

# HMS Bulletin

October 11, 2024



Dear HMS Families,

Research is clear that showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic and social success, starting from kindergarten and continuing through high school. Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school, or even facing social challenges.

- Missing 10% (or about 18 days of a school year) can drastically affect a student's academic success.
- By the 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that can indicate if a student is at risk for dropping out of high school.
- In the 9th grade, regular and high attendance predicts graduation rates better than 8th-grade test scores.

Student attendance is a major point of focus for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Starting in the 2023-2024 school year, MSDE lowered the chronic absenteeism rate from 20% to 10%, meaning that at 10%, a student should receive support and interventions to improve their absenteeism.

Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) believes that attendance is key to student success. Maryland's attendance rate represents the average daily attendance rate of students in grades 1-12, including special education students. The state's proficient standard for attendance rate is 94%, and the advanced standard is 96%."

In support of achieving Exemplary Attendance for all students, we are sharing with you a comprehensive approach to attendance supports and interventions.

- If a student has missed 5% of their monthly attendance days (as few as 1-2 days a month), parents/guardians will receive a Care and Concern Phone Call and letter from their school. This step will allow staff members to coordinate with families to determine how the student can be supported for better attendance.
- If a student has missed 10% of their monthly attendance days (this is defined as chronic absenteeism by MSDE), parents/guardians will receive a 10% Chronic Absenteeism Attendance Letter. Parents/guardians and students may be scheduled for an attendance conference. Other interventions and supports may also be used in an effort to assist the student.
- If a student has missed 15% of their monthly attendance days, in addition to the interventions and supports at 5% and 10%, these students may require an attendance support plan. Students may also be referred to the Central Attendance Team.
- If a student has missed 20% of their monthly attendance days, parents/guardians will receive a 20% Emergency Chronic Absenteeism Letter or Habitual Truancy Letter. Students may be referred to Project Attend and/or the State's Attorney's Office for habitual truancy.

With the collaborative effort of HCPSS parents/guardians, staff, and students, we are confident that all students can have successful attendance. This will improve student success in school and future life.

## **Q2 Bookbages in lockers**

Starting November 1, 2024, we will no longer allow backpacks to be carried around all day. Students must leave backpacks in their lockers until dismissal time. This decision has been made with student and staff safety in mind. While we understand that backpacks can be convenient for carrying books, computers, and supplies, eliminating them will help create a safer environment for everyone.

Here are a few reasons for this change:

1. **Safety and Security:** Requiring all bags to remain in lockers allows us to monitor things that may be brought to school that should not be. It also helps us respond more quickly in case of an emergency.
2. **Clutter-Free Environment:** Without backpacks, our hallways and classrooms will be less cluttered, making it easier for everyone to navigate the school safely.
3. **Focus on Learning:** By limiting personal items, we encourage a focus on education and interaction and minimize distractions during school hours. We understand that this may be an adjustment for students. We are using quarter 1 to get all lockers in working condition. We have delivered a few additional lockers so all students can be assigned their own locker.

We have established designated locker times for students to get what they need for a few classes. Students will only need to bring their computers to the classes using them for instruction. If a computer is not required for class, it should remain in the locker. We encourage students to learn their locker combinations, unpack their bookbags, organize their belongings, and practice opening their locker.

Safety is our top priority, and we appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we implement this school-wide expectation. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Answers to some questions that you may get from students:

We will not increase the transition time between classes. Students will have grade-specific locker times.

