

Dear Hart County Middle School,

I hope you've all had a great summer and are ready for the new school year ahead. I am so excited to continue serving you as Principal of Hart County Middle School. Working together with our amazing teachers and staff, we're going to make this year a fantastic learning experience.

This new academic year brings with it the promise of new beginnings, experiences, and opportunities for personal growth. Every member of our school community—teachers, administrators, support staff, and families—plays a pivotal role in making this year memorable.

To make a difference in the lives of our students, we must focus on two things. First, our staff must build positive relationships with students. Second, we must set high academic and behavioral expectations for all. All students can learn and deserve an environment that supports learning.

Our staff at Hart County Middle School is dedicated to ensuring that each student has a successful school year. If I can assist you in any way, please contact me at jacqueline.brock@hart.k12.ga.us.

Go Bulldogs!

Sincerely,

Dr. Jacqueline Brock
HCMS Principal

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Hart County Charter System Calendar

Hart County Charter System Calendar 2026-2027

July 2026							Date		Event or Holiday		January 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa			July		Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3	4	27-Jul	New Teacher Induction							1	2
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	28-Jul	New Teacher Induction			3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	29-Jul	Pre-Planning/Professional Learning			10	11	12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	30-Jul	Pre-Planning/Professional Learning			17	18	19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30	31		31-Jul	Pre-Planning/Professional Learning			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
									August		31						
August 2026							3-Aug	First Day of School for Students	February 2027								
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		September		Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	
						1	7-Sep	Labor Day (Student/Teacher Holiday)			1	2	3	4	5	6	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8-Sep	Progress Reports			7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9	10	11	12	13	14	15		October			14	15	16	17	18	19	20
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	5-Oct	Fall Break			21	22	23	24	25	26	27
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	6-Oct	Fall Break			28						
30	31						7-Oct	Fall Break									
September 2026							8-Oct	Fall Break	March 2027								
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	9-Oct	Fall Break		Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	
		1	2	3	4	5	12-Oct	End of 1st Nine Weeks (45 Days)			1	2	3	4	5	6	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	15-Oct	Early Release* Report Cards			7	8	9	10	11	12	13
13	14	15	16	17	18	19		November			14	15	16	17	18	19	20
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	16-Nov	Progress Reports			21	22	23	24	25	26	27
27	28	29	30				23-Nov	Thanksgiving Holiday			28	29	30	31			
October 2026							24-Nov	Thanksgiving Holiday	April 2027								
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	25-Nov	Thanksgiving Holiday		Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	
				1	2	3	26-Nov	Thanksgiving Holiday						1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	27-Nov	Thanksgiving Holiday			4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17		December			11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	18-Dec	Last Day of School (Students release @ 1PM)			18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	18-Dec	End of 2nd Nine Weeks (44 Days)			25	26	27	28	29	30	
November 2026							21-Dec	Christmas Holidays Begin (12/21/26-1/6/27)	May 2027								
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa		January		Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	5-Jan	Student Holiday/Teacher Professional Learning								1	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6-Jan	Student Holiday/Teacher Professional Learning			2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	7-Jan	Students Return Report Cards			9	10	11	12	13	14	15
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	18-Jan	MLK Day (Student/Teacher Holiday)			16	17	18	19	20	21	22
29	30							February			23	24	25	26	27	28	29
December 2026							11-Feb	Progress Reports	June 2027								
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	15-Feb	Winter Break		Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	
		1	2	3	4	5	16-Feb	Winter Break								1	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	17-Feb	Winter Break			2	3	4	5	6	7	8
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	18-Feb	Winter Break			9	10	11	12	13	14	15
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	19-Feb	Winter Break			16	17	18	19	20	21	22
27	28	29	30	31				March			23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							19-Mar	End of 3rd Nine Weeks (46 Days)									
							25-Mar	Early Release* Report Cards									
							29-Mar	Spring Break									
							30-Mar	Spring Break									
							31-Mar	Spring Break									
								April									
							1-Apr	Spring Break									
							2-Apr	Spring Break									
							29-Apr	Progress Reports									
								May									
							28-May	Last Day of School (Students release @ 1PM)									
							31-May	Memorial Day									
								June									
							1-Jun	Post Planning/Professional Learning									
							2-Jun	Post Planning/Professional Learning									
							3-Jun	Post Planning/Professional Learning									

*Teachers work from 7:30AM to 7:30PM in lieu of one professional learning day.

**Faculty & staff members will document 8 hours beyond the hours captured on the calendar above. The hours must be completed between July 1, 2026 and May 28, 2027.

Regular Bell Schedule

7:30 a.m. School Opens
8:00 a.m. School Day Begins
3:00 p.m. Dismissal

HCMS Bell Schedules

6th Grade		
Period	Time	Minutes
Homeroom	7:30-8:00	30
Academic 1	8:00-9:28	88
Connection A	9:30-10:20	50
Academic 2	10:22-11:50	88
Lunch/HART	11:50-12:15	25
Lunch/HART	12:15-12:40	25
Connection B	12:40-1:30	50
Academic 3	1:32-3:00	88

7th Grade		
Period	Time	Minutes
Homeroom	7:30-8:00	30
Connection A	8:00-8:50	50
Academic 1	8:52-10:22	90
Lunch/HART	10:24-10:49	25
Lunch/Hart	10:49-11:14	25
Connection B	11:14-12:04	50
Academic 2	12:05-1:32	87
Academic 3	1:33-3:00	87

8th Grade		
Period	Time	Minutes
Homeroom	7:30-8:00	30
Academic 1	8:00-9:10	70
Academic 2	9:12-10:22	70
Academic 3	10:24-11:34	70
Academic 4	11:36-12:46	70
Lunch/HART	12:46-1:11	25
Lunch/HART	1:09-1:34	25
Connection A/B	1:34-3:00	86

Hart County Charter System Mission and Vision

Mission: The mission of the Hart County Charter System is to prepare all individuals to meet tomorrow's challenges by providing quality educational opportunities today.

Vision: Hart County Schools will be recognized for educational excellence.

Guiding Principles/Beliefs:

- Schools provide safe, secure, and nurturing environments for all.
- Stakeholders promote a positive atmosphere that fosters confidence and self-worth for all.
- Each individual is valued and treated with respect.
- Each individual has the right to be educated and the responsibility to learn.
- Quality education requires partnership, which is the responsibility of the school system, the students, the parents, and the community.

Hart County Middle School Technology Acceptance Use Policy

We offer students access to a school-wide computer network, the internet, and various technologies to support learning. Students must obtain parental permission and sign the agreement at the start of the year. Internet filters help block inappropriate content. While the internet offers vast resources, misuse may still occur. We believe the benefits outweigh the risks. Misuse is prohibited.

HCMS Computer Network Rules

Network access is a privilege, not a right. Students must act responsibly and use resources for education and research. They must have teacher permission to use personal storage media and must not 'surf' the internet without purpose. The following actions are not permitted: using a teacher's computer, sending or viewing offensive material, accessing personal emails or social media, using obscene language, harassing others, damaging equipment, bypassing security, violating copyright laws, accessing others' passwords or files, or wasting resources. Students must always follow these rules. If unsure whether something is allowed, ask first. Violations may lead to loss of access and other disciplinary or legal action. If a student owes a fee, they will not be assigned a chromebook until fees are paid. Students should charge computers at home. If students come to school with a computer that goes dead, they may face disciplinary action.

Technology Fees

Chromebooks:

Full Replacement - \$180

Screen Replacement -\$40

Keyboard/Trackpad Replacement -\$25

Charger Replacement- \$20

HCMS Media Release Policy

Hart County Middle School may participate in media presentations highlighting school activities. Parents may opt out by completing the Media Release Form at the beginning of the year.

1. Media developed by HCMS staff, students, or district personnel may include videos, photos, and digital presentations. These may identify students and be used for staff development, parent programs, and public relations.
2. Media produced by outside organizations, such as the news media.

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act ("COPPA")

COPPA imposes certain requirements on operators of websites or online services directed to children under 13 years of age, and on operators of other websites or online services that have actual knowledge that they are collecting personal information online from a child under 13 years of age.

(<https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule>)

This includes, but is not limited to, the use of social media sites (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, etc...) by individuals under the age of 13.

NOTICE TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND ELIGIBLE STUDENTS OF RIGHTS UNDER FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT

UNDER THE FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (20 35U.S.C. 12329) (THE "ACT"), YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO:

- (1) Inspect and review, within 45 days of a request, the education records of a student who is your child, or in the case of a student who is eighteen (18) or older, or those who are emancipated, your own education records. Parents or eligible students should submit to the Superintendent a written request identifying the record(s) they wish to inspect. The Superintendent will make arrangements for access and provide notice of such arrangements.
- (2) Request the amendment of the student's education records to ensure that they are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights. To request that the school district amend a record, parents or eligible students should write the school principal, specify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights. If the district decides not to amend the record, it will notify the parents or eligible students of the decision and inform them of their right to a hearing. Additional information regarding the hearing procedure will be provided with the notification of the rights to a hearing.
- (3) Consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that the Act and the regulations promulgated pursuant to the Act authorize disclosure without consent. One exception which permits disclosure without consent is to school officials with legitimate educational interest. A school official is a person employed by the district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member; a member of the school board; a person with whom the district has contracted to perform a specific task (such as attorney, auditor, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee (such as a disciplinary or grievance committee). A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an educational record in order to fulfill his/her professional responsibility. Upon request, the school district forwards educational records without prior consent to another school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll.
- (4) The Hart County Charter System has designated the following information as directory information:
 - (a) Student's name, address and telephone number;
 - (b) Student's date and place of birth;
 - (c) Student's participation in official school clubs and sports;
 - (d) Weight and height of student if he/she is a member of an athletic team;
 - (e) Dates of attendance at the Hart County Charter System; and
 - (f) Awards received during the time enrolled in Hart County Charter System.

Unless you, as a parent/guardian or eligible student, request otherwise this information may be disclosed to the public upon request. You have the right to refuse to allow all or any part of the above information to be designated

as directory information and to be disclosed to the public upon request. If you wish to exercise the right, you must notify the principal of the school at which the student is enrolled in writing within 5 days after officially enrolling in school or within 5 days of release of this notice.

(5) File with the United States Department of Education a complaint under 20 C.F.R. 99.64 concerning the alleged failures by the Hart County Board of Education to comply with the requirements of the Act or the regulations promulgated thereunder. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is: Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-4605.

(6) You are also notified that from time-to-time students may be photographed, videotaped, or interviewed by the news media at school or some school activity or event unless you, as a parent/guardian object in writing to your student being photographed, videotaped, or interviewed to the principal of the school where your student is enrolled. You must notify the principal of your objection by the date specified above.

PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) gives parents rights regarding surveys, information collection for marketing, and physical exams. Parents will be notified of scheduled activities and may opt their child out. Written consent is required for certain surveys funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

(A) The administration of any survey containing one or more of the following items:

- (i) Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
- (ii) Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
- (iii) Sex behavior or attitudes;
- (iv) Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
- (v) Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
- (vi) Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
- (vii) Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent; or
- (viii) Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program), without prior written consent of the parent or eligible student.

(B) Activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the purpose of marketing or for selling that information (or otherwise providing that information to others for that purpose).

(C) Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening that is required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school and scheduled by the school in advance, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student, or of other students.

You may, upon request, inspect any instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum for your student.

The school is required by federal law to give this notice to parents. However, the school does not have scheduled any such activities as are described above. If any such activities are initiated during the school year, parents will be notified accordingly and will be afforded all the rights as described herein;

Section 504/Americans with Disability

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States, as defined in Section 7(20), shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Title II prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability by public entities, including public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools, regardless of whether they receive federal financial assistance.

Any parent, teacher, or administrator may request an evaluation of their child to determine eligibility for accommodations under Section 504. Requests are to be made to the school-based 504 Coordinator, Mrs. Tonya Bridges, or District Coordinator, Mrs. Stacy Martin. Initial evaluations may not be conducted unless the parent has given permission for the evaluation. Evaluations are to be conducted by a team of individuals who know the student and the determination of eligibility is to be a team decision. Parents are to be informed of the decision made by the team.

Any student or parent or guardian (“grievant”) may request an impartial hearing due to the school system’s actions or inactions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement under Section 504. Requests for an impartial hearing must be in writing to the school system’s Section 504 Coordinator; however, a grievant's failure to request a hearing in writing does not alleviate the school system’s obligation to provide an impartial hearing if the grievant orally requests an impartial hearing through the school system’s Section 504 Coordinator. The school system’s Section 504 Coordinator will assist the grievant in completing the written Request for Hearing. The Section 504 Coordinator may be contacted through the school system’s central office. Copies of the *504 Procedural Safeguards* and *Notice of Rights of Students and Parents under Section 504* may be found at the system website or may be picked up at the central office or at any of the school offices.

Student Arrival

Hart County Middle School will open at 7:30 a.m. each day. Students dropped off before 7:30 a.m. will remain in the atrium until 7:30 a.m. Students will walk through the metal detectors and get their breakfast from the breakfast cart or cafeteria. Students who are not eating breakfast will report to their homeroom class. Teachers will be in their classrooms at 7:30 a.m. Students who are involved in morning clubs will be called over the intercom.

Visitors

Only visitors with legitimate school business are allowed at the school. All visitors must register and print a badge at the front office upon entering as well as pass through the metal detectors. Students may not interact with visitors in vehicles or the parking lot. Visitors who do not check in (Powell Street) may be subject to arrest.

Fire and Emergency Drills

Fire drills are necessary for the safety of the students and faculty. Everyone should know the specific directions for reaching a point of safety for those areas of the building in which he/she may be. The information for fire drills is posted in each room. Faculty and staff will allow a 90 second check of the exterior of the building before release. “All clear” to return will alert school personnel and students to return to the building. Students are expected to walk in a straight, orderly line and refrain from talking during fire drills.

School Nurse/ Health Clinic

The school health clinic provides assistance with chronic medical conditions, medical treatments, medication administration and monitoring (with signed parent permission), and illnesses or injuries that occur during the school day. All students must have a completed Health Service Consent Form on file at the beginning of **each** school year. This is not an electronic form. Parents/guardians should keep emergency contact information and phone numbers current at all times. If students have allergies or asthma parents **must submit a yearly action plan to the clinic**. If a student visits the clinic, the visit will be documented, and the nurse may contact a parent or guardian by phone or text message as needed.

WHEN TO KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME

Students should remain at home if they have:

- Vomiting
- Fever over 100.4°F (Please do not give fever-reducing medication such as Tylenol and send the student to school.)
- Diarrhea
- Persistent pain such as ear, stomach pain, or injury-related
- Productive or persistent cough

- Widespread rash

Many of these symptoms should be discussed with your child's physician before returning to school.

MEDICATION GUIDELINES

Medication should only be brought to school when it **must** be administered during school hours. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medications.

- All medication must be brought directly to the nurse by a **parent or guardian**.
- Medication must be in the original container with the student's name, prescription label, and clear instructions.
- Students may only carry asthma inhalers and EpiPens with signed parental consent and required documentation.
- Written parental permission is required before school staff can administer any medication.
- A physician's signature is required for medications that must be given for longer than two weeks.
- Students are responsible for coming to the clinic at the scheduled medication time.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for picking up medication when treatment is completed or at the end of the school year.
- Any medication not picked up by the last day of school will be disposed of properly.
- The clinic does not stock cough drops or cold/allergy medications for students.

