

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Legionella Testing on Cooling Towers  
**Date:** Monday, October 21, 2019 2:55:28 PM

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Dear colleagues,

Ensuring that all students and staff have a safe learning environment has been a top priority of mine since becoming Superintendent in 2017. We have taken significant measures to improve the health and safety of our buildings to ensure that our students and staff have a safe and healthy learning environment. This includes going beyond required state, federal and local regulations to conduct comprehensive testing of our building's systems and perform remediation when necessary. We have prioritized transparency and want to ensure that our community is aware of work being done.

Out of an abundance of caution, and based on industry best practices, HCPSS began proactively testing for the bacteria Legionella in September 2019. This was not due to any health concerns or done in response to a requirement or request. This sampling is not required by federal, state or local regulations. This first round of testing involved several schools, and since this is the first time we have done such testing and posted the results, I wanted to provide a comprehensive update.

As part of our testing, the school system collected samples from cooling towers, which are present only at the [23 buildings listed online](#) and used to cool water as part of the building's HVAC system. This is not drinking water or water used for any other purpose.

On Friday October 18, HCPSS [posted information](#) online regarding sampling in those cooling towers. The sampling results indicated three schools (Atholton, Long Reach, and River Hill high schools) requiring treatment aligned with recommendations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). A message was sent to those communities with results and treatment information.

Legionella also was detected in the cooling towers at six other schools but did not reach levels where OSHA provides recommended treatment. Regardless, all of those cooling towers were treated as a precaution. This includes towers located at Laurel Woods and West Friendship elementary schools, and Hammond, Howard, Marriotts Ridge and Mt. Hebron high schools. Response actions will be monitored by confirmatory sampling, with results expected within the next two weeks and sent to school communities. The bacteria was not detected in any of the other cooling towers sampled.

It is not uncommon to find various Legionella species in cooling towers. According to OSHA, there are at least 50 legionella species and 20 of which cause human diseases, however, the presence of the organism cannot be directly equated to risk of infection. While the sampling

and analytical procedures used are not specific enough to verify if the species detected are the ones that cause human disease, we felt the detection of any bacteria warrants chemical treatment and maintenance.

HCPSS will continue to test annually for Legionella, in the fall when the water in the cooling towers can be idle for extended periods of time due to low cooling load conditions. [Test results and more information](#) can be found on the HCPSS website. Moving forward, as testing is completed and remediation work occurs, schools will provide updates to their respective communities.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact [Christopher Madden](#), Certified Industrial Hygienist/IEQ manager, in the HCPSS Office of the Environment or [Larsen Angel](#), Mechanical Engineering Manager, in the HCPSS Department of School Facilities.

Thank you,  
Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Central Office Group Photo  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 8, 2019 9:49:26 AM

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Dear Central Office colleagues,

I trust that your school year is off to a fantastic start! Please remember to [join me](#) and your colleagues for our annual Central Office staff photo, this Thursday, October 10 at 2 p.m. in front of the Department of Education. I look forward to seeing all of you.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Social Media Norms for HCPSS Staff  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 2, 2019 12:03:26 PM

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Dear Colleagues:

The first few weeks of the school year offer an ideal opportunity to establish positive habits that will serve us well throughout the year. In today's world, social media is seemingly ubiquitous, affecting both our personal and professional lives. We all need to understand the social media norms for HCPSS staff members.

Like many of you, I enjoy interacting with students, staff and parents on social media, and find that these forums offer great opportunities to build positive relationships and goodwill among students, parents and our community. I urge you to be mindful that the content you share – through social media, email, a text message, photo or any other medium – is an indelible reflection of your entire persona, including your values and professional role as an educator. Be aware that the lines between our personal and professional lives are blurred, because whether we are on social media or at the grocery store, students and their families will always perceive us as educators and leaders.