### **8th grade locker times:**

- Arrival to school
- After period 2
- Before and after lunch
- Dismissal

### **7th grade locker times:**

- Arrival to school
- After period 2
- After period 4
- After lunch
- Dismissal

### **6th grade locker times:**

- Arrival to school
- Before Lunch and after Lunch
- Before Pd. 6
- Dismissal

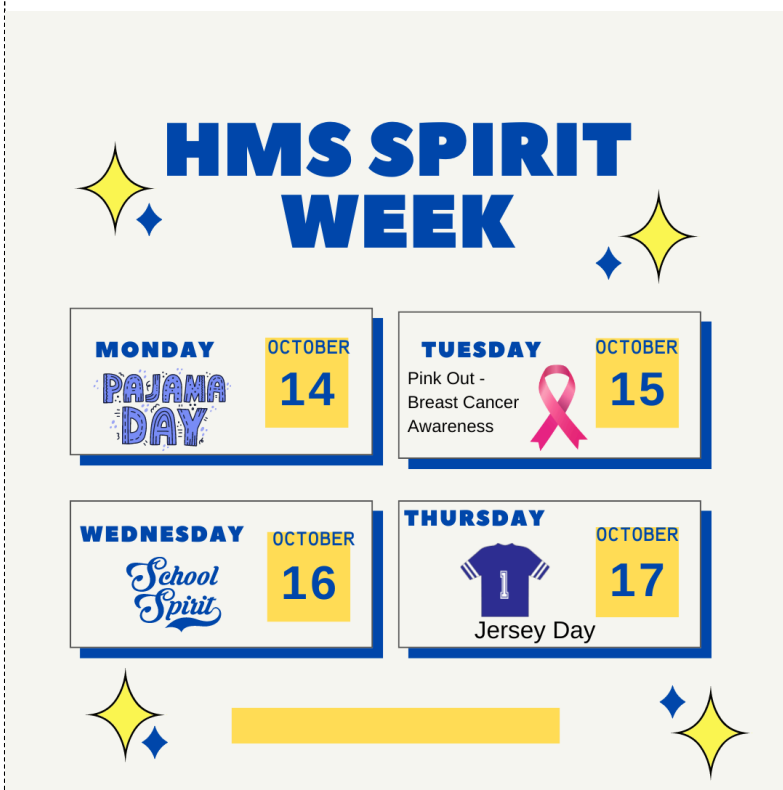
All instrumental music students were assigned an instrument cubby in our storage rooms in the band room. Most 6th-grade band students have band first period; they come straight to band, put their instruments in their cubbies at the end of the first period, and pick

them up after 6th or 7th period, whichever period is closer to the band room. 6th-grade students who do not have band or orchestra first period drop their instruments off in their cubbies before the first period and pick them up after 6th or 7th period.

If a student needs to access their locker outside of the designated locker times, they may ask their teacher for a pass. Students should organize their supplies based on their morning and afternoon classes so they can only carry some materials around all day.

Students can carry a small purse, fanny pack, or belt bag with them throughout the day for small personal items. This bag should be small enough to fit inside a student desk. We ask that students do not carry string/cinch bags for this purpose as they can be a tripping hazard. Zip binders can be carried around all day.

## IMPORTANT DATES



**October 18:** Professional Work Day - Schools Closed for Students

**October 29:** HMS Flu Clinic (\*register by October 15)

**October 30:** End of 1st Marking Period

**October 30:** HMS Family Engagement Night - 5pm HMS Media Center (*see details below*)

**October 31:** Professional Work and Development Day - Schools Closed for Students

**November 5:** Election Day - Schools & Offices Closed

**November 8:** Report Cards Issued

**November 8:** Picture Retake Day @ 8:30am

**November 13:** HMS Hearing/Vision Screening (*Note: All 8th grade students and students who are new to Maryland will be screened*)

**November 21:** HMS Hearing/Vision Clinic Rescreen

**November 25:** Parent Teacher Conferences (*in-person*)

**November 26-27:** Parent Teacher Conferences (*virtual*)

**November 28-29:** Schools & Offices closed

**December 17:** HMS Spelling Bee 5pm - HMS Media Center

**December 23 - January 1:** Winter Break

## NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are excited to invite you to our next **Family Engagement Night** on **Thursday, October 30th**, from **5-7 p.m.** in the **HMS Media Center**. Our focus for the evening will be **data conversations**.

On **September 26th and 27th**, many of our students took the **Reading and Math MAP (Measures for Academic Progress)** assessment. However, please note that **8th-grade** students enrolled in **GT ELA, Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, or Statistics** did not take this year's MAP assessment. While you are still welcome to join us, we will be reviewing older data for these students. Additionally, **MCAP scores**, which apply to all students, were recently sent home and will be discussed during the presentation.

During our "Data & Dinner" event, we will share your child's most recent Reading and Math MAP data from this fall's September sessions. Each registered participant will receive a personalized folder with your student's data and a space for reflection. We'll guide you through interpreting the scores and exploring ways to support further academic growth.

To ensure all families can attend, we will offer a **children's area** during the session. Kids can enjoy a showing of *Monster's Inc.* and participate in supplemental activities. Please be sure to account for any additional children attending in your registration.

**RSVP Today!** (<https://forms.gle/zk11HLCtypakXtgz6>)

By registering, you'll help us prepare for dinner and create your personalized folders.

HAMMOND MIDDLE SCHOOL

**DATA & DINNER**

FREE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NIGHT!

Wednesday, 10/30/24  
5-7 pm  
HMS Media Center  
Childcare provided!