HEAD LICE

- Students found to have head lice (pediculosis) will be sent home from school.
- Before returning to school, parents/guardians must provide documentation from a physician, the Hart County Health Department, or the school nurse verifying that the student is free from active lice infestation and all remnants, including nits.
- If evidence of infestation remains, the student will not be permitted to return to school.
- If a student has not been cleared to return by the second school day after being sent home, additional absences may be marked unexcused.
- Repeated cases of head lice may be referred to the district social worker.

HEALTH RECORDS & 7TH GRADE IMMUNIZATIONS

- Georgia law requires that every student enrolled in a Georgia public school have a valid Certificate of Immunization on file. Students who do not provide the school with an approved certificate will not be allowed to remain in school.
- All 7th grade students must have immunizations updated on or before the first day of school.
- Transfer students have 30 days to furnish the appropriate Certificate of Immunization.
- Vaccinations may be obtained from the Hart County Health Department or from a private physician. Vaccination records must be documented on the official Georgia Department of Human Resources Form 3231.
- Students entering a Georgia public school for the first time must also provide a completed eye, ear, and dental certificate.

Personal Electronic Device (PED)

HART COUNTY CHARTER SYSTEM PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE (PED) PROCEDURE

In Compliance with Georgia House Bill 1009

Goal: To provide a safe, focused, and distraction-free learning environment where students can fully engage in learning, build relationships, and achieve academic success.

What is a personal electronic device (PED)? PEDs include, but are not limited to: Cell Phones, Smart Watches, Earbuds/AirPods/Headphones, Tablets, Smart Glasses, Gaming Devices, Any personal device capable of communication, internet access, recording, messaging, gaming, or media playback

School-issued instructional devices are not considered PEDs.

Medical Conditions: Students with serious medical conditions will be allowed to possess and use a cellular telephone or other PED that is determined by a licensed physician to be essential for the health of the student. Use of the device during the school day shall be restricted to the immediate health concerns of the student.

Devices Must Be:

- ✓ Powered Off or Silenced
- ✓ Stored in a Backpack or Approved Storage Area
- ✓ Out of Sight Throughout the School Day

Arrival & Dismissal: Students may use devices before exiting their vehicle upon arrival and after entering their vehicle at dismissal. Once students enter the school building, devices must remain secured and inaccessible until dismissal.

Need to Contact Your Child?: Parents/Guardians should contact the school office. Students may use a school phone with staff permission when necessary.

The following consequences will be applied to students not meeting these expectations:

1st Offense: Parent/Guardian must pick up the device from the front office after school.

2nd Offense: Parent/Guardian must pick up the device from the front office after school. Student will also receive a behavior referral, 1 day placement in ISS, and a parent contact will be made.

3rd Offense: Parent/Guardian must pick up the device from the front office after school. Student will also receive a behavior referral, 2 day placement in ISS, and a parent conference will be held.

4th Offense: Parent/Guardian must pick up the device from the front office after school. Student will also receive a behavior referral, 3 day placement in ISS, and a parent conference will be held.

Curriculum

Each student at Hart County Middle School is required to take classes in English Language Arts/Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Connections. Administrators and counselors make every effort to mix each class by gender, race, and ability, thereby providing a wholesome environment for all teachers and students. We do not honor parent requests for specific teachers before, during, or at the end of the school year. Students will receive acceleration and enrichment for academic classes throughout each school day. More information about the Georgia Standards can be found at www.georgiastandards.org

Gifted Program

Students are evaluated using various assessments for the gifted program. Students in gifted are placed in Accelerated Classes based on performance on end of year State Testing as well as academic classes. Students who do not meet requirements for Accelerated Classes will be placed in a gifted classroom if available so that services can be provided. Student progress will be monitored at each grading period and adjustments made as necessary based on student performance as well as work skills. Both academics and behavior will be considered. Students who do not meet expectations could be dismissed from the program.

Advanced Classes

Eligibility for Advanced Classes is determined by current academic performance. Students may qualify based on Georgia Milestones scores, MAP scores, grades, and teacher recommendations.

The following is applicable to those enrolled in advanced classes during the school year 2026-2027:

- Instruction for students is quicker paced and at a higher or advanced level.
- Instruction is more project-based with application of knowledge gained.

Note: Gifted students will receive gifted services but not necessarily advanced courses.

STEAM

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics instruction will take place in each grade level at Hart County Middle School. Instruction throughout the year at each grade level will be focused on developing problem-based learning that allows for students to make connections to STEAM areas.

Connections Classes

Connections courses are held daily and are an essential part of the academic schedule. Student participation and attendance are required. Offerings include Agriculture, Art, Career Awareness, Engineering and Technology, Physical Education, Music Appreciation, Band, Chorus, Reading Connections, and Math Connections.

8th grade students have the opportunity to take some high school courses for credit.

High School Credit

- 9th Grade Coursework
 - Instruction is at the high school level and is more rigorous than 8th grade.
 - Criteria for these courses will be based on qualifications and availability.
 - Students must pass the class to receive credit.
- Connections/Electives
 - Students have multiple opportunities to gain experiences in all of our connections courses. However, if they would like high school credit for connections courses, they must pass the course with a 70% or higher.
 - Courses vary in length. They can be semester long or year long.
- 9th Grade CTAE/Academic Courses
 - Courses are year long

- Students taking High School courses will receive 5 extra points added to their grade during the summer from the High School. This grade is not used to determine Middle School awards.

Students struggling with 9th grade courses will require a parent meeting by the end of the first nine weeks. If no improvement is shown by the end of the first nine weeks, the student may be moved to an equivalent 8th grade course.

Students may add or drop Band at the end of each semester - during winter or summer break.

Fit Georgia

According to state board rule 160-4-2.12, each local board of education is required to administer a fitness assessment approved by GaDOE. Fit Georgia is a state-developed fitness assessment designed to measure various aspects of physical health, including Healthy Body Ranges, Aerobic Capacity, Flexibility, Muscular Strength, and Muscular Endurance. For more information see <https://fitgeorgia.gadoe.org/About/>.

Promotion and Retention

The promotion of students in grades 6 and 7 who do not achieve on grade level on the State Assessment (s) shall be determined by a Student Support Team. Promotion of such students shall be based on a review of factors specified in this policy below, including but not limited to, the student's performance on the State Assessment (s) in reading and math.

The promotion of students in grade 8 shall be determined in accordance with State Board Rule 160-4-2-.11 Promotion, Placement, and Retention that requires those students to achieve grade level on the Georgia Milestone Assessment. The school principal or designee shall utilize the results of the State Assessment (s) as specified in this policy in determining: a. the overall academic achievement of students; b. an appropriate plan of accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction for students who do not achieve grade level; and c. placement (with specific recommendations), promotion or retention of a student. The local promotion criteria has been determined by the Hart County Board of Education. Promotion and Retention will be a school decision guided by the MTSS team.

HCMS Athletics

Hart County Middle School shares its athletic program with Hart County High School. All questions regarding middle school sports should be directed to the high school's Athletic Director or Assistant Athletic Director.

Biff Parson, Athletic Director
biff.parson@hart.k12.ga.us

Earl Fouch, Assistant Athletic Director
earl.fouch@hart.k12.ga.us

Middle School Athletic Eligibility

- 6th and 7th Grades and 1st semester 8th Grade
 - During preceding semester, students must be passing or have passed 2.5 classes
 - Semester classes are .5
 - Year long classes are 1
 - All 6th Graders are academically eligible 1st semester
 - Students should be on track as defined by school grade level expectations
- 8th Grade
 - 1st Semester, follow 6th and 7th grade criteria
 - 2nd Semester, follow the below
 - During preceding semester, students must be passing or have passed 3.5 classes

- Semester classes are .5
- Year long classes are 1
- Students should be on track as defined by grade level expectation

Attendance Policy

In order to be eligible to participate in any HCMS sports/extracurricular activity after school hours, a student must attend at least one-half day of school on the day of the event excluding weekends. Students must be in attendance until at least 11:30 a.m. to receive credit for a half day of school. Tardy students must be signed in by 11:30 a.m. on the day of the event to be eligible.

Athletic Expectations

Academics

- Students with two failing grades at the end of a semester are ineligible to participate in sports/extracurricular activities during the entirety of the following semester.
- Student athletes who are failing one class during the season may practice but are ineligible to participate in games, matches, or meets until the grade is passing.
- Student athletes who are failing two classes during the season are ineligible to play or practice until the grades are passing. Student athletes can practice when at least one of the grades is passing.

Behavior

- Student athletes who are suspended out of school (OSS) for an offense are immediately ineligible to play or practice for the remainder of that semester.
- Student athletes who receive in-school suspension (ISS) for a total of two days (consecutively or otherwise) are immediately ineligible to play or practice for the remainder of that semester.

HCMS offers the following sports:

- Baseball—7th and 8th grade boys
- Basketball—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls
- Competition Cheerleading—6th, 7th, and 8th grade girls
- Sideline Cheer —7th and 8th grade boys and girls
- Cross Country—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls
- Football—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys (only if not eligible by age at Rec. Dept.)
- Golf—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls
- Soccer—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls
- Bass Fishing Team —6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls.
- Softball—6th, 7th, and 8th grade girls
- Tennis—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls
- Track—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls
- Volleyball—6th, 7th, and 8th grade girls
- Wrestling—6th, 7th, and 8th grade boys and girls

Honor Roll/Merit Lists

The following system will be used to evaluate students eligible for the Honor Roll/Merit List:

- Honor Roll – Students must receive all A's (90-100) in all courses.
- Merit List – Students must receive all A's and B's with at least 2-A's (90-100) in all courses.

HCMS Awards Day

All awards for the year will go through the 4th nine weeks progress report. The Extra points added to a High School credit course during the summer do not count towards academic awards at the Middle School level.

Academic Award

There will be one medal in each academic course.

Connections Award

Connections teachers give awards in the following areas:

Physical Education, Agriculture, Chorus, Music Appreciation, Drafting, Band, Art, Career Awareness and Engineering and Technology

Bulldog Character Award

Each teacher will present one Bulldog Character Award to a student who demonstrates and consistently models HART characteristics (Helpful, Accountable, Respectful, and Teachable).

Honor Roll

In order to be recognized for the honor roll, students must have a cumulative average of 90 or above *in all courses* at the end of the 4th nine-weeks progress report. Every subject must have a cumulative average of 90 or higher.

Top Dog Character Award

This award is given to a female and male student in each grade level who exemplifies outstanding character in everything they do.

Principal's Award

The Principal's Award honors one student per grade level who embodies HART: Honorable, Accountable, Respectful, and Teachable.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

The HCMS staff encourages parents to schedule conferences by calling the school at (706) 376-5431. Teachers are available for conferences during their planning time. Twice a year, early dismissal allows parents to pick up report cards and meet with teachers. These dates are 10/15/2026 and 3/25/2027. Longer conferences can be scheduled upon request.

School Counseling

HCMS follows the American School Counseling Association's (ASCA) framework and standards in implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. HCMS is recognized as an ASCA Model Program (RAMP) school. ASCA recognizes schools committed to delivering comprehensive, data-informed school counseling programs aligned with the ASCA National Model framework. The RAMP designation demonstrates to administrators, school boards, families and the community at large that the school is committed to supporting the mission of the school and district. School Counselors help students with a variety of indirect and direct counseling services. All counseling sessions are confidential with the exception of those issues that the law dictates school personnel to report.

Social Work Services

The Hart County Charter System is committed to supporting the academic success, emotional well-being, safety, and overall needs of every student. School Social Work Services help connect students and families with resources and supports that remove barriers to learning and improve school attendance, engagement, and success.

School social workers collaborate with students, families, school staff, and community agencies to provide support in a caring, respectful, and solution-focused manner. Services may include consultation, crisis response, attendance intervention, resource coordination, and family support.

School social workers may assist families with:

- Attendance concerns and school engagement
- Homeless and McKinney-Vento services
- Foster care support and school stability
- Enrollment and residency assistance
- Community resource referrals
- Mental health and behavioral support connections
- Crisis intervention and safety planning
- Hospital/Homebound coordination
- Family transitions or hardships impacting school performance
- Coordination with community agencies and support programs

Students or parents/guardians may request assistance through the school counselor, administrator, attendance office, or directly through the district social worker.

The Hart County Charter System values strong family-school partnerships and encourages families to reach out whenever support may be needed. Early communication allows schools and families to work together to help students stay connected, supported, and successful.

Clubs and Organizations

Participation in extracurricular activities provides students with valuable experiences and benefits.

- ART Club -Open by application; the art teacher will distribute requirements.
- BETA Club- Invitation-Only academic organization that fosters enthusiasm for scholarships. Eligibility is based on academic achievement.
- FCA- Fellowship of Christian Athletes- For athletes and students committed to their faith and sportsmanship.
- FFA- Future Farmers of America. Open to students enrolled in Agriculture Class.
- Student Leadership- Representatives from each grade level will work with the counselor on improving the school
- TSA- Technology Student Association -Offers leadership and innovation opportunities in technology, engineering, and design.
- Chess Club- Provides opportunities to learn strategies related to chess while boosting critical thinking skills for everyday life.

School Food Services

Educational research has shown that students can learn more effectively when they are properly nourished. Nutritious breakfasts and lunches that meet USDA nutritional requirements are served each day at the school. This year, the district qualifies for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which will allow all students to be served breakfast and lunch each day at no cost. Breakfast will be served from 7:30-8:00 each day.

For your convenience, menus are on the school's website, in addition to, <https://www.hart.k12.ga.us/departments/school-nutrition>. Though meals are offered at no cost, some students may choose to purchase additional meals or a la carte items. Parents are encouraged to pre-pay their child's meals. Pre-paid amounts are listed below. As an additional pre-payment option and convenience to parents, online payments may be made at www.myschoolbucks.com. This is an online system that allows parents/guardians to make deposits into a student's meal account or view meal purchases. A \$2.75 transaction fee covers the cost of

processing online transactions. This fee goes directly to the payment processor, not to the school district. Parents who have children with a special nutritional or feeding need due to a disability must have their child's physician complete the EATING AND FEEDING EVALUATION CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS form. This must be completed and on file with the School Nutrition Manager of each school before any modifications are made. This is a separate form from the one given to the school nurse and must be completed each year. The form may be picked up from the Nutrition Manager or printed from <https://www.hart.k12.ga.us/departments/school-nutrition>.

2026 - 2027 Meal Prices

All students will receive first meals at no cost throughout this school year.

The cost of additional meals is listed below.

- Additional Student Breakfast \$2.00
- Additional Student Lunch \$4.00
- Adult Breakfast \$3.00
- Adult Lunch \$5.00

EVERY DAY COUNTS AT HCMS

Attendance Support, Chronic Absenteeism & Truancy Process

WHY ATTENDANCE MATTERS

At Hart County Middle School, we believe regular school attendance is one of the most important parts of student success. Every school day provides students with opportunities to learn, build relationships, participate in activities, and stay connected to their school community.

