining rules of elementary school.

The truth is, it's neither. ...Or maybe it's both. Some new kids at Harper's Choice might see middle school as a

completely freeform place with no rules. However, they will soon find that there are rules in middle school, as well as an abundance of work. And, although middle school isn't completely bully-free, it certainly isn't as terrible as it's sometimes portrayed in books or the media.

An informal survey was conducted of 20 former Swansfield and Longfellow students who are now in 6th grade at HCMS. It showed just how varied the HCMS students' opinions about middle school are. Some say the experience is completely exceeding their expectations, while others find middle school utterly disappointing and inadequate.

Students were asked to rate their middle school experience so far, with (10) being excellent and (-5) being the worst. The average score was a 5.2. Some of the students responded with a seven, which is relatively positive. However, a larger number of the students (twelve, to be specific) actually chose a negative score to describe school life.

How could 6th graders opinions be so varied? Jayla Cooke, a 6th grader, says that she "hates

middle school sometimes," but knows that it is necessary so she can get a job in the future. She explained that some of the curricular materials are hard to digest, and she said she struggles with unclear directions from the teachers and the rapid pace of the work compared to elementary school.

Though many 6th graders are still coping with the change, there are those who are perfectly comfortable in middle school. Some students said they "love having lockers" and are excited for a fresh start. They are happy to be learning new things, and the extended freedom is what they like most about 6th grade.

"I feel like 6th grade is a great opportunity to learn... and learning leads to great opportunities in the future," Bereket Tewodros, 6th grader, said. He is currently advocating for the anti-fighting campaign at HCMS, and wishes to improve the state of the hallways and transitions between classes. This shows just how quickly some students have jumped in at HCMS and already want to help the school improve.

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photo by Caleb McKenna

On the morning of October 31st, 6th graders and chaperones gathered in the cafeteria to wait for the buses to take them on a 3-day outdoor education experience at NorthBay.



NEWS · NOTICIAS · NOUVELLES

Staff members offer students alternatives to “required” books

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select titles they believe will offer “new diverse voices” all while fitting into the curriculum.

However, adding a text to the curriculum can take an entire year. “For example, the books that were read [and] reviewed last year, will be put on display in November and then the Board of Education votes on approval of the titles in January or February,” Czarnecki said.

A concerned community member can also submit a formal complaint about a

book, and it will be reviewed by HCPSS’ Instructional Materials Review Committee. The members discuss and vote whether to remove the text or not. The whole process can take a few months.

While students do not have much choice in the books they are assigned in English Language Arts classes, there are many other

ways for students to start enjoying books.

One option for reading is the Harper’s Choice Book Club, which is run by Cindy Six, the G/T resource teacher. She said that Book Club is a good opportunity for students to read things they may not have picked for themselves and to connect with other students around them.

Students read wide-ranging books about topics like sports and jail and robots. They read historical fiction, fantasy, realistic, and even some nonfiction. The books

cover a wide range of genres.

Keck, along with Hannah Zimmerman, our Black Student Achievement Liaison, also organized a special book club this year so that students across grade levels could join together to read *T.H.U.G. (The Hate U Give)* by Angie Thomas.

Some students still object to

“If you don’t like to read, you haven’t found the right book.”

-J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter author



photo by Lindsey Sands

The G/T seminar Book Club will read and discuss these books during the 2018-2019 school year.

assigned reading, even if it is in a book club. According to Amna Cheema in 8th grade, being in a book club has the same effect as if a teacher were to assign a book. She said, “I need the freedom to choose my own books.”

Not everyone feels the same way about how they choose reading material, but one thing stays the same: reading is an essential

element in the development of young minds.

Harry Potter author JK Rowling once said, “If you don’t like to read, you haven’t found the right book.”

According to Nicole Cathirell, our HCMS media specialist, many students dislike reading because they’re bored. “They haven’t found the right book to capture their attention yet,” Cathirell said.

If students do not like to read, one thing they could do is talk

“I need the freedom to choose my own books.”

-Amna Cheema, 8th grade

to their friends to find out what books they enjoy reading. “Students should be open to trying to read new things,” our media paraprofessional, Jill Cruz, added.

If you aren’t connecting with the books in your English Language Arts class, don’t give up! Visit our school library and talk to Cathirell and Cruz about what your interests are. You might just find something that you like to read after all!

ANNOUNCING

SoMLA’s 2018 – 2019

Young Authors’ Contest

Middle School

Who: Students in Grades 6 – 8

What: Write a poem or short story!

- Entries must be **original work**.
- All entries must use no smaller than **12 point font in Times New Roman or Comic Sans**.
- Short story entry may range from a minimum of 600 words to no more than 1,600 words.
- Poem entry will consist of a single poem, any style from a minimum of 25 words to no more than 300 words.
- Entries must **not** include graphics.
- Each entry must include a completed cover sheet signed by the student author and sponsoring teacher.



For additional details and guidelines, contact your local reading council Young Authors’ Contest Chairperson.

Entries due: JANUARY 11, 2019



You voted, we listened.

Thank you, homeroom classes, for choosing our school newspaper’s name.

The Cougar Chronicle	154 votes
Cougar’s Choice	67 votes
The Choice	54 votes
Harper’s Haven	35 votes
Heart of Harper’s	34 votes

CALLING ALL POETS!

Newspaper Poetry Contest

We want poems from students and staff to publish in our next issue! Poems must be your own original work and include your name. Readers will vote on their favorite poems to win a prize.



Submit your poem to Ms. Cometa (laura_cometa@hcpss.org).



OPINION · LA OPINIÓN · L'OPINION

Disruptive students affect everyone's chance to learn



Greta Giuliano,
8th Grade
Editor

School is for learning. Sadly, some students don't seem to think so.

I am fortunate because most of my classes are G/T, where the students generally behave well and they do their work.