**RSVP TODAY!** Join us for dinner, then dive into data! Each registered

Feedback from last year's Data Dive:  
"Extremely informative"  
"The folder is awesome!"  
"Will you offer this session again?"

### Update Your Family File (80% Completed)

Family files that have not been updated for the 24/25 school year will receive a paper copy brought home by their student. Please complete and return to the front office. **The completion of the Family File is essential to your student's participation in field trips, dances, and other fun activities throughout the year.** We want HMS to be the first middle school to have 100% of its families complete this important task!

### HMS Spelling Bee



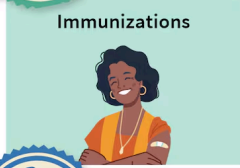
The Bee is Back! Students can now sign up for the 24-25 HMS Spelling Bee! Students must complete the Google Form to sign up: <https://forms.gle/pbaJKmjBGBkzp9UJ8> The Spelling Bee will be held on **Tuesday, December 17 at 5:00PM** in the HMS Media Center.

### From the Health Room

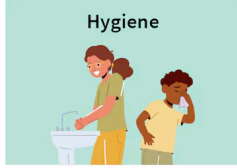
# Respiratory Virus Guidance Snapshot



## Core Prevention Strategies



Immunizations



Hygiene



Steps for Cleaner Air



Treatment



Stay Home and Prevent Spread\*



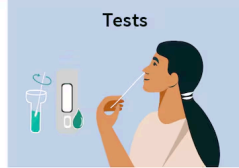
## Additional Prevention Strategies



Masks



Distancing



Tests

Layering prevention strategies can be especially helpful when:

- ✓ Respiratory viruses are causing a lot of illness in your community
- ✓ You or those around you have risk factors for severe illness
- ✓ You or those around you were recently exposed, are sick, or are recovering

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**\*Stay home and away from others until,**

**and**

**Your symptoms are getting better**      **You are fever-free (without meds)**

**for 24 hrs**

**Then take added precaution for the next 5 days**

## REMINDERS

### HMS FLU AND COVID VACCINE CLINIC – REGISTER BY Tuesday, October 15th

Each year, the Howard County Public School System partners with the Maryland Partnership for Prevention to bring flu immunizations into our schools for students. This year, they will also be offering the latest Covid vaccine if it is available at the time of the clinics. **The clinic at HMS will be held on Tues, October 29th during school hours.** If you would like your child to be vaccinated against the flu and/or Covid at this clinic, please register at this link:

<https://www.marylandvax.org/appointment/en/reg/6012552769>

You are not required to provide your child's insurance information. If you have any concerns about the new Covid vaccine, you are advised to speak with your child's pediatrician.

**\*\*\*\*Registration for the HMS Flu/Covid Vaccine Clinic closes on October 15th** to allow our health room staff time to review and prepare the consents and make sure enough vaccine is ordered. **If you wish to cancel your child's appointment after then, please contact the school nurse, Christina Toler ([christina\\_toler@hcpss.org](mailto:christina_toler@hcpss.org)).** If you have any questions, please call your school's health room at 410-880-5836.

### \*\*\*Health Room News\*\*\*

**Please perform daily health checks and keep sick children at home:**

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore Throat
- Body Aches
- Abdominal Cramps
- Diarrhea
- Nausea/Vomiting

\*\*\*\*\*

If your child requires medication (prescription or over the counter) during the 2024-2025 school year, your child's health care provider must complete a [medication form](#) and/or an [Epi-Pen Care](#) form. All prescribed medications must be in properly labeled containers that include the following information:

- Student name
- Medication name
- Dose to be given
- Time & Frequency of medication
- Prescriber's name & signature
- Date of medication order

Pharmacy labels will usually contain this information. Over-the-counter medications should be in new, unopened containers labeled with the student's name.

Feel free to contact our health team with any questions: [christina\\_toler@hcpss.org](mailto:christina_toler@hcpss.org) [karisma\\_rencher@hcpss.org](mailto:karisma_rencher@hcpss.org)

**Reporting your child's absence**

Need to report an absence? Please email your absence notes/questions to: [HMSabsence@hcpss.org](mailto:HMSabsence@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 may not be honored.

Please Note: Absences are unexcused until an email or note is received.

**STAY CONNECTED**

Families may find it useful to bookmark the following web-pages where information will be continually updated and posted:

- [HMS Website](#)
- [HMS Twitter](#)
- [HMS Instagram](#)
- [HCPSS Website](#)
- [HCPSS News site](#)
- [HCPSS Help site](#)

**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.*

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