Students who attend school consistently are more likely to:

- Perform better academically
- Build strong friendships and positive relationships
- Stay engaged in school activities and athletics
- Develop responsibility and positive habits
- Stay on track for promotion and future success

We understand that families may occasionally experience circumstances that impact attendance. Our goal is to partner with families early, provide support when needed, and help students maintain positive attendance habits throughout the school year.

Hart County Charter System follows the attendance expectations outlined in district procedures, Board Policy JB, and Georgia law.

GEORGIA COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW

Georgia law (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1) requires children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school regularly. Students enrolled in school are expected to:

- Attend school daily
- Arrive on time
- Remain at school for the full instructional day
- Attend all assigned classes

Attendance concerns may result in school interventions, attendance support meetings, and possible legal consequences when unexcused absences become excessive.

Hart County Schools uses a supportive attendance process designed to identify concerns early, work collaboratively with families, and provide assistance before attendance concerns become more serious.

QUICK ATTENDANCE FACTS

- ✓ Up to 3 parent notes per semester may be accepted
- ✓ Attendance documentation should be submitted within 2 school days of returning to school
- ✓ Excessive tardies and early check-outs may contribute to attendance interventions
- ✓ Missing 10% or more of enrolled school days may result in chronic absenteeism concerns
- ✓ Students may receive attendance support for excessive excused or unexcused absences
- ✓ Legal intervention is considered a last resort after supportive interventions and outreach efforts have been attempted
- ✓ Our goal is always to partner with families to support positive attendance and student success

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS & EXCUSED ABSENCES

WHAT COUNTS AS AN ABSENCE?

A student may be counted absent when they miss all or part of the instructional day, including:

- Full-day absences
- Late arrivals (tardies)
- Early check-outs
- Missing class periods without approval

Students arriving late or leaving early miss valuable instructional time and may be subject to attendance interventions.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences may be excused for reasons allowed under Georgia law and district policy, including:

- Personal illness or medical appointments
- Serious illness or death in the immediate family
- Court orders or government agency appointments
- Religious holidays
- Unsafe conditions impacting attendance
- Approved school-sponsored activities
- Other approved circumstances determined by administration

Parents/guardians must submit attendance documentation within two (2) school days of the student returning to school.

PARENT NOTES

- Up to **three (3)** parent notes per semester may be accepted
- Notes must include:
 - Student name
 - Date(s) of absence
 - Reason for absence
 - Parent/guardian signature or contact information

Additional absences may require medical or official documentation.

Remember! Parents/guardians must submit attendance documentation within two (2) school days of the student returning to school.

CLASS PERIOD ATTENDANCE, TARDIES, & EARLY CHECK-OUTS

CLASS PERIOD ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

At Hart County Middle School, attendance is important throughout the entire school day. Because middle school students attend multiple classes each day, missing part of the school day may result in missed instruction in several different subjects.

Students are expected to:

- Attend all assigned class periods
- Arrive to class on time
- Remain in class for the full instructional period
- Report to class promptly after transitions, appointments, or check-ins

Students who are:

- excessively tardy,
- checked out early,
- absent from individual class periods,
- or repeatedly missing instructional time

may be subject to attendance interventions, academic consequences, or disciplinary action in accordance with school and district procedures.

MISSED INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Regular attendance and full participation in each class period are essential for student success at Hart County Middle School. Because middle school students attend multiple classes each day, missing part of the school day may result in missed instruction in several different subjects.

Students who miss instructional time due to tardiness, early check-outs, skipping class, or extended time out of class may miss:

- Classroom instruction and discussions
- Assignments and assessments
- Group activities and participation opportunities
- Important academic support and intervention time

Students are responsible for making up missed work and communicating with teachers regarding assignments and deadlines. Repeated missed instructional time may result in attendance interventions, parent conferences, and disciplinary consequences.

TARDIES & CLASS TRANSITIONS

Students are expected to report to school and each class on time every day. Prompt arrival helps students stay engaged and minimizes disruptions to learning.

Students should move promptly and responsibly during class transitions and report directly to their assigned class. Loitering in hallways, restrooms, vending areas, or other unauthorized areas during transitions is prohibited.

Students arriving late to school or class without an approved excuse will be considered tardy. Repeated tardiness may:

- Interrupt learning
- Impact academic performance
- Result in parent contact or conferences
- Lead to disciplinary consequences or attendance interventions

Excessive tardies may also contribute to chronic absenteeism concerns and attendance support planning under the Hart County Charter System Attendance Protocol.

Tardy Expectations

- Students arriving late must report to the office for a tardy pass
- Students who are more than 15 minutes late may be counted absent for the class
- Students should move promptly during transitions and report directly to class

Progressive Tardy Consequences	
Tardy Offense	Possible Consequence
1st	<i>Warning</i>
2nd	<i>Teacher Documentation</i>
3rd	<i>Hart Break Detention + Parent Contact</i>
4th	<i>Office Referral</i>
5th	<i>ISS and/or Loss of Privileges</i>
Continued Violations	<i>Progressive Administrative Consequences, which may include:</i> • Parent conferences and intervention planning • Court Diversion Program/ Risk Reduction • Juvenile Court/ DFCS referral

EARLY CHECK-OUTS

Students are expected to remain at school for the full instructional day. Early check-outs result in missed instructional time and may negatively impact academic performance, attendance, and classroom participation.

All students leaving campus during the school day must sign out through the school office. Students may only be checked out by a parent, legal guardian, or approved emergency contact. Identification will be required at the time of check-out.

Whenever possible, appointments and non-emergency activities should be scheduled outside of school hours.

Excessive early check-outs may:

- Result in missed instruction and assignments
- Trigger attendance interventions or parent conferences
- Contribute to chronic absenteeism concerns
- Impact student academic progress and classroom participation

Students leaving campus without following proper check-out procedures may be subject to disciplinary action.

Progressive Early Check-out Consequences	
Tardy Offense	Possible Consequence
1st	<i>Warning</i>
2nd	<i>Teacher Documentation</i>
3rd	<i>Hart Break Detention + Parent Contact</i>
4th	<i>Office Referral</i>
5th	<i>ISS and/or Loss of Privileges</i>
Continued Violations	<i>Progressive Administrative Consequences may include</i> • Parent conferences and intervention planning • Court Diversion Program/ Risk Reduction • Juvenile Court/ DFCS referral

UNDERSTANDING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM VS. TRUANCY

At Hart County Middle School, we want families to clearly understand the difference between chronic absenteeism and truancy, because they are not the same thing.

Both can negatively impact student learning and success, but they are measured differently and may result in different levels of support or intervention.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

A student is considered chronically absent when he/she misses 10% or more of enrolled school days for ANY reason. This includes:

- *Excused absences*
- *Unexcused absences*
- *Excessive tardies*
- *Excessive early check-outs*
- *Partial days missed*

For example:

- Missing about 2 days per month during the school year may place a student in the chronic absenteeism category.

WHY CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM MATTERS

Even when absences are excused, missing too much instructional time can:

- Impact academic performance
- Make it harder to stay connected socially
- Increase stress and anxiety about schoolwork
- Cause students to fall behind
- Increase risk for long-term attendance concerns

Because of this, schools may provide attendance support and intervention planning even when absences are excused.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM SUPPORTS

- Parent communication and attendance check-ins
- Attendance Support Team (AST) meetings
- Problem-solving conversations with families
- Social worker or counselor support
- Attendance improvement plans
- Community resource referrals
- Academic support planning

The goal of chronic absenteeism interventions is prevention, support, and early problem-solving.

TRUANCY

Truancy specifically refers to unexcused absences under Georgia compulsory attendance law.

A student may be considered truant when they accumulate excessive unexcused absences, including:

- Absences without documentation
- Absences not approved under district policy
- Failure to submit excuses within the required timeline
- Excessive parent notes beyond district limits

Under Georgia law, schools are required to intervene and provide notices when students accumulate unexcused absences.