However, in Related Arts classes like PE or FACS, where there are no G/T sections available, I have seen students who constantly talk while the teachers are trying to give instructions. The teachers have to stop repeatedly to address bad behaviors, which gives us less time to do our work.

Sophia Sapp, an 8th grader, agrees. She said that the kids in her G/T classes are well-behaved, but in her Band and FACS classes, there are constant interruptions from students who don't want to learn.

Pretty much all of us have had experiences like this, right?

Having disruptive students in class can have a negative effect on the other kids in the class too. Renee Miller wrote an article called "Negatives of Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom."

According to Miller, disruptive students make it hard for the teacher to control the class and more importantly, for students to learn. Students who are not disruptive are forced to wait while the behavior is addressed, and they are sidetracked from learning by the disruptive student's attempts to be noticed.

Disruptive students not only affect the mood of the students, but also the teachers. According to FACS teacher Pamela Colombel, there are a lot of distractions in class, and she says that the bad behavior

interferes with the good behavior in class. She has tried to set boundaries for her classes, but in an interview she said that there are always "students who try to push the boundaries."

Related Arts are not the only classes with disruptive students. Non-G/T core academic classes also have their share of disruptions, too. According to 7th grader Sean Francis, he experiences frequent disruptions from other students in his math and English classes, which he says is affecting his learning in those subjects.

Some students have proposed solutions on how to deal with these misbehaving students. Multiple students, including myself, have said that creating "Honors" Related Arts classes would be a good idea. That way, the students who don't care about learning won't affect the students who want to learn.

We've all experienced our learning being disrupted by the behavior of a few, but why?

Another solution could be having a separate classroom where teachers could send kids if they are being too disruptive. This would allow the students who keep disrupting the class an alternative to doing so. Maybe they could get their work done in there, and allow the rest of the students in the class to continue learning.

We've all experienced our learning being disruptive by the behavior of a few, but why? We really need to find out why some kids are so disruptive. Maybe we can talk to them and try to find out what's really going on.

Students at Harper's Choice should join with the teachers and show these kids that what they're doing is wrong and it is not only hurting their own future, but it is also affecting the rest of the students in the school.

We need to be assertive and stand up to the students who are making us learn less. Then, we could possibly turn all of our classes back into the good learning environment that a school should be.



cartoon by Megan Wolters

In Related Arts and other classes that are not G/T, students who want to learn have to contend with other students who cause problems and distractions. How can we make sure that every classroom in our school is a good learning environment?



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& HCMS Robotics
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The
COUGAR
CHRONICLE



Mission

The Cougar Chronicle staff aims to uphold the highest standards of journalism and ethics in order to provide accurate information and promote the voices of Harper's Choice students.

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Respond

The Cougar Chronicle invites staff, students, and community members to submit their responses and opinions by writing Letters to the Editor. Include your name in your letter and submit it to Ms. Cometa.

Join

Students, please contact Ms. Cometa if you would like to attend our weekly Journalism seminars on Mondays to join our school newspaper team!

Support

We appreciate your ad purchases to print this newspaper! Thank you.

Do “fidgets” help you focus?



Liliana Choppelas,
8th Grade
Reporter

Sometimes teachers take fidgets away from students for being “distracting,” but I believe that fidgets can actually help students who are easily distracted or in need of relieving stress. Fidgets are not just a mindless distraction from learning – they can actually help us learn.

It is true that some students get distracted even if they have fidgets that are meant to help them. In addition, of course teachers should have the right to take away a toy that is distracting from learning.

However, not all fidgets have to be seen as a nuisance. Megan Wolters, an 8th grader, said, “I think that when a fidget is being used properly, as a tool to help students focus in class, it’s a good thing to use. But sometimes toys are labeled as fidgets, and there not a good thing for students to use in class.”

I agree with Wolters’ statement. Mostly, when you hear negative things about fidgets, it’s the fidget spinner. In my 3rd period class on class October 29th of this year, a boy brought a fidget spinner into class and instantly grabbed the attention of several students, distracting them from their work. I have also seen fidget spinners get stuck in people’s hair and hurt people. Even worse, there have been reports in the media of children putting blades on the ends of fidget spinners and acting like they’re ninja stars.

However, I would actually classify the spinner as a toy, rather than a real fidget. Therefore, the reputation of fidgets should not be tarnished just by the spinner. Another so-called fidget that I would actually categorize as a toy would be slime.

One of the best real fidgets, in my opinion, is a “squishy.” Several students I asked had no idea what a “squishy” is, but this is the type of fidget I can support because whenever I use them, I can actually get more work done.

G/T teacher Cindy Six has a bin of things to fidget with in



Are these toys or fidgets? Which ones can help you concentrate the best, without distracting others? Read my article to find out.

her classroom, including fidget cubes, which are also useful tools to aid students in concentration.

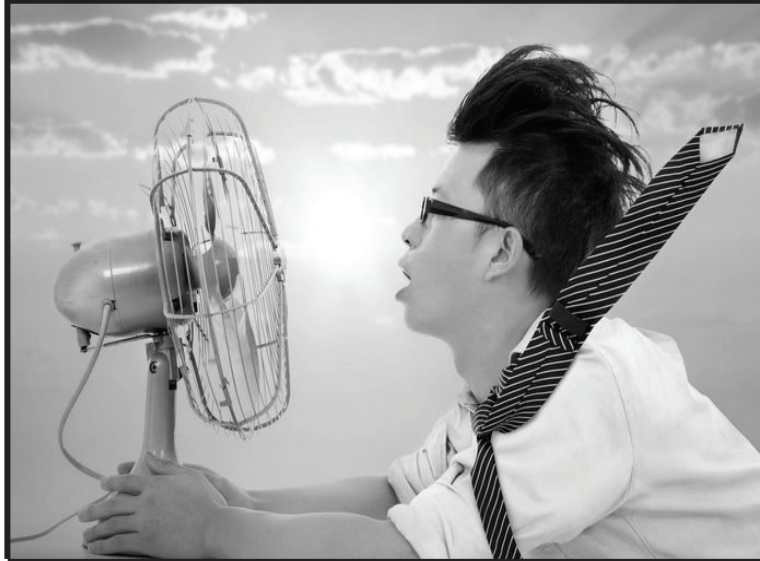
Personally, drawing while I do my work also helps me. Sometimes having the option to doodle, for example while taking notes, is good. Of course, I don’t mean making a masterpiece in math during a test, I mean drawing small things, like I sometimes draw eyes or a small basic dragon on the side of my notes. It actually helps me concentrate on what the teacher is saying.