The [implementation procedures](#) for Policy 8080, Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media give more detailed direction about staff responsibilities in using personal and school system technology and social media. Please carefully review Section 3.B.14, which specifies that your postings must never contain content that could be viewed as cruel, obscene, insulting or intimidating, or that disparage students, colleagues or members of the community. Other HCPSS policies, including 1060 regarding bullying, 1000 regarding civility, and 7030 on employee conduct, also make clear that staff members must demonstrate civil and professional conduct at all times and act as positive models for students, *both during and outside of school hours*. An employee who falls short of these standards may be subject to disciplinary or even legal action.

Our children are always carefully watching us, and whether or not you intend it, your online posts are very likely to be seen by students and their families. Please be thoughtful, and ensure every message reflects our mutual values of kindness, acceptance and compassion. When in doubt, don't post, or first run your message by a trusted mentor or colleague.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent



**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Winter Break Closings  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 24, 2019 5:04:37 PM

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Dear Colleagues,

Over the last two years, I have continued to stress the importance of a strong work/life balance, because as caregivers for our students and staff, it is important that we also look to our own self-care. That can mean making time for exercise, practicing mindfulness, enjoying a hobby or relaxing with family and friends. To give staff additional time to rest and rejuvenate this holiday season, I am closing schools and central offices three extra days, on Monday, December 23; Monday, December 30 and Tuesday, December 31. In total, offices will be closed for six days during winter break, including the already scheduled days of December 24, December 25 and January 1.

HCPSS offices will remain open on Thursday, December 26 and Friday, December 27; however, I encourage you to take any available leave you may have for those two days.

Thank you,

Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Fostering a Safe and Civil Work and Learning Environment  
**Date:** Thursday, September 19, 2019 4:20:04 PM

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Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday a community member expressed a threat to an employee outside the Department of Education building. Recently, Board members, system leaders (including myself) and staff members have been the targets of personal threats, intimidation and insults by members of our community who are angry and frustrated at the prospect of redistricting.

I want to assure you that I consider the safety and well-being of central office and school staff among our highest priorities. Any threat against an employee or building is taken seriously. System leaders and our Safety and Security team collaborate with Howard County Police to investigate and assess every threat, and implement appropriate safety precautions. Security and safety protocols at our central offices and schools have been enhanced over the last several months, and we continue to look for ways to further ensure safe and nurturing learning and working environments for every student and staff member. Your caution, diligent observation and prompt reporting when you perceive a threat, are among our most effective defenses.

As community leaders and educators, we have real influence in upholding a high standard for civility, open mindedness and kindness in our community. By continuing to show appropriate, polite and constructive ways to express disagreement without rancor, we demonstrate that Howard County and our school system represent a model for civility, inclusion and mutual respect for all individuals' perspectives, backgrounds and attributes.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to providing a nurturing, inclusive and welcoming environment for all of our students and families.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Administrative Appointments/Promotions  
**Date:** Thursday, September 19, 2019 4:08:51 PM

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Dear colleagues,

Please join me in congratulating the following individual on his administrative appointment/promotion, announced at today's Board of Education meeting with a start date to be determined:

**Darin Conforti:** From Acting Director, Parks and Recreation Department, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, to **Executive Director of Budget**

Best wishes to Mr. Conforti on his new assignment.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Welcome back to a great new school year  
**Date:** Friday, August 30, 2019 4:30:09 PM

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Dear Colleagues:

In just a few days students will head back to our classrooms. I'm super-charged from your enthusiasm at our kick-off events, and I know everyone is excited and eager to give students a warm welcome, renew connections with colleagues and families, and embark together on a great new school year adventure.

This school year, I call on you to be a guiding light of hope for the children in our care. Put equity into action by lifting up kindness, compassion, empathy and understanding. Our focus this year will be the "4 A's" – access, attendance, achievement and acceptance. These four basic principles underlie everything we are working toward to ensure every child is on a path to graduation and becoming life-ready.

