

HCMS News

March 26, 2021

NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS AND IMPORTANT REMINDERS

IMPORTANT DATES

We are looking forward to welcoming back our Grade 6 Hybrid students next week. As a reminder, Group A students will return on Monday, March 29 and Group B students return on Thursday, April 1. If you were unable to join the Grade 6 Hybrid Orientation this week, you may view [presentation](#) here.

Schools will be closed for Spring Break from Friday, April 2 through Tuesday, April 6. Students will return to classes on Wednesday, April 7.

STAYING CONNECTED

As students return to the building, we continue to focus on ensuring the safety and wellness of our students not only in their daily activities, but also in the event of an emergency. It is important for all HCMS families to complete their Family File in [HCPSS](#)

[Connect](#) so we have updated contact information and so families receive all school communications.

HCMS and HCPSS frequently send updated information to parents/guardians via email and text. Please be sure that your [Family File is up-to-date](#) and that you have opted into text messages to ensure you receive all messages. To opt into texts, text “yes” to 67587 from the cell phone listed in your Family File. If you need assistance updating your Family File, please contact our front office at 410-313-6929.

HEALTH CHECK REMINDER

We are excited to continue to welcome back students in person. To ensure students are healthy enough to attend in-person instruction, parents/guardians are to perform a symptom check every day before the student leaves home. A student having any of the following symptoms should not be sent to school and may continue to access their classrooms virtually if they are well enough to do so:

1 of the following: New onset cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing; New loss of taste or smell;

OR

2 of the following: Fever over 100.4 or chills within the past 24 hours; Fatigue; Muscle or body aches; Headache; Sore throat; Congestion or runny nose; Chills or shaking chills; Nausea or vomiting; Diarrhea.

Additionally, students who have been in close contact (within less than 6 feet for a cumulative time of more than 15 minutes over the past 24 hours with or without a mask) with anyone who tested positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19 (exhibiting COVID- like illness and has not tested negative after exhibiting symptoms) should not enter any HCPSS building.

Parent/guardians will assess their children for symptoms of COVID-19 illness and refrain from sending/transporting them to school until after they have been symptom-free at least 10 days after the onset of symptoms, have no fever for at least 24 hours without the aid

of fever-reducing medication, and have continued improvement of symptoms and /or medical consult with their primary care physician.

MESSAGE FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE

If your child is returning to school and will need medication dropped off at the Health Room, please contact HCMS School Nurse, Mrs. Casey, at 410-313-6934 to schedule a time.

If you have been notified by the Health Room about immunizations, you will not be able to attend in-person school without proof of immunization.

HCPSS DIGITAL EDUCATION CENTER VIRTUAL INFORMATION SESSIONS

The Howard County Public School System is considering a virtual school option for students in grades K-12 who wish to remain virtual for the 2021-2022 (upcoming) school year. Once finalized, the Digital Education Center program will give students the option to access synchronous (real-time) instruction and digital assignments while receiving support services from the student's districted home school.

The HCPSS Digital Education Center (DEC) is currently in the planning and design phase. The DEC would allow students to take all classes and earn credits virtually while maintaining a relationship with their assigned home school. The final DEC scope and options are subject to funding, staffing and final Board of Education approval.

HCPSS students and families interested in learning about the DEC option can register to attend a virtual information session Wednesday, March 31, at 1 or 7pm. Please select one of the links below to register for a session and receive login information:

- [Wednesday, March 31 - 1-2pm](#)

- [Wednesday, March 31 - 7-8pm](#)

Information presented during the session will be made available online following each session for those who are unable to attend. Answers to frequently asked questions and additional information on the DEC are forthcoming.

Please note that decisions on the 2021-2022 academic year, in terms of students returning in person, hybrid or virtually have not yet been determined, and will be communicated as soon as possible.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT CENTERS

The HCPSS Technology Support Center site at the ARL is now closed for device exchanges, returns and support. In addition to a location at Old Bushy Park Elementary School, a new support center will open at the nearby Old Cedar Lane building in Columbia. [Click here](#) for full details.

GT SUMMER INSTITUTES REGISTRATION OPEN

Online registration for the GT Summer Institutes for Talent Development is now open! These enrichment classes for students entering grades 1 through 8 in 2021-2022 include offerings in the humanities, science, mathematics, technology, and the arts. Course lists, registration instructions through HCPSS Connect, costs, and dates are all available on the Summer Programs page. Courses include fully virtual and fully face-to-face (in person) options. The first window for registration requests closes on Monday, March 29 at 6 p.m. Be sure to register today!