Wolters agreed that drawing can help her feel more focused.

According to Guttulus, drawing can not only help you focus, but can also help you gain attention to detail and improve your creativity. From my perspective, drawing is therefore a great fidget and anyone can afford it, since all you need is your pencil and paper.

Do you think that bringing a squishy or fidget cube to class would help you concentrate and learn more? Do you see doodling as a way to say focused? Maybe the school should talk to students more about the use of fidgets and promote the ones that are the most helpful.

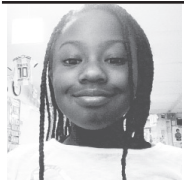
YOU IN 1ST PERIOD...



YOU IN 2ND PERIOD.



First it’s hot, then it’s cold. Who knows what the classrooms hold?



Kayla Timmons,
6th Grade
Reporter

We can all relate to this experience: you walk into a classroom and it’s so hot that you have trouble focusing on the lesson. Then, you walk into your next classroom and it’s so cold that you’re trying to find ways to keep yourself warm!

There have been many complaints about hot and cold classrooms this year at Harper’s Choice. There is really no way for students to know ahead of time which classrooms will be unbearably hot or cold that day.

The inconsistency affects both the teachers and the students.

How do students feel about the hot and cold classrooms? Sixth grader Scarlett Lopez declared, “It’s annoying! I hate being in Tech and being cold or in music class and it’s so hot!”

Principal Adam Eldridge said that there are many factors that influence whether the classrooms are hot or cold. He said, “It totally depends on the classroom, the school, the day of the week, and the time of year. If there is a really hot weekend, then the following days could be warm because the school doesn’t get cooled on the weekend.”

He added, “Outside classrooms may have a higher temperature than inside classrooms.”

Eldridge did point out that, “Students do complain, but what

they don’t understand is that the temperature is in the acceptable range for the county and state.”

Yet, music and chorus teacher Angela Pope said, “I’ve had a student in class who passed out from being overheated. I’ve had a student get so hot they threw up, ‘cause sometimes when students get overheated they get nauseous.”

How could the acceptable classroom temperatures for the county or state be so extreme that they would make a student feel sick or faint? If that is the case, the county should look into revising its “acceptable” temperatures for classroom.

On the other hand, in reading teacher Angela Jones’ classroom, where students take Digital Citizenship classes, it is sometimes freezing cold. The teachers, like

Pope and Jones, are unable to adjust the temperatures in their own classrooms. In my case, since I have both Pope and Jones’ classes, I can go from extremely hot to extremely cold in just a few minutes, making me feel uncomfortable.

To me, it seems insane how in one school there can be so many extremely hot and extremely cold classrooms. I think that the entire school should be one temperature, except for maybe the gym should be a little cooler.

Students need to be able to learn in a stable environment where they can concentrate, and not be worried or distracted by the extreme temperatures.

I hope that we will find a way to deal with this issue, but for now, dress in layers and be prepared for hot and for cold.



OPINION · LA OPINIÓN · L'OPINION

Pandemonium in the hallways must stop!



Megan Wolters,
8th Grade
Reporter

Harassment and bad behavior in the hallways has become a big issue at Harper's Choice, and chances are you've experienced it. During our three minutes of passing time between classes, there are students who are rude, running, pushing, and blocking the hallways for seemingly no reason.

The hallway problems seem to be at their worst in the circular "one way hallway", also referred to by students as "the loop." This is the main artery of our school where many of the classrooms and lockers are located, hence more students, and more problems. Being such a small and narrow space doesn't help either.

I myself have experienced a lot of problems during passing periods, especially in the "one way hallway". In fact, I have physical scars from what happens in that space!

When I was in seventh grade, I was walking to my Spanish class and was about to turn a corner in the "one way hallway." Suddenly, three students who were running collided with me and gave me a deep cut with a pencil. The mark is still visible on my arm.

Clearly, this incident is not acceptable by any means. Because the students were running, I couldn't see their faces or identify them. There were no teachers monitoring the hallway at that time. Thus, no disciplinary action was taken towards the students.