Truancy may include:

- Required attendance letters
- Parent conferences
- Attendance contracts
- Attendance review meetings
- Referral to attendance support services
- Referral to Juvenile Court or legal intervention when required

Legal consequences are generally considered only after multiple interventions and outreach efforts have occurred.

IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE

Chronic Absenteeism	Truancy
Includes ALL absences	Includes ONLY unexcused absences
Focuses on missed instructional time	Focuses on compulsory attendance law
May include excused medical absences	Involves absences without approved excuses
Primarily prevention and support focused	May involve legal intervention requirements
Measured at 10% or more missed days	Triggered by excessive unexcused absences

A student can:

- *Be chronically absent without being truant*
- *Be truant without being chronically absent*
- *Or meet criteria for both*

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT & INTERVENTION TRIGGERS

The following attendance triggers are designed to provide early communication, support, and intervention when attendance concerns begin to develop. Attendance supports may occur for both chronic absenteeism concerns and unexcused absences/truancy concerns. Our goal is always to partner with families early, identify barriers, and support positive attendance habits before concerns become more serious.

I. Early Attendance Concern

Attendance Patterns Begin OR 3 Unexcused Absences

At this stage, the school may:

- *Contact the parent/guardian by phone, email, text, SchoolStatus, or letter*
- *Review attendance expectations and excuse procedures*
- *Encourage submission of missing attendance documentation*
- *Monitor patterns of tardies, early check-outs, or repeated absences*
- *Discuss possible barriers impacting attendance*
- *Provide early attendance support and intervention strategies*
- *This level of support is intended to increase awareness and prevent continued attendance concern*

II. Attendance Support Intervention

5 Unexcused Absences OR Signs of Chronic Absenteeism

At this stage, the school may:

- *Send the required attendance notification letter*
- *Review Georgia compulsory attendance requirements*
- *Schedule a parent conference or Attendance Support Team (AST) meeting*
- *Review attendance data and missed instructional time*
- *Discuss academic impact and student engagement concerns*
- *Develop an attendance improvement plan*
- *Identify barriers such as illness, transportation concerns, anxiety, housing instability, or family challenges*
- *Connect families with school-based or community support resources*

Students with excessive excused absences, repeated tardies, excessive early check-outs, or chronic absenteeism patterns may also receive interventions and attendance support planning.

III. Intensive Attendance Support

Continued Chronic Absenteeism, Ongoing Attendance Concerns, or 6–9 Unexcused Absences

At this stage, the school may:

- *Refer the student to the district social worker or attendance support personnel*
- *Conduct individualized problem-solving meetings with the family*
- *Create attendance contracts or intervention plans*
- *Increase attendance monitoring and follow-up communication*
- *Refer concerns to school support teams or attendance review teams*
- *Connect families with outside agencies or wraparound services*
- *Review academic concerns and possible support interventions*

The focus remains on identifying root causes, supporting the student, and improving school engagement and attendance consistency.

IV. Serious Attendance Concern

Ongoing Chronic Absenteeism OR 10+ Unexcused Absences

At this stage, the student may be considered truant under Georgia law.

Possible actions may include:

- *Formal attendance review*
- *Referral to attendance intervention or diversion programs*
- *Referral to Juvenile Court when required by law*
- *Additional parent conferences and intervention planning*
- *Review of compulsory attendance requirements and legal obligations*
- *Coordination with community agencies or support services when appropriate*

Legal intervention is considered a last resort after supportive outreach and intervention efforts have been attempted.

IMPORTANT ATTENDANCE REMINDERS

While Hart County Schools follow a general attendance intervention timeline, the district reserves the right to adjust, combine, accelerate, or modify interventions based on:

- Individual student circumstances
- Chronic absenteeism patterns
- Excessive tardies or early check-outs
- Student safety or welfare concerns
- Lack of response to interventions
- Academic concerns or other school factors

Attendance concerns may be addressed earlier when significant patterns or barriers are identified.
Our shared goal is to help every student attend regularly, stay connected, and succeed at school.

HOSPITAL/HOMEBOUND (HHB) SERVICES

Hospital/Homebound (HHB) Services provide temporary instructional support for students whose medical or psychiatric condition prevents them from attending school for a limited period of time. HHB services are designed to help students maintain educational continuity during extended absences due to documented health conditions.

To be considered for HHB services:

- The student must be enrolled in the Hart County Charter System.
- The student must be expected to miss a minimum of ten (10) consecutive or intermittent school days due to a medical or psychiatric condition.
- Medical documentation must be completed by the licensed physician or licensed psychiatrist currently treating the student for the condition presented.
- HHB services are temporary and are not intended to replace regular school attendance on a long-term basis.

Students approved for intermittent HHB services must generally be absent for three (3) consecutive school days during each occurrence before services begin.

Each school has an administrator assigned to assist with HHB coordination. For additional information regarding Hospital/Homebound Services, families should contact the middle school or the Hart County Board of Education.

Withdrawal / No-Show Procedures

In accordance with Georgia law, State Board Rule, Senate Bill 123 (2025), and Hart County Board Policy JB, student withdrawals and enrollment status will be monitored to ensure accurate attendance reporting and timely intervention for students who stop attending school.

- A student who is expected to return based on prior year enrollment but is not in attendance on the first day of school shall be classified as a no-show and withdrawn after ten (10) consecutive school days if the student has not enrolled or attended. The student shall not be included in enrollment or attendance counts after withdrawal.
- When a parent or guardian officially withdraws a student, the withdrawal date will be recorded as the student's last day of attendance. If the student is under suspension at the time of withdrawal and the receiving school is known, the receiving school may be notified of the terms of the suspension.
- If a parent or guardian does not complete formal withdrawal procedures, but the school system receives documentation that the student has enrolled in another educational program or school system, the withdrawal date shall be the student's last date of attendance.
- Students who stop attending without official withdrawal or verified enrollment elsewhere may be withdrawn after ten (10) consecutive unexcused absences in accordance with local attendance procedures and compulsory attendance requirements.
- If the school system obtains documentation confirming that a student no longer resides within the school attendance zone or district, the student may be withdrawn based on the date residency documentation is verified, in accordance with Board Policy JB and Policy JBCD.
- In alignment with Georgia law and HB 268, students absent for thirty (30) consecutive calendar days without enrollment verification or official withdrawal may be referred to the appropriate agencies, including DFCS and the Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) Student Affairs Officer, for wellness and compulsory attendance follow-up.
- Students aged sixteen (16) and older who are no longer attending school and are not enrolled in another educational setting may be subject to withdrawal procedures consistent with state law and local board policy.

This process supports accurate student records, promotes student safety and wellbeing, and ensures compliance with Georgia compulsory attendance laws and Senate Bill 123 attendance expectations.

Transportation Changes & Leaving With Others

Students wishing to leave school with someone other than their parent/guardian or ride home with another student must provide written parent/guardian permission to the front office upon arrival at school.

The note should include:

- Student name
- Date and time of check-out or transportation change
- Reason for the change
- Parent/guardian signature
- Daytime phone number for verification

School administration reserves the right to verify transportation changes for student safety purposes.

After-School Events & Supervision

Students may not remain on campus after school without supervision. Students are not permitted to leave campus after dismissal and return later for school events unless accompanied or supervised by a parent/guardian or approved school personnel.

Students participating in JV athletics or activities with Hart County High School must also follow all HCMS sign-out procedures if leaving campus with the high school team or staff.

Campus Safety

Student safety is a top priority. Students leaving campus without permission or failing to follow sign-out procedures may be subject to disciplinary action. School officials may contact law enforcement when necessary for student safety and liability purposes.