Summer Programs Page: <https://www.hcpss.org/summer-programs/>

FREE FOOD DRIVE

There will be a free Food Drive at Howard Community College on Thursday, April 1 and Friday, April 30 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. [View flier](#) for more information.

2ND HOCO VIRTUAL RAINBOW CONFERENCE

Please join us virtually to learn more about how to be better advocates for the LGBTQ+ Community at our second HoCo Rainbow Conference. With over 24 concurrent sessions and local as well as national speakers, we have a full day of fun and learning lined up for Saturday, May 15, 2021. Session speakers include Jane Clementi and Joshua Patel of the Tyler Clementi Foundation, Rae Sweet of the It Gets Better Project, Maryland House Majority Leader, Eric Luedtke, Kevin Naff of The Washington Blade, Ying Matties and Robyn Page of Community Allies of Rainbow Youth (CARY), and many more! Registration for this FREE conference will go live on Friday, April 2nd. Until then, you can browse our [conference website](#) to learn more about the sessions and view the conference schedule. We hope many of you will join us!

UPCOMING DATES

04/02/2021 - 04/06/2021 SCHOOLS CLOSED, Spring Break

04/14/2021 Schools close 3 hours early, End of Quarter 3

04/22/2021 Report cards issued

CONTINUING ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHROMEBOOK CARE WEBPAGE

There is a webpage for students, [Chromebook Care](#), which includes tips on caring for and transporting Chromebooks, as well as student mobile technology support and additional resources.

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Featuring answers to hundreds of FAQs, HCPSS' [Help Site](#) provides a wealth of information about the Bridge to Normalized Instruction Hybrid Instructional Model, health and safety, transportation, technology, and more. The site is organized by category and can be searched by keyword, making it easy to navigate to the information you need. New FAQs are continually being added and we encourage you to visit the site regularly.

HYBRID LEARNING RESOURCE

A new [resource document](#) summarizes all major aspects of the school system's planned transition to hybrid in-person and concurrent virtual instruction that begins on March 1. The document is intended to serve as a reference for both families and staff.

UPDATE YOUR FAMILY FILE

We still need many families to complete their Family File for the 2020-2021 school year. We have begun calling families who have not yet completed Family File to offer assistance. If you have questions on how to complete the Family File, please call the school at 410-313-6929.

HCPSS uses Family File for parents/guardians to provide emergency information. **Parents/guardians must verify and/or update information annually for each child** and can do so by logging in to [HCPSS Connect](#) and selecting the Family File tab and then clicking on Family File.

Once logged in, parents/guardians will be asked to provide or update the following information:

- Student information
- Parent/guardian contact
- Emergency contacts
- Medical information
- Arrival/dismissal procedures
- Media release (photo approval)
- Data confidentiality
- PTA/PTSA directory

Changes of address may not be made through Family File. If you have recently moved, please contact your child's school as soon as possible.

HCMS ATTENDANCE POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

Need to report an absence? Please email your absence notes/questions to: HCMSabsence@hcpss.org. **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.

For Discretionary Absences (up to 3 per school year), please complete the [linked form](#) and email it to: HCMSabsence@hcpss.org.

For Religious Observances, please complete the [linked form](#) and email to: HCMSabsence@hcpss.org.

PTA BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED

The HCMS PTA needs you! We are seeking volunteers to fill several vacant board member positions and to assist our PTA President Mrs. Headlam. Be involved with your child's school and let your voice be heard as we plan for an engaging school year. The PTA is a rewarding way to meet other parents/guardians in our school community and a way for you to make a difference in your child's middle school experience!

A FULL BOARD IS NEEDED to continue the amazing work of our PTA, which supports our students while building community and pride in our school. Unfortunately, without a full board, the PTA will not be able to continue all the programs we currently provide. Please consider joining the HCMS PTA Board!

If you are interested or would like more information, please contact our HCMS PTA President at ingrid.headlam@gmail.com or call the front office at 410-313-6929.

FUNDRAISING PROGRAMS

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.

Clothing to Cash

Please donate to our 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, stuffed animals, and more. What a great way to help our 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.

Harper's Choice Middle School | 5450 Beaverkill Road Columbia, MD 21044 | 410-313-6929 | hcms.hcpss.org