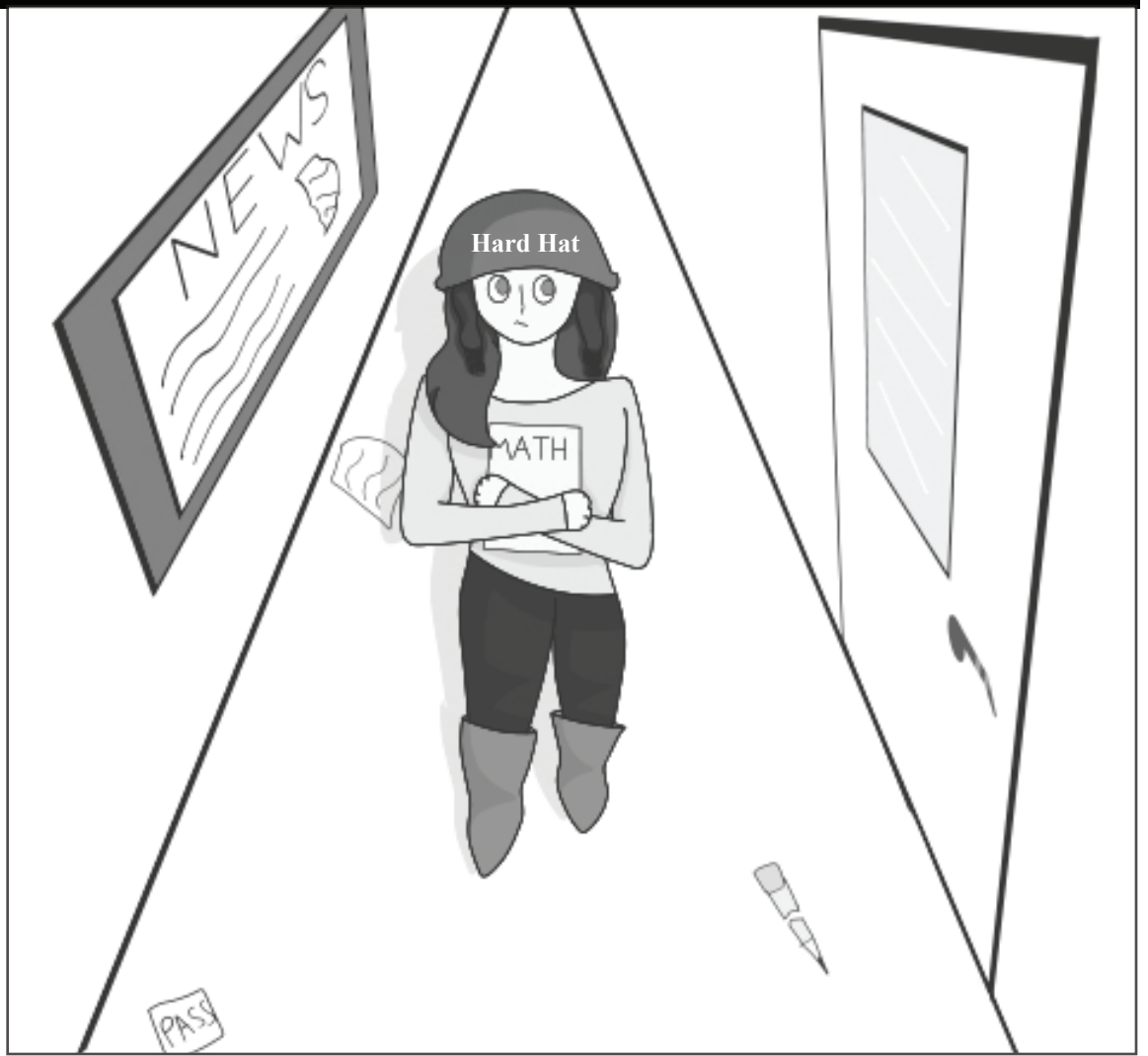
Likewise, I have also received verbal harassment in the hallways. For orthopedic reasons, one of my shoes has a "lift" on it that makes it several inches taller than my other shoe. I never cease to hear rude comments about it from certain students as I walk down the halls.

Another issue in the hallways is "neck slapping." Although some kids will say they are just "messing around," neck slapping is pretty self explanatory, and it's everywhere. Kids are reaching over and slapping other kids on the back of the neck. It can be very irritating and it's a pointless gesture.

Clearly, all of this bad hallway behavior needs to end, and I feel like nobody is talking about it. However, there are plenty of students who feel the same way as me.

"Students are always pushing me and tripping people in the hallways, and there are sometimes fights in the hallways," said 7th grader Hannah Boyer. When asked where it happens the most, she said in "the loop."

Sixth grader Geleisi Li said



cartoon by Megan Wolters

Sometimes you feel like you need protection just to walk down the hallways at Harper's Choice and get to your next class safely. Students should put a stop to all the hallway horseplay and insults!

that she has also "seen people experience harassment in the hallways."

Students also mentioned how the "one way hallway" itself is frustrating, because their class-

room could be close by, but if they have to go all the way around the circle and deal with all the behavior they encounter, then they can end up being late to class.

The hallways can be very frus-

trating, but if we as a school work together, we can fix them. We shouldn't have to wear protective gear or shield ourselves when walking down our own school hallways!

How can we solve our cafeteria catastrophe?



Caleb McKenna,
6th Grade
Reporter

The cafeteria could be so much better if it were clean, orderly, and had better food. Students and teachers should be talking about these problems and trying to make the cafeteria better.

Both the food and the behavior are terrible. To start with, every day the food is questionable, and when I eat some of the food, it makes me feel sick. Many times when I buy lunch, I get an expired milk, which is sour and absolutely disgusting!

Not only that, but sometimes the french fries are rock hard. So, you have some kids with amazing food they brought from home, and other students who are struggling to chew on these french fries. The food that HCPSS gives its students needs to change.

But above all, the students' behavior needs to change. I cannot count how many times I have been pushed, shoved, or yelled at in the cafeteria. Some students are just straight up going insane in there! They are playing around too much and getting others injured; it is a big problem.

So what should we do about it? We could start by asking Superintendent Dr. Michael Martirano to give us better and healthier food options at lunch. That would help. If the students were busy enjoying their food, maybe they wouldn't be acting so crazy.

But clearly, fixing the food will not solve all of the behavior problems. I asked people what they think we should do to improve students' behavior in the cafeteria.

"We should get rid of the problematic kids during lunch," 7th grader Kathryn Polletti said.

I completely agree with her. I think that a few problematic kids are making other kids mad or setting them off. This is turning into a big problem because even some "good" kids are starting to act out. The kids who cause problems should be removed before the problems get bigger.

Assistant Principal Kristin Terry explained, "The cafeteria should be a place where you can relax a little." I think this is a very good point and something that

Right now, the cafeteria is too chaotic for us to enjoy our lunch time. It should be somewhere where kids can just chill out, and not worry about getting shoved.



kids can just chill out, and not worry about getting shoved.

One thing that I think needs to change is that the staff members who are in the cafeteria during lunch need to pay way more attention to the students. Kids could start yelling at each other or fighting, and sometimes don't even notice for a while.

My idea is that we should all go out and ask the administrators, staff members, and the PTA to start fixing the problems in the cafeteria. Do you agree?

students should care about. Right now, the cafeteria is too chaotic for us to enjoy our lunch time. It should be somewhere where

ministrators, staff members, and the PTA to start fixing the problems in the cafeteria. Do you agree?



You can visit us at the Rhythm Drizzle Training Center
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ART CONTEST

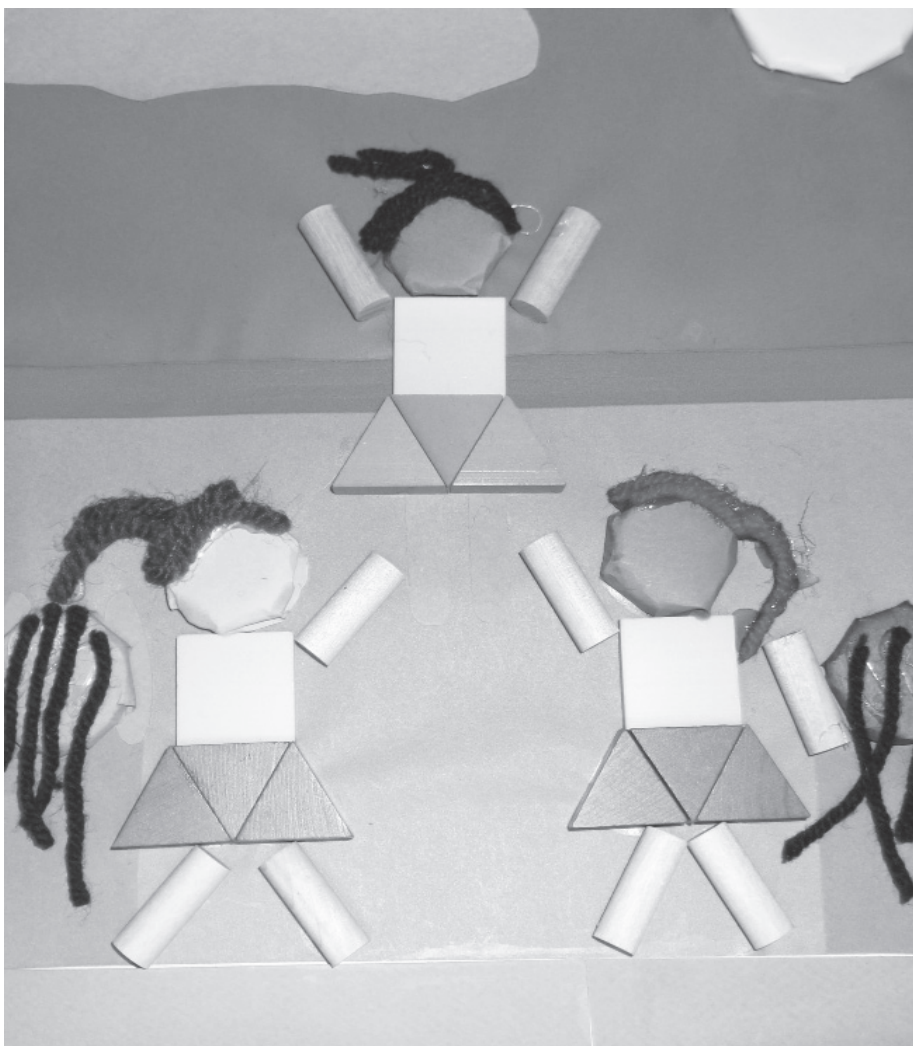
Art teacher Maxquesar Jones selected three pieces of art from his classes to enter in this issue's Art Contest. Submit your vote on an official slip to help us choose the winner!

Which one is *your* favorite?



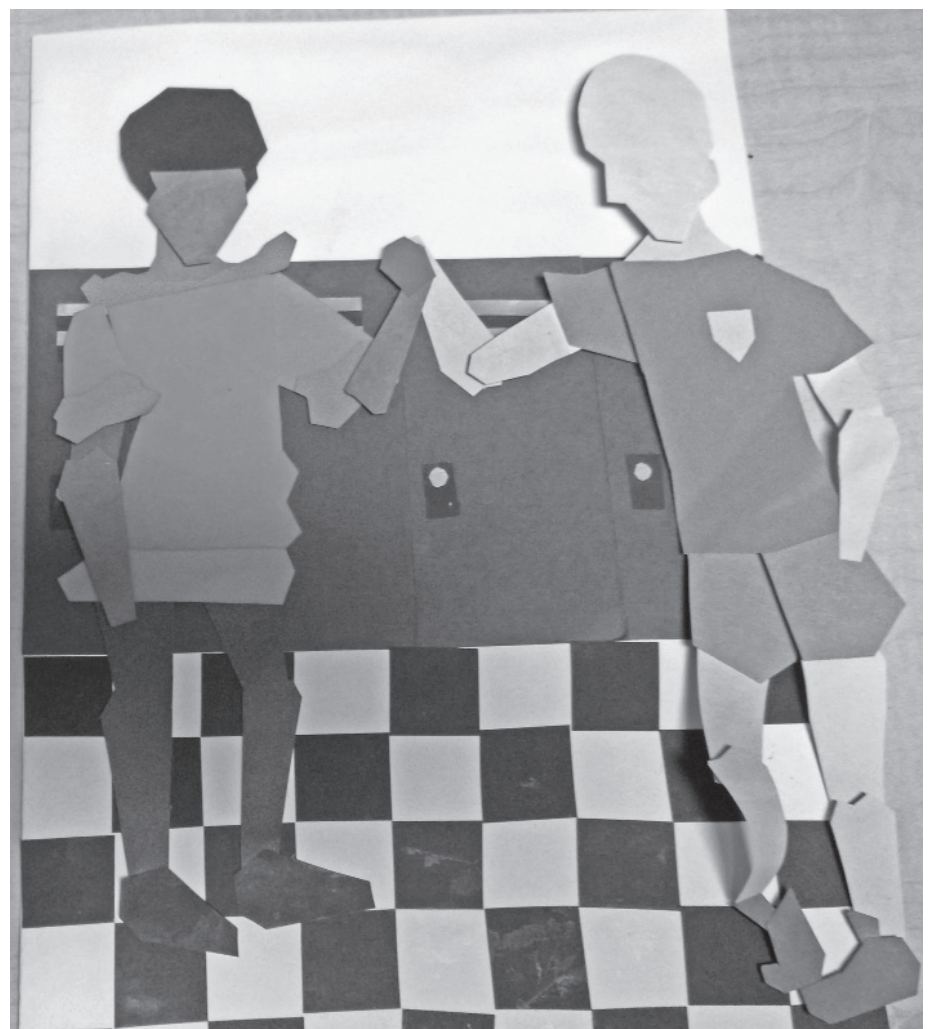
Self Portrait, by Anna Griffiths, 8th grade

