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## Important Dates

January 26 - Schools Closed for Student

January 27 - Schools and Offices Closed due to inclement weather (Please continue to follow your HCPSS emergency notifications for any changes in school operations.)

January 29 - Hearing and Vision Screening Make-Ups (Grade 8 only)

February 2-February 6 - National School Counseling Week

February 4 - Schools Closed for Students; Quarter 2 Report Cards Issued (new date)

February 16 - Schools and Offices Closed

February 17 - Schools and Offices Closed

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## Morning Drop-off

Parents of car riders are reminded that students should not be dropped off before 8:15am which is the same time that students exit the buses. This gives our staff time to post at their morning duty station and be ready to receive and supervise our students.

## Cold Weather Attire

With the cold weather settling in, please remind your students to dress appropriately for their time outside (waiting at the bus stop, recess, etc). If they are missing a coat, jacket or hoodie, please encourage them to check the lost and found.

## Expanded Online Tutoring Help

Brainfuse HelpNow is now available 24/7 for all library users, expanding access beyond the previous 2 p.m.–midnight live tutoring hours. This means students and caregivers can connect with live online tutoring and academic support anytime that fits their schedule. Brainfuse HelpNow is available on the [HCLS website](#), and video and written

instructions on how to use the resource are available [here](#). First-time users will need to create a username and password.

## **HCPSS HBCU College and Career Fair**

HCPSS will host its second annual **HBCU College and Career Fair on March 7, 2026, from 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM at Guilford Park High School**. Over 20 HBCU representatives will be in attendance to provide students and families with information on admissions, scholarships, and pathways to higher education. Many HBCUs offer rolling admission, making this event especially beneficial for students who have not yet applied to college. We are expanding this event to include Careers and Trades! We have over 10 businesses registered to attend and several organizations will be on hand to share information to support students and families with their college and/or career pathway.

Students and families will have access to workshops on financing HBCU education, campus life, athletic scholarships, Career Preparation, and the application process, and can receive support on essay writing, resume and cover letters and even interview prep. Click [here](#) to visit our website and keep up with what colleges/universities, businesses and organizations will be in attendance.

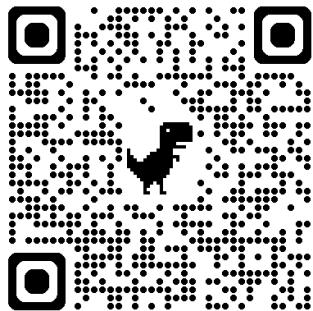
For additional information, Contact Kareem Penn at [kareem\\_penn@hcpss.org](mailto:kareem_penn@hcpss.org) or Monica Stevens at [monica\\_stevens@hcpss.org](mailto:monica_stevens@hcpss.org) with any questions.

Fliers [HCPSS HBCU College & Career Fair English](#) & [HCPSS HBCU College & Career Fair Spanish](#),

## **Mt. Hebron High School Mulch Sale**

Each year, the Mt Hebron HS PTSA runs a mulch sale to raise money for our After-Prom Program. After Prom is a fun, alcohol-free/chemical-free party held at the YMCA. **Mulch Day is March 7, 2026 from 7:00AM to 1:00PM**. Please help us reach our goal of 7,000. Don't wait to order your mulch.

**Orders are due by March 2nd.** Don't forget that if you pick up your mulch you will save 10% off your order. Use the code PICKUP during checkout! Use the QR code below or click [here](#) to access our online store.



**For a discount on laying your mulch**, contact Mt. Hebron alums Ashton D'Alonzo and Jackson Williams, proud owners of [AJ's Lawn & Landscape](#), at 443-520-5258.

**Don't need Mulch?** Consider making a [monetary donation](#) instead. Every dollar donated helps to reduce out-of-pocket cost to attend, and allows us to gift tickets to students who might otherwise not be able to attend.

## **Mental Health and Wellness Strategies**

Working in partnership with CARY, Ellie Mental Health, and the HCPSS Counseling Office, HCPSS will be offering a special event on Wednesday, February 11, 2026 from 6:30PM - 8:00PM in the Central Office board rooms called *The Power of Presence: Nurturing Resilience for Youth through Mental Health and Wellness Strategies*. This is a FREE and in person event open to all.

Designed for students in middle and high school and parents, caregivers, educators, and community, participants will engage in an interactive presentation and discussion to:

- Learn about risk and protective factors for overall health and well-being
- Identify personal and community protective factors
- Reflect on how to access and activate resources

Refreshments will be provided, courtesy of our partner, CARY. Registration is strongly encouraged, but not required to attend.

