



Harford County Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HCPS adds cybersafety page to its website

Website launched as part of school system's Cybersafety Awareness campaign

To maximize awareness and communication with parents, students and the community about cybersafety and cyberbullying, Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) today launched a new page on its website, www.hcps.org. The HCPS cybersafety page features resources about online safety for elementary, middle and high school students and their parents. Links for age-appropriate videos, websites and brochures are available, as well as a link to report incidents. This new, informational site is just one piece of a larger Cybersafety Awareness campaign to reduce incidents of cyberbullying in Harford County.

"In response to the ever-increasing trend of cyberbullying facing our students today, now is the time to address cybersafety issues and forge partnerships with parents to increase awareness so we can work together to protect and guide our children," said Superintendent of Schools Robert M. Tomback, Ph.D.

Dr. Tomback called for the creation of a committee to review the existing HCPS Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation of Students policy to ensure that cyberbullying is adequately addressed and to create a Cybersafety Awareness campaign.

In February 2011, a team was assembled that included representatives from the Harford County Sheriff's Office, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Harford County Government Office of Drug Control Policy, the Harford County Boys & Girls Clubs, the Harford County Council Parent Teacher Association and the following HCPS Offices: Middle and High School Performance, Communications, Safety & Security, School Counseling, Student Services and Technology. The committee is led by HCPS Director of Community Engagement, Equity and Cultural Proficiency Dr. Jonathan Brown.

In addition to the new cybersafety webpage, the campaign also includes parent surveys, brochures mailed to home addresses, professional development for staff at each school and a culminating cybersafety and cyberbullying summit to include parents, community members, law enforcement and school staff and administrators. This event is currently being planned and more information will be forthcoming.

Every day, thousands of HCPS students log on to various internet and social network sites. According to estimates Grunwald Associates published for National School Board Associations, 96 percent of students have used social networking technologies. Based on these numbers, it can be estimated that nearly 36,000 Harford County older students are chatting, text messaging or accessing online social forums, like Facebook.

To access the new cybersafety page, visit: <http://www.hcps.org/cybersafety>.

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