PARENT ACADEMY



ELEMENTARY ACADEMIC PLAYBOOK

2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ACADEMIC PLAYBOOK

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR

Student success is not left to chance; it is built by design. Our vision of students being Ready by Design begins with a powerful partnership between school staff, families, and our community. When we align our efforts to support a student's learning, attendance, and well-being, we build the foundation for their future achievement.

The Elementary Academic Playbook is your tool for participating in this design process. It empowers you to take an active, informed role in your child's education by providing the questions to ask, strategies for meaningful collaboration with teachers, and clear information on the support available if your child faces challenges. Consider this your essential guide to successfully navigating the elementary years.

Sincerely,
Dyann R. Mack, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

The Playbook includes:

School Directory 3
My School Information 4
School Bus Information 5
Student Health Services 6
Payment Options 6
Food and Nutrition Services 7
Building Positive Relationships 8
Elementary Grading Information 9
Standardized Testing Information 10
Elementary Reading Program 11
Elementary Mathematics Program 12
Parent-Teacher Conference Checklist 13
Parent-Teacher Conference Note Tracker 14
After the Conference 15
Join Your School's PTA 16
Connect with Us 17
Canvas Parent Access 18
HCPS Parent Academy 19
Learn with Me Events 20
Student Support Services 21
Special Education 22
Family and Student Support 23
Social-Emotional Early Childhood Support 24
Community Resources 25

SCHOOL DIRECTORY

ELEMENTARY

Abingdon Elementary ◊
Dr. Stacey Gerringer, Principal
(410) 638-3910

Bakerfield Elementary* ▪
Tara Sample, Principal
(410) 273-5518

Bel Air Elementary* ◆⊙
Katie L. Scharpf, Principal
(410) 638-4160

Church Creek Elementary ▪
Kori P. Yekstat, Principal
(410) 273-5550

Churchville Elementary ▪✳⊙
Stephanie Barnes, Principal
(410) 638-3800

Darlington Elementary ✳
Danielle O'Neill, Principal
(410) 638-3700

Deerfield Elementary* ◊
Meridith Dunlap, Principal
(410) 612-1535

Dublin Elementary ▫⊙
Stacey L. McCord, Principal
(410) 638-3703

Edgewood Elementary ◊›
Emily S. Heisey, Principal
(410) 612-1540

Emmorton Elementary ◆
Zachary Greenbaum, Principal
(410) 638-3920

Forest Hill Elementary ◆◄▫
Cheryl Shaw, Principal
(410) 638-4166

Forest Lakes Elementary* ◆◄
Kelly Sayre, Principal
(410) 638-4262

Fountain Green Elementary ⊙
Mary Ann Clinton, Principal
(410) 638-4220

George D. Lisby Elementary ▪
Caitlin L. Sieracki, Principal
(410) 273-5530

Hall's Cross Roads Elementary ▪
Karen Jankowiak, Principal
(410) 273-5524

Havre de Grace Elementary* ✳
Shelby M. Houseman, Principal
(410) 939-6616

Hickory Elementary ◆⊙
Lorien B. Covelly, Principal
(410) 638-4170

Homestead/Wakefield Elementary ◆Δ
Jeanna M. Gentile, Principal
(410) 638-4175

Jarrettsville Elementary ◄▫
Christian Slattery, Principal
(410) 692-7800

Joppatowne Elementary ◄›
Dr. Jessica Hichkad, Principal
(410) 612-1546

Magnolia Elementary ›
Sara Jo Brown, Principal
(410) 612-1553

Meadowvale Elementary ✳
Harley J. Main, Principal
(410) 939-6622

Norrisville Elementary ▫
Jennifer Drumgoole, Principal
(410) 692-7810

North Bend Elementary ▫
Gregory Lane, Principal
(410) 692-7815

North Harford Elementary ▫
Christopher Yancone, Principal
(410) 638-3670

Old Post Road Elementary ◊
Jennifer N. Gasdia, Principal
(410) 612-2033 (Intermediate Bldg)
(410) 612-1566 (Primary Bldg)

Prospect Mill Elementary ⊙
Amanda Heise, Principal
(410) 638-3817

Red Pump Elementary* ◆◄
Heather Skopak, Principal
(410) 638-4252

Ring Factory Elementary Δ
Parfait Awono, Principal
(410) 638-4186

Riverside Elementary ›
Marc Hamilton, Principal
(410) 612-1560

Roye-Williams Elementary ▪
Rose Martino, Principal
(410) 273-5536

William S. James Elementary* ◊Δ
Bethany Farver, Principal
(410) 638-3900

Youth's Benefit Elementary ◄
Lisa Minutoli, Principal
(410) 638-4190

MULTI-LEVEL

Harford Academy
Randy Geyer, Principal
(410) 638-3810

Swan Creek
Melissa K. Williams, Principal
(410) 273-5594

Click here to access **HCPS School websites.**

Feeder School Key

- ▪ Aberdeen Middle
- ◆ Bel Air Middle
- ◊ Edgewood Middle
- ◄ Fallston Middle
- ✳ Havre de Grace Middle
- › Magnolia Middle
- ▫ North Harford Middle
- Δ Patterson Mill Middle
- ⊙ Southampton Middle

Elementary school office hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
**Fourth tier school office hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.*

All school information accurate as of July 2026.