- We prioritize **access** by opening opportunities for every child and family – especially doors that may at first appear closed. We want every student to have access to the benefits of rigorous, high-level courses, extracurricular and career preparation programs, and to receive the individualized academic and social-emotional support they need to thrive. <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>[[SEP]]</sub>
- **Attendance** is critical to academic success. Frequent absence or tardiness is among the earliest and strongest indicators of a child at risk of falling behind. We must be proactive in reaching out to families and emphasizing to children the importance of prompt attendance. Take special care to foster a sense of belonging and build strong relationships during the first few weeks, so students will feel connected and want to come to school. The routines established at the beginning of the school year are likely to continue all year. <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>[[SEP]]</sub>
- **Achievement** is our target, and assessments can be useful benchmarks. Achievement will take care of itself when we teach the instructional program with fidelity, provide individualized instruction and support, believe in each child, and address obstacles that stand in their way. <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>[[SEP]]</sub>
- Most important of all is **acceptance**, which we express by genuinely listening to and respecting each child's background and individual story, opening our eyes and hearts to their challenges and strengths, and showing through words and actions that they are important and valued, and that we care. Reach out to a student or family member who appears to be struggling, and embrace them. <sup>[[L]]</sup><sub>[[SEP]]</sub>

As Student Board Member Allison Alston expressed so eloquently during kick-off, "the success of our students revolves around you." As an HCPSS staff member, you have a platform and the real influence to effectuate change. Many children, like adults, experience a great deal of

stress and anxiety in today's world. We have the power and the choice to make our school system and community a safe haven where every person – regardless of birthplace, creed or appearance – knows they are accepted and included.

I am proud and fortunate to have so many remarkably talented and committed colleagues in our schools and offices. Please continue to share with me your stories about the impact of building meaningful connections, and to tag me on twitter (@mjmsuper). There is nothing I enjoy more than sharing your stories and successes with our community.

Thank you again for your hard work and dedication on behalf of every student. I wish you all the best for a great school year.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** My Recommended Attendance Area Adjustment Plan  
**Date:** Thursday, August 22, 2019 6:53:20 PM

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Dear colleagues:

On January 24, the Board of Education directed that HCPSS initiate a systemwide school boundary review, which could potentially impact any or all of the 74 comprehensive schools in our system for the 2020-2021 school year.

The prospect of change can always be hard and I realize this process invokes a great deal of stress, frustration and concern for many families. I want you to know that a considerable amount of thoughtful work was committed to this process on the part of my staff, our consultants, and members of the Attendance Area Committee (AAC). Furthermore, our community members offered valuable perspectives and ideas through our community input sessions and surveys, all of which was considered equally.

### **Equity in Action**

At this evening's Board of Education meeting, I presented my Attendance Area Adjustment Plan recommendation. My proposal is significantly different than the recommendations presented in the Feasibility Study. Our driving priorities through this process have been to relieve crowding, advance equity by addressing the distribution of students participating in the Free and Reduced-price Meals (FARM) program across schools, and plan ahead for the impact of new High School #13, which is scheduled to open in fall 2023.

I want to emphasize that equity is the underpinning for our Strategic Call to Action and guides all of our decisions and strategies. Equity has been the basis for all of our decisions throughout our boundary review process, as we strive to ensure that all students may have full access and opportunity to receive the best educational services and supports.

My recommendation reflects the priorities expressed by our AAC and community members and considers transportation times and costs, the effective use of existing school resources and other Policy 6010 standards. It also considers our desire to keep school boundaries contiguous, and maintain neighborhood schools and walkable distances for as many students as possible.

### **Recommendation Summary**

I want to share a brief summary of my recommendation, though I encourage you to [visit our website](#) for greater details.

To address the significant imbalances in school capacity utilization, my proposal would result in approximately 7,396 student reassignments, including approximately 3,194 elementary,

1,351 middle and 2,851 high school students. As a result, 53 schools would be within the 90-110% target utilization defined in Policy 6010, compared with 42 without adjustment. The proposal also minimizes, as much as feasible, reassignments for high schools and families that are most likely to be affected by boundary adjustments for new High School #13, which is scheduled to open fall 2023.