Important Reminder

Students are not permitted to sign out after 2:30 PM except for emergencies, verified appointments, or administrative approval.

Bus/Bus Behavior

All buses will pick up and deliver students at regular designated stops on the route. Drivers will make every effort to run on time; however, this will require students to be at the designated stop when the bus arrives. Missing the bus is not an excuse for absence/tardiness to school. School bus drivers represent school authority and are responsible for each passenger on the bus. All students who ride a bus are subject to rules and regulations. Any misbehavior that distracts the driver is a very serious violation and jeopardizes the safety of individuals on the bus. Misconduct on the bus or at the bus stop will result in disciplinary action.

Media Center

The Hart County Middle School Media Center hours of operation are from 7:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each school day. The maximum number of items a student patron may check out is two (2) unless otherwise authorized by administration. The maximum number of school days in a checkout period for an item is ten (10). Most of the materials in the library circulate for a specific period of time. It is essential that all materials be returned on time for the benefit of everyone who uses the library.

Students must immediately notify the Media Specialist of any items lost or presumed lost. All lost or damaged materials must be replaced at the expense of the borrower. See the Media Specialist for the replacement cost of lost materials. Students will receive an email each day listing materials that are checked out by them. It is the student's responsibility to notify the Media Specialist of any discrepancies on his/her record.

The Media Center should maintain a respectful working environment. Students should refrain from loud talking, horseplay, and general disruption. Library privileges may be revoked due to misbehavior. Computer Lab areas are accessible to teachers for classroom use and small groups. Students must have supervision by an adult to be in the lab areas.

Discipline

Board Policy: Student Behavior Code

Descriptor: JCDA

It is the desire of the Hart County Board of Education that all students have every possible opportunity to take advantage of instructional programs that will allow them access to the best possible education. Any distractions from a favorable teaching and learning environment lessen this opportunity. Students are expected to adhere to standards of behavior that will facilitate a positive learning environment for themselves and other students. Respect for each other, system employees, and school property is a requirement for all students. They are also expected to comply with student behavior policies adopted by the Board of Education, and to obey student behavior rules established by individual schools.

Parent involvement is the most desirable avenue for correcting behavioral problems and will be used when possible. Parent conferences may be used in conjunction with other forms of discipline.

School systems are required to have progressive punishment policies. Students accused of violating this Code should be advised of the violation and given a reasonable opportunity to present their position. Any student in excess of ten (10) cumulative days of suspension per semester for disciplinary reasons may be recommended to the tribunal panel for possible change of placement.

Student Code of Conduct

This Code of Student Conduct shall be available to each student and parent in the district, including newly enrolled students. Parents shall sign an acknowledgement of the receipt of the Code. This Code shall be available online and a printed copy will be provided upon request. Federal and state laws and regulations that are in conflict with this Code or its application shall take precedence.

Student Behavioral Expectations through PBIS

Hart County Charter System implements Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) to support student growth. PBIS is an evidence-based, data-driven framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school's sense of safety and support improved academic outcomes. More than 1,400 Georgia schools and 27,000 nationwide have been trained in PBIS. Implementation of PBIS is saving countless instructional hours otherwise lost to discipline. The premise of PBIS is that continual teaching, combined with acknowledgement or feedback of positive student behavior will reduce unnecessary discipline and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety and learning. PBIS schools apply a multi-tiered approach to prevention, using disciplinary data and principles of behavior analysis to develop school-wide, targeted and individualized interventions and supports to improve school climate for all students. Additional information about PBIS will be provided throughout the school year.

The Middle School expectations are Honorable, Accountable, Respectful, and Teachable (H.A.R.T.). Student behavior should coincide with H.A.R.T. expectations. Even with clear expectations and positive reinforcement, negative behaviors can occur. Teachers will follow the school discipline policy when applicable.

School Specific Expectations

Participate fully in the learning process. Students need to report to school and class on time, attend all regularly scheduled classes, remain in class until excused or dismissed, pay attention to instruction, complete assignments to the best of their ability, and ask for help when needed.

Avoid behavior that impairs their own or other students' educational achievement. Students should know and avoid the behaviors prohibited by this code, take care of books and other instructional materials, and cooperate with others.

Show respect for the knowledge and authority of teachers, administrators, and other school employees. Students must obey reasonable directions, use acceptable and courteous language, avoid being rude, and follow school rules and procedures.

Recognize and respect the rights of other students and adults. All students should show concern for and encouragement of the educational achievements and activity participation of others. Disciplinary action for violations of expected behaviors will include appropriate hearings and reviews. In all cases, the rights of individuals will be ensured and protected. The Hart County Charter System will make every reasonable effort to administer the discipline code consistently in all schools. When applicable, individualized plans (i.e. IEP, 504, etc.) will be reviewed for appropriate consequences. The school's primary goal is to educate, not punish; however, when the behavior of an individual student comes in conflict with the rights of others, corrective actions may be necessary for the benefit of that individual and the school as a whole. Accordingly, students shall be governed by the rules set forth in the Code of Conduct.

Step Plan for 6th and 7th grades

Student Behavioral Support & Consequences (STEP Plan)

To promote a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment, 6th and 7th grades utilize a progressive discipline process known as the STEP Plan to handle minor misconduct/offenses. Major misconduct/offenses require an immediate office referral. This structured approach provides students with clear expectations, opportunities to correct behavior, and consistent communication with families. Teachers will inform students and parents of how the Step Plan works during the first week of school.

Step One – Teacher Warning

When a student demonstrates inappropriate behavior, the teacher will provide verbal redirection and clearly communicate expectations. If the behavior continues after continuous redirection, the teacher will document the incident, including a detailed description of the behavior. This serves as a formal warning and an opportunity for the student to make immediate improvements.

Step Two – Parent Contact

If the behavior persists, the teacher will document the incident with a detailed description and date, and contact the parent/guardian through SchoolStatus. During this communication, the teacher will explain the behavior and include prior incidents (including Step 1), and inform the parent that continued misconduct will result in loss of privilege (silent lunch/no Hart Break).

Step Three – Parent Contact & Loss of Privileges (silent lunch/no Hart Break)

Continued inappropriate behavior will result in additional parent contact through SchoolStatus and the assignment of a silent lunch & loss of Hart Break. The teacher will provide detailed documentation of the incident and clearly communicate that if the student continues to misbehave, it will result in an office referral (step 4).

Step Four – Office Referral

If behavior does not improve, the student will be referred to administration. The teacher will document the incident in Infinite Campus, including a detailed description and rationale for the referral, and will notify the parent/guardian through School Status. Administrative consequences will be assigned in accordance with the school's discipline policies.

Please note that any steps after step 4 will result in an automatic office referral. The Step Plan will restart each nine weeks.

Hart Break

Hart Break is a designated intervention time at Hart County Middle School that allows students to focus on their academic and/or behavior goals. While this period provides an opportunity for outdoor time as a reward, its primary purpose is to support student growth. Student safety remains our top priority. Therefore, administration reserves the right to restrict or cancel Hart Break for individual students or the entire grade level if academic or behavior expectations are not met.

Field Trips

Students who are assigned to ISS or OSS are not permitted to go on field trips during the semester they received the referral. Students will not be given a refund. Students with excessive absences will not be allowed to attend. In addition, students should not be failing classes.

The Code of Conduct

The code of conduct is effective during the following times and in the following places:

- At school or on school property at any time;
- Off school grounds at any school activity, function or even while traveling to and from such events;
- On vehicles for student transportation by the school system;
- On school buses and at school bus stops;
- Also, students may be disciplined for conduct off campus, which could result in a student being criminally charged with a felony, and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process.

Definition of bullying: Bullying is defined as repeated, intentional behavior—verbal, physical, social, or digital—meant to harm, intimidate, or control another student, often involving a real or perceived imbalance of power. It includes ongoing actions (not a one-time conflict) where there is clear intent to hurt, embarrass, or exclude another student.

Anti-Bullying Rules:

1. We will not bully others.
2. We will try to help students who are bullied.
3. We will try to include students who are left out.
4. If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

For complete policy, reference JCDAG. Pattern of behavior, which may include written, verbal, or physical acts, that is so severe, persistent, or pervasive so as to have the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education, threatening the educational environment, or causing substantial physical harm or visible bodily harm (Policy JCDAG)

Unsafe School

Major offenses including, but not limited to, drug and weapon offenses can lead to schools being named as an Unsafe School according to the provisions of the State Board Rule 160-4-8-.16, UNSAFE SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS

Seclusion or Restraint of Students

The use of physical restraint in Georgia public schools and educational programs is governed by *Rule 160-5-1-.35 Seclusion and Restraint for All Students, Code JGF(2), O.C.G.A 20-2-2-240*. The rule can be found on the Georgia Department of Education website at www.doe.k12.ga.us.

Student Support Processes

The Hart County Board of Education provides a variety of resources that are available at every school within the district to help address student behavioral problems. The school discipline process will include appropriate consideration of support processes to help students resolve such problems. These resources include Student Support Teams, school counselors, chronic disciplinary student plans, mentoring programs, peer mentors, and student leadership class support.

Authority of the Principal and Authority of the Teacher

The principal is the designated leader of the school and, in concert with the staff, is responsible for the orderly operation of the school. In cases of disruptive, disorderly, or dangerous conduct not covered in this Code, the principal may undertake corrective measures, which he or she believes to be in the best interest of the student and the school, provided any such action does not violate school board policy or procedures. The Superintendent fully supports the authority of principals and teachers in the school system to remove a student from the classroom pursuant to provisions of state law.

Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to become familiar with the student Code of Conduct and to be supportive of it in their daily communication with their children and others in the community.

This Code of Conduct is based on the expectation that parents, guardians, teachers and school administrators will work together to improve and enhance student behavior and academic performance and will communicate freely their concerns about, and actions in response to, student behavior that detracts from the learning environment. School administrators recognize that two-way communication through personal contacts are extremely valuable; therefore, they provide information to parents as well as on-going opportunities for school personnel to hear parents' concerns and comments.

Georgia law mandates that any time a teacher or principal identifies (Infinite Campus Referral) a student as a chronic disciplinary problem, the principal shall notify by phone call and by mail the student's parent or guardian of the disciplinary problem. The principal may request at least one parent or guardian to attend a conference to devise a disciplinary and behavioral correction plan.

Georgia law also states that before any chronic disciplinary problem student is permitted to return to school from a suspension or expulsion, the school shall request by telephone call and by mail at least one parent or guardian to schedule and attend a conference to devise a disciplinary and behavioral correction plan.

The law allows a local board of education to petition the juvenile court to require a parent to attend a school conference. If the court finds that the parent or guardian has willfully and unreasonably failed to attend the conference requested by the principal pursuant to the laws cited above, the court may order the parent or guardian to attend such a conference, order the parent to guardian to participate in such programs or such treatment as the court deems appropriate to improve the student's behavior, or both. After notice and opportunity for hearing, the court may impose a fine, not to exceed \$500.00, on a parent or guardian who willfully disobeys an order of the court under this law.

Dress Code

Students are expected to dress for school success. Clothing, piercings, and hair color must not interfere with the educational process or the rights to education of others, undermine the authority of teachers, or jeopardize the safety of others. Exceptions may be made for Spirit Weeks, field day, and other student events and will be communicated by administration. Administration, school leadership team, students, and school governance members contributed to the 2026-27 school dress code.

The following guidelines must be followed at Hart County Middle School:

- No blouses, dresses, or shirts which expose any areas of the stomach, chest, side, or back
- No bare midriffs or crop tops
- No pajamas
- Sweatpants/ athletic pants must be fitted at the waist (no sagging)
- Leggings must be worn with a shirt that comes down past the bottom when standing in a normal position with hands down (bottom must be covered)
- Head-Hats, doo-rags, hoods, bonnets, bandanas, fish hooks, along with earphones/buds and sunglasses are not permitted. Hats worn inside will be taken up by administration for the 9 weeks.
- No tank tops, spaghetti straps, or sleeveless garments
- No studded bracelets, studded necklaces, studded belts, handcuffs, fish hooks, heavy chains or items that could be considered to be used as a weapon.
- No visible undergarments
- No sheer, mesh, or see-through clothing
- No clothing or accessory that displays inappropriate language or images or causes a school disruption (profanity or insinuation of profanity, sexual suggestion, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, ethnic slurs, gang-related imagery, etc.)
- No blankets, flags, stuffed animals (toys) or capes. Items will be taken up and placed in the front office. Parents will be notified and students may pick up items at the end of the day.
- No bedroom shoes or slippers
- An open back of any type of shirt is not allowed
- Shorts, skirts, skorts and dresses must be worn at the student's natural waistline and must be no shorter than three inches above the top of the knee in front and back.
- Pants should have no unpatched holes or slits above the knee.
- Spandex shorts shall not be worn.
- Pants and shorts should be fitted at the waist and cover the entire buttocks area without drooping.
- Gang attire, colors or symbols are not permitted in clothing or accessories.
- Shoes and shirts must be worn at all times on school grounds and at all school functions. Shoes with laces must be tied.
- Facial, tongue or body piercing jewelry is not acceptable. This includes lip rings, etc.
- Nose jewelry is not permitted with the exception of a small nose stud (20 gauge or smaller)
- Students may not draw or carve inappropriate or unacceptable graphics on their bodies, their clothing, backpacks, their books, paper and folders.
- Students may not have face painting, stickers, etc. on their face (clear acne stickers are the only exception).

Administration has the discretion to deem other clothing articles as inappropriate.

Students will be asked to change clothing that disrupts the learning environment. Potential consequences for dress code violation may include the following:

- Parent(s) contacted to bring appropriate clothes
- Detention
- ISS
- OSS

Food and Drink Policy

Water is the only drink allowed in the classrooms during school hours. Food/candy (including gum) is not allowed in the classroom. Coffee and energy drinks are not permitted at school.

Valuables

Students are advised not to bring large sums of money or other valuable items to school because of the danger of loss and theft. The school does not provide insurance coverage for loss, theft, or giving away of personal items and is not responsible for items left in the building or on school grounds. Students are urged to take musical instruments and any other expensive personal possessions home every day. Students are personally and solely responsible for the care and security of their personal electronic device (PED). The school assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, damages, or vandalism to PEDs brought on school grounds, or the unauthorized use of such devices.

ISS (In School Suspension)

- Tardies and absences will be reported to the attendance office. All absences excused or unexcused must be made up. If you check out early, the time must be made up.
- You should always remain seated unless otherwise directed. If you need help or information, please raise your hand, the instructor will try to assist you.
- Talking is not allowed at any time.
- No sleeping or putting your head on the desk.
- No disruptive actions in the classroom.
- Any referral to an administrator while in ISS may result in OSS for the remainder of the assignment ISS time.

OSS(Out of School Suspension)

SHORT-TERM SUSPENSION: The student is suspended out of school up to ten (10) days by the local school administrator. The student may be suspended for an accumulation of offenses, as well as a major offense. Suspended students may make up those tests and assignments that the teacher determines will have an impact on the student's final grade and mastery of course content. Assignments that the teacher does not require to be made up will not count towards a student's final grade. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements to make up work within five (5) school days upon return to school. During the term of suspension the student is not allowed on the school campus or at any school activity or school-sponsored event.