MY SCHOOL INFORMATION

Principal's Name _____

Assistant Principal's Name _____

School Phone Number _____

Teacher Name(s) _____ _____

Teacher Email(s) _____ _____

Bus Number _____ Bus Stop _____

School Nurse's Name _____

School Nurse's Email _____

School Counselor's Name _____

School Counselor's Email _____

More Key Contacts _____

(Examples include: PACE Coordinator, Title I, Social Worker, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SCHOOL BUS INFORMATION

Friendly reminders for our youngest bus riders:

- Be at the bus stop at least five minutes before your pick-up time.
- Use a quiet voice when you are on the school bus.
- Follow directions and listen to the bus driver.
- Keep your hands and feet to yourself and out of the aisle.
- No drinking or eating on the school bus.
- Be safe and be kind!

If there are unexpected delays or other causes for a school bus route to be altered, updates are posted on the HCPS website on the **Bus Route Status page.**

Click here for more information about **HCPS Transportation.**

Click here to see **up-to-date bus route information.**



STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) nurses support student success and achievement by identifying health concerns through assessment, intervention, and follow-up for all students in the school setting. With caring and respect, school nurses assist students to assume personal responsibility and self-care behaviors for their own health and well-being.

Printable Forms and Health Resources

Visit the Student Health Services page on hcps.org for important student health forms such as vaccination, medication, and treatment policy and permission forms, a school nurse directory, and guidelines for medication administration in schools.

Click here to access **HCPS Student Health Services.**

Click here to access the **2026-2027 Guide to Immunization Law.**

Click here to access more **student health information.**

PAYMENT OPTIONS

HCPS utilizes multiple payment options for school related payments. These platforms have been carefully evaluated and selected to ensure parents and guardians have access to the most effective, easy to use, and secure, payment options available to public school systems. The payment options noted below are known for being user friendly and efficient in their payment area.

MySchoolBucks

MySchoolBucks gives parents and guardians the convenience and flexibility of one account to securely pay for all of their student meals with a credit card, debit card, or electronic check. Parents and guardians may access meal balances, cafeteria purchases, and more.

Click here to access **MySchoolBucks.**

School Cash Online

HCPS uses School Cash Online to facilitate payments for school items and other activity fees, as well as reduce the need for students to carry cash. Schools can post items and activities so you can make purchases on a convenient, secure, easy-to-use system using your credit card or echeck. Once parents and guardians register for an account and add all their students, parents and guardians may choose to receive email notifications as new items are available for purchase. This allows you to stay informed about upcoming school activities while keeping track of the school fees that require your attention. Up to five households may add each student, so additional family members and guardians may also create an account.

Click here to access **School Cash Online.**

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

HCPS Food and Nutrition Services provides a full-service breakfast, lunch, and afterschool snack program for all students. All students may participate in the school meals program, and no student may be denied or refused a meal.

MySchoolBucks

MySchoolBucks is used to fund student meal accounts. Features include low balance alerts, auto-replenish options, and more. By enrolling/signing into MySchoolBucks, parents may also view student purchases. Cash is accepted at the registers in school cafeterias.

Student Allergies

Parents should provide the school nurse with medical information provided by the student's physician. Medically required restrictions, such as food allergy diagnosis, are flagged in the computer registers in school cafeterias.

Food Health and Safety

Foods are evaluated and menus are planned to meet United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines for Americans and federal laws like the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act. Lean protein, whole grain rich items, several fruit and vegetable choices, and fluid milk are available in all school cafeterias. All a la carte foods must meet Smart Snack federal restrictions.

All staff receive continuous sanitation and food safety training. Each school kitchen has at least one ServSafe certified staff member. All kitchens are inspected twice a year by the Harford County Health Department. HCPS professional staff are members of the School Nutrition Association.

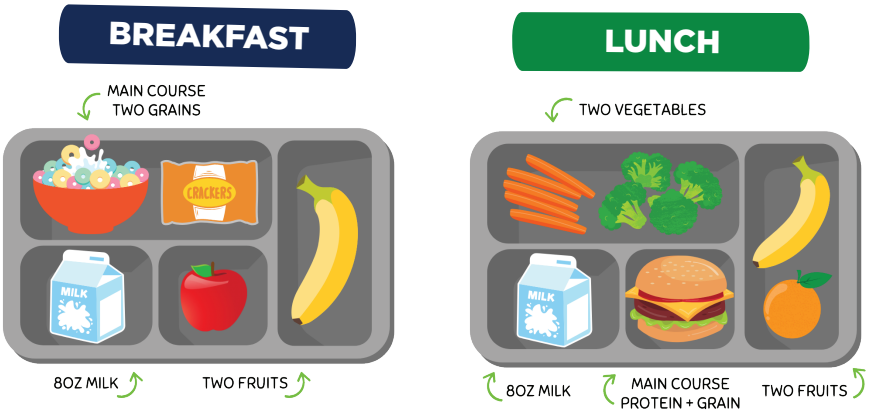
Free and Reduced Priced Meals

If a student's family receives certain benefits, the student may automatically be enrolled for free or reduced priced meals ("meal benefits"). Households will receive a confirmation letter outlining which benefit is provided. All other students must pay for meals or apply for meal benefits using the online or paper application. **Meal benefit applications must be submitted each year.**

Click here to access the **meal benefit application.**

Additional program information is available at schoolmeals.hcpsschools.org.

EACH SCHOOL MEAL INCLUDES:



BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Building a positive relationship with each of your child(ren)'s teachers will help set you and your child up for success this year! Teachers observe many things with each of their students that can help them succeed both in and out of the classroom. Here are a few helpful strategies to help cultivate a positive relationship with your child(ren)'s teachers:

- **Say Hello:** Start by introducing yourself and saying hi to the teacher. Let them know you care about your child's learning.
- **Go to Meetings:** Take the opportunity to meet with the teacher. Talk about how your child is doing and ask questions.
- **Keep Talking:** Stay in touch with the teacher during the school year. You can send messages or call if you have questions or want to share something about your child.
- **Be Kind:** Be kind and positive when you talk to the teacher. They want to help your child, too!
- **Listen:** Listen carefully when the teacher talks to you. Ask if you don't understand something.
- **Follow the Rules:** Help your child follow the rules the teacher sets in class. This makes it easier for everyone to learn.
- **Help at Home:** Ask the teacher what you can do at home to help your child learn better. They have great ideas!
- **Check In:** If you notice something different about your child's behavior or school work, talk to the teacher about it. They can help!
- **Say Thank You:** Tell the teacher thank you for all they do to help your child learn. It's nice to show you appreciate them.
- **Resources:** Ask about resources available at the school or district to help your child succeed.

Having a positive relationship with your child's teacher is important and helps to create a powerful partnership that will help your child succeed in school!

Building Blocks



Kindergarten

Readiness



HEALTH, SELF-CARE & ROUTINES

- 10-12 hours of sleep per night
- Yearly check ups
- Basic self-dressing abilities
- Independently use the bathroom and feed self
- Follow daily routine
- Limit screen time

GROSS AND FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT



- Fine Motor Activities
  - Drawing
  - painting
  - cutting
  - manipulating playdough
- Gross Motor Activities
  - Running
  - Jump Rope
  - Dancing
  - Riding tricycles

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AT HOME

- Follow routines
- Set expectations
- Support conflict resolution
- Create a calming space in your home
- Initiate play dates with other children
- Practice disappointment

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT



- Language and Literacy
  - Talking and listening to adults and children
  - Answering questions about a story (who, what, where...)
  - Front cover, Back cover, Spine
  - Identifying some letters and sounds
- Mathematics
  - Count to 20
  - Identify numbers to 10
  - Making sets to 10
  - Sorting shapes and colors

INTRODUCING KINDERGARTEN COMMUNITY GROUPING

Harford County Public Schools is starting
Kindergarten Community Grouping in the 2026–2027 school year!

WHAT IS COMMUNITY GROUPING?

Community Grouping helps us make sure every child is in the best place to learn and grow. We make better choices after we take time to get to know each student.







HOW DOES IT WORK?

For the first few weeks of school, students will spend time learning with each kindergarten teacher. This helps us see where each child will do their best and feel happy and successful.

- ✓ All kindergarten students begin the year in a homeroom.
- ✓ During the first few weeks, teachers get to know each child's learning and social/emotional needs.
- ✓ School teams review the information together to make informed decisions.
- ✓ If needed, class placements are adjusted to best support each child's success.

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Harford County Public Schools
Office of Early Childhood Education

www.hcps.org

ELEMENTARY
GRADING INFORMATION

Your goal as a parent is to make sure that your child is ready for post graduate opportunities, whether that includes college, technical or trade school, the Armed forces, or a career. Students in grades K-5 will not receive a first-quarter report card. Instead, parents will have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress during parent-teacher conferences in November. Families will receive 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quarter report cards by email. Depending on the school, a paper copy may also be sent home. You can also access your child's Report Card on the **Home Access Center (HAC)**. Report cards are available on the following dates for the 2026-2027 school year:

- **Quarter 2:** Friday, February 12, 2027
- **Quarter 3:** Friday, April 23, 2027
- **Quarter 4:** Friday, June 25, 2027

For students in grades 1-5, grades are posted to HAC on an approximately bi-weekly basis throughout the school year, beginning on Friday, September 11, 2026.

Click here to access **HAC.**

Quarterly progress report cards for students in prekindergarten through grade two are given to you through a non-graded checklist of "competency" marks.

- **CE- Consistently Evident**: Students consistently demonstrate understanding of the learning.
- **EV- Evident**: Student demonstrates understanding of the learning.
- **DV- Developing**: Student does not consistently demonstrate understanding of the learning.
- **NE- Not Evident**: Student does not demonstrate understanding of the learning.
- **NA- Not Assessed:** Item not yet taught.

The competency marks may be used for supplemental instructional competency marks are as follows:

In grades 3 through 5, student progress shall be reported using letter grades for mathematics, reading, science, social studies, and writing

- **A** = 89.5%- 100%
- **B** = 79.5% - 89.49%
- **C** = 69.5% - 79.49%
- **D** = 59.5% – 69.49%
- **E** = Below 59.5%

Unified arts classes such as art, band, media, vocal music, orchestra, and physical education will also receive competency marks.

STANDARDIZED TESTING INFORMATION

Now that you are beginning your journey as a family with HCPS, your child's job is to learn, study, and always try their best. As a parent, your job is to stay informed so that you can support your child's progress – know what kinds of tests your child is taking, why they are being administered, how the results will be used, and when that information will be communicated with your family. Throughout their K–12 education with HCPS, your child will be assessed in many different subjects and skills. Remember that a true love of learning is the greatest sign of success, and academic success is not defined by test scores alone. Encourage your child every step of the way.

Tests only show part of what your child has learned. Teachers will use tests, your child's classwork, participation, and how they complete assignments. Teachers may share this information during parent-teacher conferences, through phone calls, emails, or notes sent home. Help your child understand that tests matter and they should try their best—but also let them know you're proud of all their efforts and achievements, not just their test scores.

Here is an overview of some tests that will be given to your child in the early grades:

ASSESSMENT	TARGETED GRADE LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)	K	This assessment, given at the beginning of kindergarten, measures a student's school readiness across four domains including social skills, math, literacy, and physical well-being/motor skills. This assessment doesn't look like a traditional test. It includes a variety of activities and teacher observations.
Grade K Math Diagnostic	K	This assessment measures student readiness with Prekindergarten math skills and concepts and helps teachers determine how to best support your student. It is not a traditional test. It is a one-on-one interview that does not result in a score.
DIBELS, 8th edition	K-3	The DIBELS assessment is given to all kindergarten students and students in grades 1-3 performing below grade level. This assessment is an early reading screener and provides teachers with data regarding your child's phonics skills. The assessment is done in a one-on-one setting with the teacher and the student and consists of short subtests, which result in an overall score. Students who are in the "at risk" category must receive additional reading instruction in a small group setting.
Cognitive Abilities Test (CoGAT)	2	This is a computer-based standardized assessment that measures students' in the areas of verbal, numerical, and nonverbal reasoning. This assessment encourages students to demonstrate their creative problem-solving skills and their ability to learn in different situations.
iReady Reading Diagnostic	K-high school	To provide a means of gauging students' reading levels and to measure reading growth over time.
iReady Math Diagnostic	2-8	To provide student performance data regarding mathematics skills and measure student growth over time.

Click here to access **Top 10 Tips for Effective Test Taking at FamilyEducation.com.**

Click here to access **State Assessment Resources at PTA.org.**

ELEMENTARY

READING AND WRITING PROGRAM

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

What to Expect in Grades K-5
Learning to read is a journey that builds year after year. In HCPS, all reading and writing instruction is built on the Science of Reading (the research that shows us the most effective ways to teach children to read). To build strong readers and writers, students work on growing their skills in the areas below.

Phonemic Awareness (Sound Skills)	Phonemic awareness is hearing and understanding the sounds in spoken words. It helps students to be able to read the words on a page.
Phonics	Phonics is learning that letters stand for specific sounds, which helps students read and write words.
Fluency	Fluency means reading smoothly and with ease. Strong readers read words correctly without slowing down to struggle.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary means knowing what words mean. Children are taught new words directly and also learn how to figure out words they don't know. Listening to books read aloud also helps build vocabulary.
Comprehension	Comprehension means understanding what is read or heard, and it is the main goal of reading. Children practice many different skills to help them understand both fiction and nonfiction texts.
Writing	Children learn to write stories, informational pieces, and opinion writing. They also practice spelling, punctuation, grammar, and choosing the right words to show what they mean.

ENSURING READING SUCCESS

Helping All Children Achieve
Maryland has a plan to help every child learn to read well by the end of 3rd grade. If your child is in Kindergarten through 3rd grade, this plan will affect them. The goal is to catch reading challenges early to give every child the support they need.

Keeping an Eye on Your Child's Progress
All students take part in a reading screening check three times a year—in the fall, winter, and spring. It helps teachers notice problems early. If the results show your child needs extra help:

- Your family will receive a letter explaining the results.
- You will be invited to help create a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) which is a plan made just for your child to get them back on track for reading success.
- Your child will get extra support based on their needs.

Your Role as a Family
You play an important role in your child's reading growth. If your child needs extra help, you will be invited to take part in the plan and be given ways to help your child at home.

Click here to access **HCPS Reading and Language Arts information.**
Click here to access **HCPS Kindergarten Reader Activities.**

ELEMENTARY MATHEMATICS PROGRAM

In elementary grades, mathematics should help children develop as sense-makers—not just learn to follow "the rules."

The HCPS PreK–5 Mathematics Curriculum is designed to build **reasoning skills**, explore **patterns**, and provide opportunities to solve **real-world problems**. Through **discussion, play,** and **guided exploration,** students develop a deep understanding of mathematics, confidence in their abilities, and a love for learning.

In mathematics, students are always learning about and using these mathematics habits of mind:

- *I can make sense of problems and keep trying, even when I get stuck.*
- *I can explain my thinking, listen to others' ideas, and give them feedback.*
- *I can use tools like blocks, drawings, number lines, or rulers to solve problems.*
- *I can see and use patterns to help me think about and solve problems.*
- *I can think about numbers and use them in ways that make sense.*
- *I can use what I've learned before to solve new real-world problems.*
- *I can be careful, take my time, check my work, and use math words and symbols.*
- *I can notice when something repeats to help explain my thinking.*

Click on each grade level to learn more about what your student is learning about in mathematics!

- **Kindergarten**
- **Grade 1**
- **Grade 2**
- **Grade 3**
- **Grade 4**
- **Grade 5**

Click here to access additional **HCPS Elementary Mathematics information.**

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE CHECKLIST

Your school will communicate with you when it is time for you to have a conference with your child's teacher. It will be a great opportunity for you to dialogue with your child's teacher(s) so that your child can succeed.

What to Expect:

Two-way conversations are best. Like all good communication, parent-teacher conferences are best when both people talk and listen.

Before the Conference:

- **Scheduling:** Confirmation of the date, time, and location of the meeting will be provided by the school. Some meetings can be held virtually if needed.
- **Preparation:** Teachers may send home reports or information about the student's progress before the conference. Keep track of their progress and write down questions you may have.
- **Major Changes:** Are there changes to your child's home routine that may have an impact on school work such as health, family issues, separation from friends, etc.?
- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Is my child making friends? Are they socializing on the playground, at recess, and at lunch?
- **Special Interests or Other Information to Share:** Is there anything going on at home that your child's teacher should know about? This may be added stressors that could disrupt your child's ability to focus or connect with their peers.

PRE-CONFERENCE NOTES

CONFERENCE NOTE TRACKER

Not sure what you should talk to your child's teacher about? Use these recommended questions to get the conversation started!

Student's Name _____ **Teacher's Name** _____

What are my child's:

Strengths	Areas to Improve

In which subject areas is my child performing at grade level and doing well?

Is my child making friends and getting along with others?

How can I help my child at home?

As a parent, what are any additional things you'd like your child's teacher to know?

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

After a parent-teacher conference:

- **Praise** your child for doing well and making progress and discuss together areas for improvement suggested by the teacher. “For every negative, there are two positives” is a great mindset for this situation.
- **Talk** to your child about the information that the teacher shared at the conference.
- **Communicate** with your child’s teacher on a regular basis.

It is important to create a plan after the conference. List action steps you will take to help your child continue to make progress:

YOU BELONG IN PTA

UNITE | SPEAK | ADVOCATE | CHAMPION | CONNECT | INVEST

WHY JOIN PTA? BECAUSE...



PTA CREATES CONNECTIONS

- Get to know your school's teachers and staff
- Learn about helpful school and community resources
- Get involved - your unique perspective matters



PTA SUPPORTS YOUR CHILD

- Access resources to support your child's success at school, at home, and in achieving their future goals
- Bring more fun and learning to your child's school experience with proven programs

NATIONAL PTA® REFLECTIONS®

Betty Bull Scholarship

STEM +FAMILIES



PTA AMPLIFIES YOUR VOICE

Harford County Council of PTA®

everychild. onevoice.®

WILL YOU JOIN US?

Together we can make every child's potential a reality- with your help!

Get started - connect with your local PTA. Just scan the QR code.

CONNECT WITH US!

Follow HCPS online for important events, information, and updates throughout the school year!

Visit our website, www.hcps.org!

Download the HCPS app!

Follow us on Facebook @HCPSchools and @HCPSParentAcademy!

Follow us on X @HCPSchools!

Follow us on Instagram @HCPS_schools!

Canvas
Parent Access



HCPS

Why should I create a Canvas Parent account?

Canvas provides parents and guardians a window into their student's learning.

OBSERVERS

- Parents and guardians are "observers" in Canvas. Observers can view courses, pages, assignments, course calendars, and their Inbox.

ACCESS

- Canvas can be accessed using a browser or using an app on your phone.

ORIENTATION COURSE

- This course is designed to assist you with the process of creating an account in Canvas, learn how to navigate Canvas, and connect with your student's courses. (Scan or use URL below to access course.)

SCAN ME!

HCPS PARENTS ARE STUDENTS' *first and best teachers*

PARENT ACADEMY

Visit www.hcps.org/parents/parentacademy for parent resources including:

- Workshops
- Lunch and Learns
- Parent Resources
- *and more!*

Like us on Facebook!
@HCPSParentAcademy

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Parents are essential members of the learning team for each student. HCPS elementary schools focus on engaging every parent, inviting all parents to play a proactive role in the learning life of their child.

One way we do this is by inviting parents to visit the school, and attend Learn with Me events! Learn with Me events are family engagement activities and two events are hosted per grade level.

Stay tuned to hear from your child's school about this great opportunity to join in the fun and learning with your child!

At least one event will occur in the classroom so parents can participate in the learning process.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Who are school counselors and what do they do for students?

PLANNING

Individual student academic planning and goal setting.

SUCCESS

Counseling classroom lessons based on student success standards.

COUNSELING

Short-term counseling to student groups.

SUPPORT

Referrals for long-term support.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration with families, teachers, administrators, and community members for student success.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy for students at individual education plan meetings and other student-focused meetings.

ANALYSIS

Data analysis to identify student issues, needs, and challenges.

The School Counseling programs in HCPS are based on the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Standards, facilitating student development in three broad content areas: Academic Development, Career Development, and Personal/Social Development.

Click here for more information on the **HCPS School Counseling Program.**

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

HCPS School Psychologists provide professional expertise to help parents, teachers, and schools work together for the benefit of the student. School psychology focuses on the development of individuals in the school environment and addresses the emotional and social factors that influence learning. Types of services include:

- **Consulting** to assisting others in dealing more effectively with children in terms of their mental health, behavior, and education.
- **Intervening** by working directly with teachers, families, and/or students to provide specific services, such as counseling, and recommend techniques or programs which may enhance educational, emotional, social, and vocational development.
- **Recommending** resources in the community as appropriate when the indicated services exceed those the school can provide.

Referrals for psychological services begin with an individual school Student Services team conference, held on a regular basis. After a case review, the team may recommend that one or more specialists be assigned for further evaluation, study, or review. Signed parent or legal guardian permission is obtained before a student is seen by a psychologist. Psychologists are also available for consultation on classroom, staff, and school concerns.

Click here for more information on **HCPS School Psychologists.**

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education in HCPS is a collaborative partnership among schools, families, and community agencies. Together, we work to ensure that every child with a disability, from birth through age 21, receives a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), as required by law. If you have concerns about your child's learning, talk with your child's teacher. By sharing concerns, you can gain a better understanding of how your child is performing in school both academically and socially. Your child's teacher can provide you with resources and information about next steps.

Click here to access **additional HCPS Special Education information.**

- **Infants and Toddlers:** Services provided to children with disabilities and their families, birth to age 3-4, in home, community, or center-based settings.
- **Preschool Services:** A continuum of services provided to children with disabilities, ages 3 to 5, in community or school-based settings.
- **School-age Kindergarten through Grade 12:** A continuum of services provided to children and youth with disabilities in comprehensive schools, regional programs, and public or private separate day schools.