My proposal advances equity by making progress towards leveling FARM proportions across schools, to a result where all elementary schools would have a FARM rate at or below 54%, all middle schools would be at or below 45% and all high schools would be at or below 42%. A total of 41 schools would move closer to the county FARM average of 22.5%.

Together, these proposed changes have the potential to substantially improve equity and access to the best educational services and supports for all of our students. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that these changes don't work in isolation and will not, in themselves, achieve all that we are working to accomplish to improve student achievement and outcomes. We must continue our work, through our Strategic Call to Action, to support every student in all of our schools, and to monitor our progress using outcome data.

### **Next Steps**

The proposal I presented this evening is a recommendation only. The Board's deliberation is the next step in the process, which begins with the Board's public hearings followed by seven Board work sessions. The Board is expected to make a preliminary decision at their final work session on November 18, and their final decision on any boundary line adjustments is expected on November 21.

My [recommendation and presentation](#) are posted on our website. Please visit [www.hcpss.org/school-planning/boundary-review/](http://www.hcpss.org/school-planning/boundary-review/) for complete information and updates, a schedule and answers to frequently asked questions, and information about how you may submit feedback to the Board. And, watch for updates in HCPSS News emails, Facebook and Twitter.

As I've said before, a successful outcome for this process depends directly on the level of respect, empathy and careful listening that we as adults model for our children. We must remember that they will follow our lead in responding positively to the challenges and changes that are inevitable throughout life. I ask our community to bear civility in mind as we continue this process. Regardless of the outcome, every child at every school in our county will continue to have access to an excellent education.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Martirano

Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Administrative Appointments/Promotions and Transfers  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 20, 2019 4:23:00 PM

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Dear colleagues,

Please join me in congratulating the following individuals on their administrative appointments/promotions and transfers for the 2019-2020 school year, and that were announced at today's Board of Education meeting:

**Appointments/Promotions**

- **Linda Rook:** From Teacher, Quarterfield Elementary School (Anne Arundel County Public Schools), to **Assistant Principal, Ilchester ES**
- **Kathleen "Kami" Wagner:** From Acting Coordinator of Student Support Services, to **Coordinator, Student Support Services**

**Transfers**

- **Shari Lorch:** From Assistant Principal, Ilchester ES, to **AP, Hanover Hills ES**
- **Anissa Dennis:** From Chief Operating Officer to **Chief School Management and Instructional Leadership Officer**
- **Jahantab Siddiqui:** From Chief Communication, Community and Workforce Engagement Officer to **Chief Administrative Officer**

Best wishes to all of these HCPSS leaders on their new assignments.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** HCPSS Leadership Changes  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 14, 2019 10:00:32 AM

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Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to announce the following [leadership changes](#):

- **Anissa Dennis:** From Chief Operating Officer to **Chief School Management and Instructional Leadership Officer**
- **Scott Washington:** From Director of Capital Planning and Construction to **Acting Chief Operating Officer**
- **Jahantab Siddiqui:** From Chief Communication, Community and Workforce Engagement Officer to **Chief Administrative Officer**
- **Daniel Lubeley:** From Manager of Design and Pre-Construction Services to **Acting Director of Capital Planning and Construction**

Best wishes to all of these HCPSS leaders on their new assignments.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent

**From:** [Michael Martirano](#)  
**Subject:** Administrative Appointment/Promotion  
**Date:** Thursday, July 11, 2019 4:19:39 PM

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Please join me in congratulating the following individual on her administrative appointment/promotion, which was announced at today's Board of Education meeting with a start date to be determined.

- **Dr. Kendra Johnson**, From Superintendent, Montclair Public Schools (New Jersey), To **Community Superintendent**

Best wishes to Dr. Johnson on her new assignment.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent