

# HAMDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

# THE DRAGON'S TALE

## FAMILY NEWSLETTER



Principal Michelle Coogan

Weeks of December 18-22, 2023

### COMMISSIONER'S NETWORK PARENT SURVEY

[https://sdept.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eLEA9VV3iXatSd0](https://sdept.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eLEA9VV3iXatSd0)

**As of today, only 50 parents completed the survey. There are over 850 students at HMS. We need to hear from more parents. Please take this survey today.**

Parents, we need your feedback. Hamden Middle School is participating in the Connecticut State Department of Education Commissioner's Network. We are in our second year, and it is time for a mid-year audit. All stakeholders (faculty, staff, parents, and students) reflect on our school improvement plan and identify our accomplishments, as well as determine next steps. Your feedback is extremely important. Please complete the survey to share your ideas. Our goal is to have increased parent participation in the survey experience.

### OUR WEEK IN REVIEW

**Monday,  
December 18, 2023 (A2)**

### TWO-HOUR DELAY DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER

Todd White, Educational Consultant, Visits HMS

Team Leader Meeting  
2:50 PM - 3:50 PM

### After-School Programs

Healthy Heroes  
2:50 PM - 5:00 PM

Boys & Girls Basketball Practice

**Tuesday,  
December 19, 2023 (B2)**

Homebase  
8:35 AM - 9:10 AM

Grade 8 Assembly Practice  
(Block 6, Period 7)

### After-School Programs

Office Hours  
IXL Office Hours (LMC)

### Winter Sports

Boys Basketball AWAY vs. Amity  
Girls Basketball HOME vs. Amity

**Wednesday,  
December 20, 2023 (A3)**

### After-School Programs

Gr. 7 A-Team  
Gr. 8 A-Team  
Jazz Band  
Let's Learn Merengue  
Rainbow Club  
Technology Club  
YES Club

### Winter Sports

Boys Basketball AWAY vs. New Haven  
Girls Basketball HOME vs. New Haven

**Thursday,  
December 21, 2023 (B3)**

Greg Dresko, CSDE Educational Consultant, Visits HMS

**Taikoza** Enrichment Assembly  
Grade 8: Block 3, Period 5  
Grade 7: Block 4, Period 6

Early Dismissal  
(12:05 PM)

**Friday,  
December 22, 2023**

**No School  
Holiday Recess Begins**

**School Remains Closed Until Tuesday,  
January 2, 2024**

### HMS CALENDAR

Parents and students can access calendar information on the HMS School Website.

*Happy Holidays*



### HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Thursday marks an early dismissal in anticipation of the upcoming Holiday Recess. We extend our warmest wishes for a wonderful holiday season, filled with joy spent with friends and family. We look forward to reconnecting with you all in 2024.

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## FIRST MARKING PERIOD HONOR ROLL

Drum roll, please! We would like to shine the spotlight on our students who earned honors during the first marking period. Please take a moment to review the [HONOR ROLL](#) recognizing our scholars in both seventh and eighth grades. There are three categories:

**High Honors** indicates the student earned all As.

**Honors** indicates the student earned As and Bs.

**Honorable Mention** indicates the student earned As, Bs, and one C.

We could not be more proud of our students. We encourage them to continue to work hard and persevere as we forge through the second quarter.

*Reminder: The second marking period ends on Tuesday, January 23rd. Have you checked your child's progress on the [PS Parent Portal](#)? Parent Conferences will take place on Tuesday, January 9th. Parents will receive registration information in the next newsletter.*

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## HMS BASKETBALL GAMES

Students who are interested in watching a basketball game at HMS **must be accompanied by an adult/parent**. Parents, we love to have students cheering on teams, but we need help supervising students during the games.

Moving forward, parents can only accept responsibility for their own children and three additional friends as long as they are willing to remain at HMS until all children are safely picked up from school.

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## LOST AND FOUND

When students lose something, it is placed in the designated lost and found. As of today, there are several items in our HMS Lost and Found, including coats and hats. We encourage all students to check the lost and found this week. Parents are welcome to come visit school to look for missing items too. Over the holiday break, unclaimed items will be donated to the local Goodwill store.

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## SEEKING PARENT HELP WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

We are dedicated to making our social media accounts the best they can be for HMS families. We would like to start communicating important information through visuals created with Canva. These canva social media posts would highlight early dismissals, school events, and more. We wonder if there is a parent who may be willing to work behind the scenes to help us boost our social media presence. If this sparks your interest, please contact Michelle Coogan ([mcoogan@hamden.org](mailto:mcoogan@hamden.org)) or Kara Breen ([kbreen@hamden.org](mailto:kbreen@hamden.org)).



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## NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY IS LEADING COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS



### PAJAMA DAY FOR THE KIDS

PJ Day is a Connecticut initiative started 11 years ago by a 7-year old

Connecticut boy whose sister was battling cancer. The funds are raised for and in honor of the brave children fighting cancer at Connecticut Children's. The NJHS asked staff and students to donate \$1 and wear their pajamas to school on Friday, December 8. We raised over \$340. If you are interested in making a donation please visit our online [Team page](#).

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## TOYS FOR TOTS

The NJHS is in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of collecting toys and money supporting the Keefe Center's mission to bring joy to the families of Hamden during the holiday season. Each team at Hamden Middle School collects what they can for children ages 5 – 12. We donated over 300 toys this year. (Fun fact! We have gathered over 1000 toys over the years.) Special thanks to Teams Holt (Grade 7, House 5) and Ugolik (Grade 7, House 2) for their outstanding work. Both teams will receive a hot chocolate and donut party in recognition of their service.

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## THANK YOU, PTA!

On Thursday, December 7th, the HMS faculty and staff joined together for a special meeting dedicated to celebrating the team. Teachers enjoyed delicious appetizers and desserts. Then, they had some fun playing the Price is Right. It was an awesome opportunity for the adults at HMS to connect and have some fun. We would like to thank our generous PTA for their donation. Everyone loved the delicious food!

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## OPEN TEACHING POSITIONS AT HAMDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Special Education Teacher Vacancies

We are seeking certified special education teachers to join the HMS team. The teachers would join Ms. Brunetti and Ms. Patnood and work in our ALSc classrooms. New members

of the HMS team receive tremendous support to ensure they are prepared to serve our students and families.

### Long-Term Guest Teachers Needed

We are always looking for individuals who are interested in serving as a substitute teacher at HMS. There are opportunities to work each day. In addition, we are seeking individuals who are interested in working as a long-term substitute throughout the month of January for both English and social studies classrooms.

If you know someone who is interested in working for Hamden Public Schools, please encourage them to contact Michelle Coogan at [mcoogan@hamden.org](mailto:mcoogan@hamden.org).

### SAVE THE DATES HMS CONCERTS

Grade 8 Band Concert

January 17, 2024

Grade 7 Band Concert

January 25, 2024

### THE DRAGON'S POST STUDENT NEWSPAPER

Our student Newspaper Club has been busy at work compiling their second issue. They did an awesome job. [CLICK HERE to view The Dragon's Post Student Newspaper.](#)

### HAMDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS VIRTUAL BULLETIN BOARDS

Parents are invited to check out the district website. It is the virtual space for community fliers. It is a great way to see what is going on in our beautiful town.

<https://www.hamden.org/families/vbb>

**DAILY HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

Please review this health assessment each day before entering school

**HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?**

Students and staff with mild respiratory disease symptoms (infrequent cough, congestion, runny nose, sore throat, etc.) **may come to school if:**

- They are fever-free (a temperature of less than 100° F) and feel well enough to participate.
- They test negative for COVID-19 prior to reporting in-person every day they have symptoms, as well as one final test on the morning their symptoms have completely resolved, and
- They consider wearing a mask while in school.

Students and staff who have any respiratory disease symptoms **must NOT come to school if either:**

- They have a fever (a temperature of 100° F or higher),
- They test positive for COVID-19.

Stay home until the symptoms resolve and test for COVID-19. This includes not coming to school until the fever has ended for at least 24 hours without the use of medication. Anyone testing positive for COVID-19 should stay home according to the guidance provided by their medical provider and in consultation with the school nurse.

Following this guidance will help keep our schools healthy and open!  
www.hamden.org

### DAILY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Please review this updated Daily Health Assessment, available in [English](#) or [Spanish](#), with your child every day. This is an important first line of defense in both ensuring the health and wellness of your children and also protecting our entire school community from the risk of infection.

**REMINDER! EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS**

1. September 11, 2023	10. January 25, 2024
2. September 18, 2023	11. February 5, 2024
3. October 16, 2023	12. February 15, 2024
4. October 30, 2023	13. March 4, 2024
5. November 13, 2023	14. March 21, 2024
6. November 22, 2023	15. April 1, 2024
7. December 11, 2023	16. May 6, 2024
8. December 21, 2023	17. May 16, 2024
9. January 8, 2024	18. June 3, 2024

### MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. ESSAY CONTEST DUE JANUARY 5, 2024

Students are encouraged to consider an enrichment opportunity, Senator Murphy's 2024 Martin Luther King Essay Contest. It is not too late to write and submit an entry. As a reminder, the deadline for submissions is January 5<sup>th</sup> 2024. Please review the attached flyers for additional information.