SPECIALIZED SERVICES

HCPS provides a variety of related services for eligible students in partnership with licensed professionals trained to address the needs of students to support access, participation, and/or progress in the learning environment. These services include:

- **Occupational Therapy:** Sensory integration/processing, fine motor skills, feeding, attention, and self-help skills.
- **Physical Therapy:** Gross motor skills, safe navigation of the physical school environment, access to learning environment, and maximizing independence.
- **Speech-Language Therapy:** Articulation, language, fluency, feeding, and communication development to facilitate learning.
- **Vision Services:** Orientation and Mobility and direct vision services for students who are blind or have a visual impairment which adversely affects a student's educational performance.
- **Hearing Services:** Specialized instruction provided to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Services may include accommodations and modifications such as assistive listening devices or interpreting services.
- **Audiology:** HCPS' audiologist will review a student's audiogram, functional hearing, and ability levels to determine if a student has an educationally significant hearing loss. The audiologist will consult with school personnel to ensure appropriate accommodations are made in the school.

Eligibility for specialized services and vision/hearing services is determined by the appropriate team once all relevant evaluations are completed and reviewed. Referrals can be initiated by a parent or outside provider with parent permission.

Partners for Success

RESOURCE CENTER



A resource and support center for families of students with disabilities.

At HCPS, we believe families are essential partners in building bright futures.

HOW WE PARTNER WITH FAMILIES

- Meaningful involvement in the IEP process
- Open and respectful communication
- Learning opportunities for families and educators
- Shared decision-making focused on your child's success

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- Information, resources, and referrals
- Multi-media lending library and sensory resources
- Laminator and copier for parent use
- Connections to community resources and family supports

LEARN, CONNECT, AND COLLABORATE

- IEP Workshops
- Monthly Parent Workshops
- Parent Surrogate Trainings
- Family and School Events

We're here to support your family and your child.

Our mission is to **empower** families of **students with disabilities** through partnership, resources, and support.

HELPING YOUR YOUNG CHILD DEVELOP

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS HELP YOUR CHILD:

- develop healthy relationships
- manage emotions
- solve problems
- build confidence
- succeed in school and life

TALK ABOUT FEELINGS

Feeling words to discuss:

- Basic:
  - happy
  - sad
  - angry
  - scared
  - excited
- Advanced:
  - frustrated
  - disappointed
  - nervous

Questions to ask:

- "How did you feel when...?"
- "What made you feel frustrated today?"
- "How do you think the character felt when...?"
- "What does your body do when you feel angry?"



MODEL EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Show how you handle emotions

- "I'm feeling frustrated because I dropped the groceries."
- "I'm going to take three deep breaths to calm down."
- "I feel so disappointed that we can't go to the park today."
- "I guess we can always try again tomorrow!"

Validate their feelings!

- "It's okay to feel angry. Everyone feels angry sometimes."
- "I understand you're disappointed. It's hard when things don't go as planned."
- "Your feelings make sense to me."







PRACTICE PROBLEM-SOLVING TOGETHER

When conflicts arise:

- **Help your child identify the problem:**
  "What happened?"
- **Encourage them to name their feelings:**
  "How did that make you feel?"
- **Brainstorm solutions:**
- *"What could we do about this?"*
- **Try a solution:**
  "Let's try your idea."
- **Reflect:**
  "How did that work?"
  "Should we try something else?"

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR CONNECTION

- "What made you smile today?"
- "Was there a time when someone was kind to you today?"
- "Did anything feel challenging for you today?"
- "What's something you're looking forward to tomorrow?"
- "When did you help someone today?"

CREATE A FEELING-FRIENDLY HOME

Daily practices:

- Use a feelings chart or thermometer
- Read books about emotions
- Play feeling guessing games
- Create a calm-down corner with comforting items
- Celebrate emotional growth:
  "You found words for your feelings!"

Phrases that help during big emotions:

- "I'm here with you."
- "Let's take a deep breath together."
- "Would you like a hug or some space?"
- "When you're ready, we can talk about it."
- "Let's find a way to feel better together."

THRIVE BY FIVE
Learning Starts Now

REMEMBER:

Young children are still learning about emotions.
Be patient, stay consistent, and celebrate small steps!

FOR MORE RESOURCES, ASK YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER OR VISIT YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY FOR BOOKS ABOUT FEELINGS.

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent Guidance.org
Get Mental Health Resources for Parents



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR YOUR FAMILY



PARENTGUIDANCE.ORG

Free, comprehensive Mental Health and Well-Being Resource Library for all families in our district.

Key features:

- Over 70 courses in English and Spanish
- Topics: Anxiety, Grief, Depression, Self-Harm, Bullying, Social Media, Parenting and more!
- Created by licensed clinicians
- Accessible anytime online

SCAN HERE



PARENT COACHING

Free parenting support to help families navigate life's challenges with confidence.