[Flyer](#)

[Register HERE](#)

## **HCPSS Family Empowerment Academy**

The [HCPSS Family Empowerment Academy](#) is designed to equip parents and guardians with practical strategies, resources, and insights to support their children's academic, social, and emotional success. The academy will take place on four

consecutive Saturdays- **March 7 through March 28, 2026**, from **9:00-10:30 AM**- and will feature interactive learning experiences, guest speakers, and opportunities to connect with other HCPSS families. Participation is limited to **30 participants**, and registration is **first-come, first-served**. Attendance is encouraged for all four sessions. Language interpretation and childcare will be provided. Please complete the [application form](#) to be considered for participation.

### **PREVIOUSLY SHARED**

#### **'Tis the Season!**

Cold and flu season is here! How can you help?

-**Donate tissues!** Please consider dropping off a box of tissues in the front office. Our supply is already running low.

-Practice healthy habits - get plenty of sleep, be physically active, drink plenty of fluids, wash your hands often, and eat nutritious foods.

-If you have cold and flu symptoms, stay at home and rest!

#### **2026 Family Academy Conference**

**2026 HCPSS Family Academy Conference:** HCPSS families are invited to save the date for the **2026 Family Academy Conference** on **Wednesday, March 4, 2026**, from **6:00–8:30 pm** at **Long Reach High School**. Families can look forward to a **light dinner**, a **community resource fair**, and **interactive workshops** focused on academic achievement, well-being, and family engagement. Workshop topics will include college and career readiness, special education supports, curriculum updates, hands-on learning strategies for use at home, and more. For more information, visit [HCPSS News](#).

#### **Yearbook Orders**

Have you ordered your Patapsco 2025-2026 yearbook?! It's not too late! To guarantee your yearbook, order soon at [jostensyearbooks.com](#). Yearbooks will be distributed during the last week of school. If you would like to check if you have already ordered, please look in your email for a receipt from Jostens, or email [kalina\\_salsman@hcpss.org](mailto:kalina_salsman@hcpss.org).

#### **Message from the Health Room**

This is a friendly reminder from the Health Room regarding the Howard County Public School System's illness policy. As we enter flu season, it is especially important to help keep our school community healthy and safe.

Please be mindful of the following guidelines when deciding whether your child should attend school:

- **Children must be fever-free for 24 hours** (without the use of fever-reducing medication) before returning to school.
- **Vomiting or diarrhea:** Students should remain home until symptom-free for **24 hours**.
- **Contagious illnesses** such as strep throat, conjunctivitis (pink eye), or influenza often require staying home for at least 24 hours after starting treatment or as directed by your healthcare provider.
- If your child is experiencing **persistent cough, significant fatigue, chills, body aches or symptoms that interfere with learning**, please consider keeping them home to rest.

With flu and other seasonal illnesses circulating, we appreciate your help in preventing the spread of germs within our classrooms. Keeping children home when they are sick protects not only your child but also classmates, staff, and our wider school community. Thank you for your attention to these guidelines and for helping us maintain a healthy school environment.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Health Room.

**Sincerely,**

Tiffany Ailstock, BSN, RN  
HCPSS cluster nurse  
Patapsco Middle School

## **FAMILY Read the Rainbow**

Registration is now open for our next FAMILY Read the Rainbow scheduled for Tuesday, January 27th @ 6:00PM. This is a FREE and VIRTUAL event and open to all. Participants will engage in a read aloud of the book, *Like THAT Eleanor: The Amazing Power of Being an Ally* by Lee Wind followed by a discussion with the author. The first 50 families with children in grades 5 and under who register for the program will receive a free copy of the book, courtesy of our partner, CARY.

[Flyer](#)

Register [HERE](#)

## **PTA and Music Boosters**

Please consider joining our PTA and Music Boosters. Each parent-led organization does so much for our school. We appreciate your membership and donations as they directly support the students and staff at Patapsco Middle School. Please consider joining the [PTA](#) and/or [Music Boosters](#) as we could not do a lot of the exciting initiatives for our kids without these organizations!

## **Cell Phones**

Cell phones should not be seen or heard during the school day. Reminders about the [HCPSS Policy 8080-Student Personal Device Use in Schools](#) were shared with students on the first day of school.

## **Forgotten Items**

We are happy to accept lunches, instruments, homework, school projects, keys, or other items as long as they are brought to school before 10:30. All items can be put on the table in the foyer and labeled with student's name and grade. Lunches that are brought in late are taken to the cafeteria and a general announcement is made.

We cannot accept items for delivery to students after this time period, with the exception of emergency situations, as we are committed to minimizing classroom interruptions throughout the school day. We know homework, projects and instruments are important to our students, so we ask for your help in assisting students prepare for the day the night before, or the morning of, to ensure they have everything they need.