Senator Murphy invites you to take part in the  
2024  
**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ESSAY CONTEST**

Senator Murphy is asking elementary, middle, and high school students from across Connecticut to help honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. by submitting essays that reflect on Dr. King's dream, their own aspirations, and the importance of what Dr. King means to them.

**DUE DATE: JANUARY 5, 2024**

**ESSAYS CAN BE MAILED TO:**  
Office of Senator Murphy  
120 Hayslope Avenue Suite 401  
Hartford, CT 06106

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:**  
MLK\_Essay@murphy.senate.gov

CHRIS MURPHY

2024  
**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ESSAY CONTEST**

**WRITING PROMPT:**  
Students must submit individual essays that reflect on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream and work towards equality. Students should provide their own aspirations, and the importance of what Dr. King means to them.

**WORD COUNT GUIDELINES:**  
Elementary (K-5): 100-200  
• Elementary students may submit essays with drawings or photos  
Middle School (6-8): 300  
High School (9-12): 500  
Entries may be handwritten or drawn.

**HOW TO SUBMIT ONLINE:**  
[murphy.senate.gov/services/mlk-essay-contest](http://murphy.senate.gov/services/mlk-essay-contest)

**VIA MAIL:**  
Must include -  
• Student's first and last name School address  
• School name (no abbreviations)  
• Grade and Teacher  
• Parent's contact (phone and email)

CHRIS MURPHY

2024  
**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. ESSAY CONTEST**

**FAQs**

**What do you win?**  
Winning entries will be hung in the Senator's office. Students will be invited to join Senator Murphy for breakfast.

**When are the winners announced?**  
Winners will be announced on MLK Day (Jan 15th). Schools will be notified directly if a student has won.

**Can teachers submit their students' essays?**  
Yes. Teachers are welcome to scan entries to the above email address or mail them to the Senator's Hartford Office.

**I am having technical difficulties with the online form.**  
Please contact us at the above email for alternate submission options.

**Does the heading and title count towards my word count?**  
No, only the body of the essay does.

CHRIS MURPHY

### A LETTER FROM SUPERINTENDENT HIGHSMITH REGARDING INCLEMENT

## WEATHER-RELATED CLOSINGS

This letter serves as a reminder about inclement weather-related closings. During the fall and winter, we are constantly checking weather reports. Our communications regarding the opening of school when there may be inclement weather begin the evening before such weather has been predicted by various meteorologists.

Hamden Public Schools Chief of Finance and Operations, Tom Ariola, and I communicate throughout the night when there is a concern about inclement weather. Based in part on the information we receive from Hamden Public Works, we decide shortly before 5:30 a.m. if we can safely open schools, and communicate any closing at or before 5:30 a.m.

There may be instances when weather and road conditions are much worse in one part of Hamden than they are in another part of town. When that happens, we cannot open some schools and not others because Hamden Middle School and Hamden High School students come from all over town, so we would be opening schools for some students and not for others ***within the same building.***

An additional consideration regards the ability of staff to safely travel the roads leading to their respective schools. While many of our staff members live in Hamden, we also have many staff members who live in other parts of the state. As such, inclement weather conditions in other parts of the state may play a role in determining if we can open schools in Hamden.

There are times when forecasts do not turn out as predicted by meteorologists. I would rather be criticized for canceling school when meteorologists predict inclement weather that does not happen than to

unnecessarily put students and staff in danger by downplaying or disregarding inclement weather reports. I never want to put any member of our community at risk during inclement weather.

Notifications regarding delayed starts or cancellations will be posted on local TV channels, our district website ([www.hamden.org](http://www.hamden.org)), and sent via automated messenger services. Please be sure that your child's school has your correct email address and phone number so that you will receive important communications.

Unless otherwise indicated, when there is a delayed opening or school closure, all before-school programs are canceled. When there is an early dismissal or school closure due to inclement weather, all after-school programs are canceled unless you are otherwise notified.

**The early dismissal time for Hamden Middle School is 12:05 PM.**

A decision to close school for weather-related reasons is not taken lightly. Each time, I will have to balance your ability to find a suitable adult to care for your child so that you can go to work, against the risk of opening schools when inclement weather is expected. This is an inexact science and I appreciate your understanding of everything that must be considered when I make this decision.

Sincerely,  
Gary Highsmith  
Superintendent of Schools