Key features:

- Weekly 1:1 coaching sessions
- Therapist-created resources
- 24/7 text and email support
- HIPAA protected
- Expert guidance on grief, anxiety, depression, and parenting
- Matched with a coach within 48 hours

SCAN HERE



PARENT ACADEMY MENTAL HEALTH SERIES

Virtual Parent Academy sessions provide families with valuable mental health support and insights throughout the school year.

Key features:

- Expert-led by therapists and facilitators
- Live interaction with professionals
- Anonymous Q&A
- One-hour virtual sessions designed for busy parents

SCAN HERE

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

COOK CENTER For Human Connection

PARENT ACADEMY

HOPE®

HEALTHY OUTCOMES
FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

Positive Experiences are Key!

We have identified four building blocks that you can use to promote positive experiences for your child to help them build resilience!



The 4 Building Blocks of HOPE

Relationships

Nurturing, supporting relationships are critical for children to develop into healthy, resilient adults.

- Play and connect with your child(ren) regularly! Be silly, move your bodies, read a book, the options are endless!
- Help your child make connections with other adults in your life - aunts, uncles, coaches, pastors. It takes a village, and the larger the village, the more opportunities your child has for connection and support.

Environment

Children thrive when they have safe, stable, equitable environments to live, learn, and play.

- Check your house for safety issues, like access to guns, medications, alcohol, and drugs. Create a plan to address any identified risks.
- Talk with your child(ren) about school. Do they feel safe there? Are they being treated well by their peers? If not, connect with their teacher and brainstorm solutions.
- Help your child find safe places to play outdoors.

Engagement

Children need to feel that they matter. Help your child connect with opportunities for engagement!

- Sign your child up for after school activities that interest them.
- Consider volunteering in the community as a family.
- Get involved in your place of worship, if that feels supportive.
- Create tasks that your child can help with around the house.

Emotional Growth

Children grow socially and emotionally through play.

- Help children name their feelings as they arise, and talk about what that feeling feels like in the child's body.
- Normalize disagreements with friends, and model or role play about how to disagree respectively and productively.
- Make sure children have plenty of unstructured time to play with peers.

HCPS Student Support Services
(410) 588-5334

HCPS Parent Academy
ParentAcademy@hcps.org

care solace



Mental Healthcare Coordination Service

for Harford County Public Schools Students, Staff, and their Families

Getting help can be a daunting process.
Let our Care Companions find the help you need for

- *depression*
- *stress*
- *anxiety*
- *and more*

caresolace.com/site/harford



It's *okay* to ask for help.

(888) 515-0595

Unplug to Connect

Put the screens down—and turn mealtime into real family time.

Our phones and tablets are a part of everyday life but
moments of connection still matter.

Unplug to Connect is a community-wide campaign that encourages families to put devices aside during meals and
reconnect through conversation.

We can turn every day meals into moments of family connection, creating time for listening, laughter, and meaningful moments.

How does it work?

1. Grab your phone.
2. Scan this code.
3. Choose a question.
4. Set it down.
5. Start talking.



Enjoy the conversation, one meal, one connection at a time.

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Harford County Health Department

Harford County Public Library
HCPLonline.org

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SHERIFF
Sheriff Jeffrey R. Gahler

HAVRE DE GRACE MARYLAND

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TAR HEEL CONSTRUCTION GROUP LLC

www.hcps.org/parentacademy/unplugtoconnect

TRUSTED *path*

Life can be unpredictable. Ensure your child has a safe, trusted place to go if you're unavailable. Use this guide to establish your family's Trusted Path. After completing the plan, be sure to make family, neighbors, and friends who are part of your plan, aware. Then, place a copy of your plan in your child's backpack, post a copy somewhere it can be seen in your home, and review it regularly with your child.

SAFE LOCATION

If no one is at the bus stop or home, where should your child go?
(A trusted neighbor, family friend, or community member?)

Name of Location or Person: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

BACKUP TRUSTED CONTACT(S)

Who else can your child call if the primary contact is not available?
(List at least two people.)

Name: _____ Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

Relationship: _____ Relationship: _____

ROUTE TO SAFE LOCATION PLAN

- Identify the safest walking route your child should take to reach the safe location if no one is at the bus stop or home.
- Walk the route with your child to help them feel confident and familiar with the directions.
- Point out landmarks or safe places they can ask for help along the way.

AWARENESS AND PRACTICE

- ☐ Have you talked to your child about what to do?
- ☐ Have you practiced calling backup contacts?
- ☐ Does your child feel comfortable with the plan?

HARFORD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2026-2027