Students in 8th grade were inspired by their personal thoughts, experiences, and the artwork of Marsden Hartley to create their self portrait compositions.



My Cheerleading Team, by Shaena Bullock, 6th grade

Students in 6th grade created an image using mixed media to show their everyday life in the style of William H. Johnson.



2 Boys Bonding at the Lockers, by Geleisi Li, 6th grade

JOIN OUR NEXT ART CONTEST!

Submit your original artwork to Ms. Cometa or Ms. Six. All art should be in neat, finished form, and be submitted with a title and your name. The Cougar Chronicle reserves the right to limit the number of pieces to be published.

YOUR ADS MAKE THIS POSSIBLE!

If you'd like to help us keep publishing *The Cougar Chronicle* newspaper for Harper's Choice Middle School, please consider purchasing an ad in our next issue! Ads begin at \$20. For more info, contact a Journalism student or Ms. Cometa (laura_cometa@hcpss.org).

Thank you to all the HCMS staff and students who helped publish the 1st issue of *The Cougar Chronicle*.

Congratulations, Journalism!

-Ms. Cometa





CULTURE · CULTURA · LA CULTURE

What's going on in the G/T Room?

By Cindy Six, G/T Resource Teacher

Wait, there's a G/T Room?! That's only for those smart kids right? Wrong! G/T Instructional Seminars are open to all students! Sign-up for seminars began in September and we have been working hard ever since. There are 30 different student groups that meet on a rotating basis. Here is a brief summary of what we have been up to.

Film Production

The students have broken into thirteen different student film groups. The theme is Movies That Matter. They will be working on planning, scripting, filming, and editing an original film with a message that falls into the theme. Some of the movies will be featured on an actual movie screen in May!

Debate

The debate topic for this year is "Be it resolved that there will be a junk food tax in Maryland." Don't worry this isn't actually happening but the students are going to debate the pros and cons of the issue. Do you like to argue or always be right? We still have room on the debate teams for more students. See me if you want to join!

Book Club

We just discussed the popular book *Rebound* which is the sequel to *Crossover* by Kwame Alexander. Our next discussion will be on the book *Holes* by Louis Sachar. We are super excited to talk about *Holes*. Feel free to join the conversation when we meet December 11th during period 2.

Future City

This year's theme is to build a sustainable city that is resistant to natural disasters. We have been working on our computer, Sim City model so far and are looking forward to starting the planning and building of our table top model. We still have room if you want to join us.

SOCAB

The SOCAB group focuses on leadership in maintaining our school food pantry. Thank you for those who participated in our candy sales. We hope to have more fundraiser activities in the coming months. We will also happily take any non-perishable (not expired) food items you may want to donate. Our group will also be contacting local businesses to see if they would like to make a donation.

Robotics

The theme this year is Into Orbit. The students are working to figure out original solutions to problems associated with prolonged space travel in humans. These may be physical or social/emotional problems. The groups are coming up with some really original solutions! They have also designed a robot and are working to program the robot to accomplish tasks on the competition table. The competition is coming up in December.

Creative Problem Solving

The students in this seminar are doing some out of the box thinking with all different kinds of problem solving and riddles. We still have space if you want to join us.

Photography

We have so many talented photographers at HCMS! This year photography is all year so we can capture the scope of the whole year. We made camera obscuras and went outside to use them.

TED-Ed

We are working on determining ideas for original student speeches. There is still space in this seminar if you want to join us.

HCTV

We have three TV crews this year which meet in the morning and we also have a Special Reports crew which meets once a week to work on special features! We still have space in this seminar if you want to join us.

Journalism

We meet every Monday in Ms. Cometa's room to write articles for this very school newspaper that you are now reading! If you would like to join our team, contact Ms. Cometa or Ms. Six.

LIBRARY CORNER

Did you know that reading can be BORING???!?! That's write! Oops, I mean right! That's why it's important, whether you're reading a novel or informational text, you must INTERACT with the text!

For informational texts, I recommend you NCUM which means: number the paragraphs, circle words you need to look up, underline important facts, and make marginal notes, questions or comments!

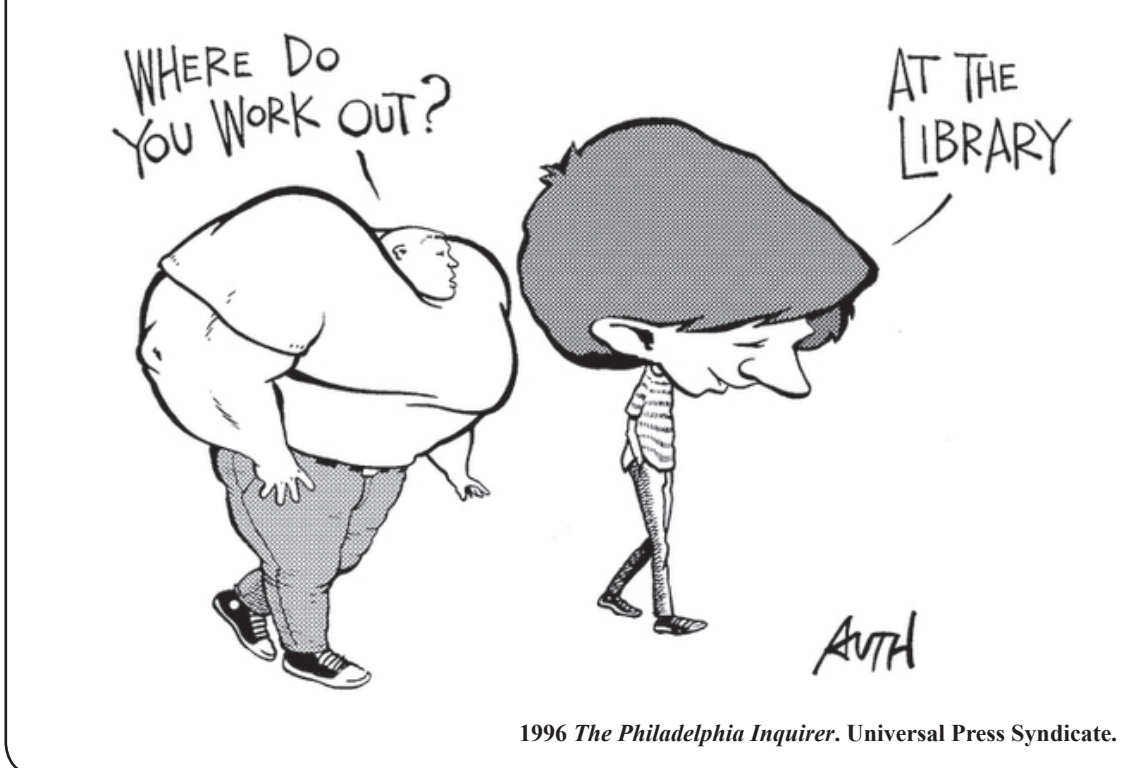
For novels, you could record the setting, characters, plot, questions you have about the story, etc.! These tactics will GUARANTEE you don't fall asleep while reading AND the information is more likely to stick in your brain!

-Ms. Cathirell,
Media Specialist



photo by Lindsey Sands

Media paraeducator Jill Cruz (left) and media specialist Nicole Cathirell (right) display two books they would recommend to students: *The Land of Stories* and *I Am Malala*.



1996 *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Universal Press Syndicate.

Is 6th grade meeting the students' expectations?

continued from page 1

Overall, we can see that some 6th graders are enjoying HCMS, while others are still struggling. The 6th grade teachers are trying to understand the obstacles that entering 6th graders face, and help them, both academically and socially. Some teachers say they are allowing students extra time to turn in their work, or they are trying to help 6th graders make good decisions and not be influenced by negative peer pressure.

G/T teacher Cindy Six has some valuable advice for 6th graders. She reassures that middle school is a necessary change from being in elementary school, where students are "being led everywhere and told where to go."

She said that lockers, organization, and time management are common problems that most 6th graders face at first, but she encouraged the 6th graders to stay motivated and overcome obstacles throughout the year.



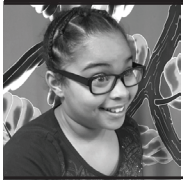
photo by Caleb McKenna

On October 31st, sixth graders board the buses to NorthBay, a 3-day outdoor education and "bonding" experience, which has come to be known as a tradition or "rite of passage" for 6th grade.



CULTURE · CULTURA · LA CULTURE

New in Town: Meet Ms. Hidey! Plus advice from an HCMS pro



Aniya Douglas,
7th Grade
Reporter

Have you noticed that we have a lot of new teachers and staff this year at HCMS? In this issue, we will profile a new teacher who traveled the farthest to come to HCMS!

Celeste Hidey is the new 7th grade English teacher who previously taught in Japan. Although she is an American teacher, she taught in Japan from 2010 to 2017.

In Japan, she taught English as a Second Language (ESOL) for kindergarten through 7th grade. While living there, Hidey learned and followed Japanese culture and traditions.

"I taught in a small town in Fukushima prefecture, which is where the big earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear explosion took place back in 2011," Hidey explained, "I worked for a small organization called The Wakakusa English program. There were 12 of us on our team."

Last year, Hidey returned to the U.S. with her husband, who she met in Japan. Hidey is from Mansfield, Ohio, but most of her husband's family lives in Maryland.

She spent several months working as a substitute teacher in HCPSS last year, before landing a full-time teaching job at HCMS for this year. How did her experience teaching in Japan compare to here?

"My time teaching in Japan taught me a lot of patience. It was very challenging to teach English to non-native speakers. Because

communication was challenging at times, I have really come to value speaking with and understanding my students in America," Hidey explained.

Hidey added, "Even though we speak the same language, communication can still be a challenge [with my HCMS students]!"

However, Hidey is having a great time overall at HCMS. "My favorite part of coming to school everyday is seeing my students

"My favorite part of coming to school everyday is seeing my students and spending time with them. No matter how stressful, busy or crazy life is, seeing you guys makes my day!"

**-Celeste Hidey,
new 7th grade English
Language Arts teacher**

and spending time with them. No matter how stressful, busy or crazy life is, seeing you guys makes my day!" she exclaimed.

Hidey admits that as a teacher, she sometimes struggles with trying to pack too much into a lesson. She sees the curriculum and wants to fill her students' heads with information and impress upon them the joy of learning. When she starts to feel this way she thinks of the famous quote by poet William Butler Yeats: "Education is not the filling of a pail,

but the lighting of a fire."

Although Hidey is not a new teacher, she is new to HCMS and she says she is always open to getting advice from other teachers because it helps her grow. Hidey says that teachers are lifelong learners who grow with the advice, help and collaboration of other educators.

One teacher with some advice for Hidey is veteran reading teacher Angela Jones, who has been teaching in Howard County for 32 years! Jones' advice to Hidey was to "expect excellence from your students" and "keep the kids on-task." She added that teachers need to be constant and keep control, but they also need to love their students, like she does!

Jones recalled that as a beginning teacher, "I always struggled with making sure the students called me 'Ms.' because I looked like them!" Now, she tries to lead her students and teach them to "be strong."

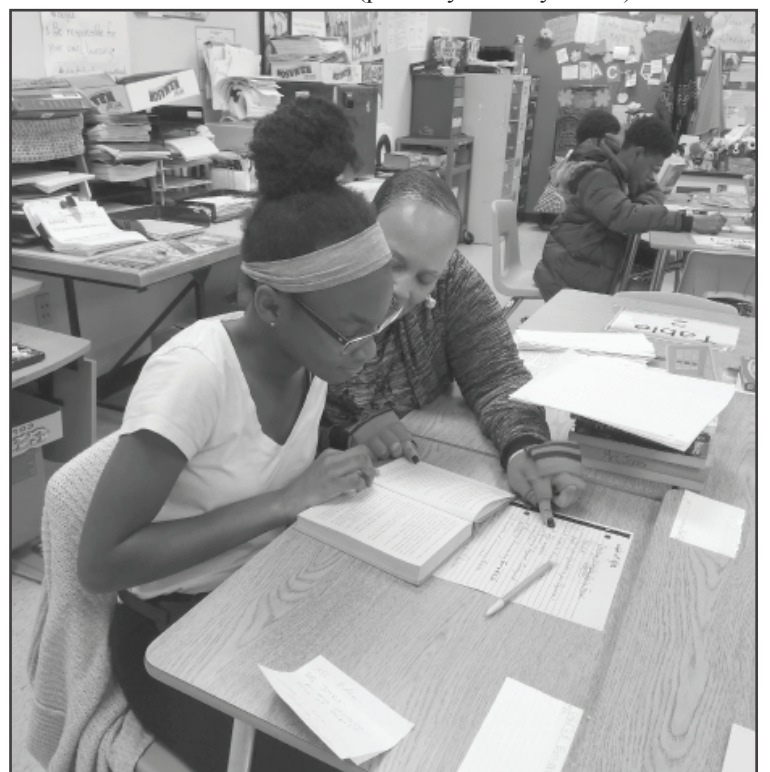
Jones added that all teachers should be careful to take time for themselves, to stay healthy and happy outside of school. Jones explained that outside of teaching, she enjoys swimming and reading. So, what is Hidey like outside of school? "Many people don't know this at HCMS, but I have a very goofy disposition. I try to reign it in at school!" Hidey exclaimed, "My husband is my better half. My spirit animal is an otter! My faith is very important to me. I could eat sashimi every day."

In conclusion, if you see Hidey in her classroom or walking through the halls, be sure to give her a warm cougar welcome! And, if you see Jones, give her a high five for her many years of service to the HCMS community!



Above: English Language Arts teacher Celeste Hidey smiles through her first quarter at HCMS. (photo by Aniya Douglas)

Below: Reading teacher Angela Jones offers assistance and advice to students and teachers alike. (photo by Lindsey Sands)



Student Council

This year, Harper's Choice has a new Student Council! Over the past two months, the Student Council has been meeting to discuss and plan activities for the year. The 2018-19 focus will be on three main areas: school spirit, community service, and school improvement.

For their first event, the Student Council sponsored a successful Spirit Week during the week of November 12th. Look for more fun activities coming up in December.

Do you have something you'd like to see happen? Speak with your Student Council members to be heard. The faculty advisors for Student Council are media specialist Nicole Cathirell and Spanish teacher Nicole Rosewag.

2018-19 Student Council members:

8th graders

Anyla Phillips, Helina Amara, Noah Davidson, Quedence Evans, Aklile Robi

7th graders

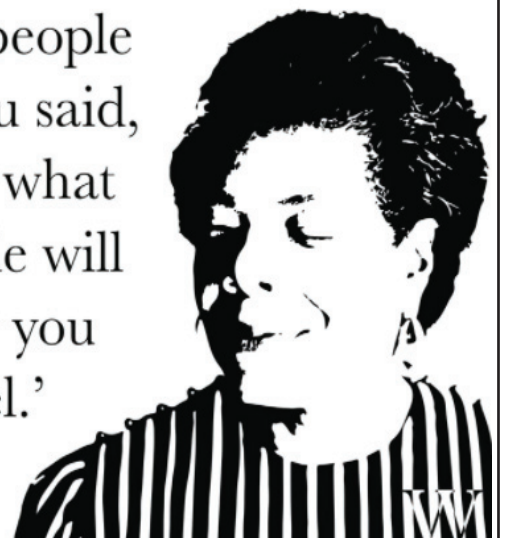
Faith Ozenne, Michael Williams, Sean Francis, Joshua Vasquez, Kathryn Poletti, Jaiden Foulks, Nkosenhle Moyo, Chayce Taylor, Laurel Sands, Hannah Boyer, Amelia Kirby, Jackson Bank-Krokos, Amaya Copes, Shay-onna Dailey

6th graders

Fatima Abbasi, Sarah KC, Ella Moss, Sophia Julian, Katie Yarrish, Victoria Goforth, Scarlett Lopez, Michelle Boukanov, Zachary Rich, Gabe Gray, William Roem, Miles Anderson, Shaena Bullock, Kayla Timmons, Siena Mullican, Jordyn Chaimiti, Jayla Copes

'I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.'

Maya Angelou



A message from the Harper's Choice PBIS Team
(Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports)

Winter Concerts at HCMS!

Chorus

Monday, December 17th
7:00PM

Wilde Lake High School-
Rouse Theater

Band/Orchestra

Wednesday, December 19th
7:00PM

Wilde Lake High School-
Rouse Theater

Support your friends and enjoy an evening of music!