

CATONSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

August, 2009

Dear Students and Parents,

I hope that you are having a relaxing and enjoyable summer. The 2009-2010 school year at Catonsville High School promises to be most exciting and rewarding. We will continue to build upon the CHS tradition of excellence with our challenging, rigorous, and stimulating academic and extracurricular programs. Our students continue to demonstrate outstanding achievement on standardized tests such as the PSAT, SAT and Advanced Placement and have continued to meet standards of excellence on statewide exams and measures of school performance. We are proud of the many significant and noteworthy achievements of Catonsville High School students including the continued ranking of our school in *Newsweek's* top 5% of high schools nationwide.

This year, however, we are also excited to begin "Our Call to Character" program that will recognize, celebrate and extend our many initiatives and programs designed to develop both performance and moral character. You'll be hearing more about this focus throughout the year, and we hope it will contribute to worthwhile conversations at home and in the community about the importance of character development.

Especially as the school year begins, I'd like to remind you about the importance of communication between school and home. As part of our comprehensive effort to facilitate ongoing dialogue with respect to students' progress and information about school events; our school website, catonsvillehs.bcps.org, provides instant access. The use of email has increased the effectiveness of communication beyond our expectations. Parents and teachers have found email to be a very convenient and efficient means of exchanging information, ideas, suggestions, and concerns. Our voice mail system is available to you twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and the direct number is: 410-788-7879. This easy to use system allows instant access to information about school events, class assignments and projects, and provides you with the ability to leave voice messages for teachers and administrators. As you will receive this letter before a few of our new faculty members have set up their email account or their voicemail mailbox, please understand that you may not be able to reach them by email or voice mail prior to August 31st—an updated email/voicemail list will be provided in the first PTSA newsletter which can be found online. Please feel free to reach those faculty and staff at our main office number, Monday thru Friday, 7:00am-3:30pm at 410-887-0808.

Although we will still use traditional methods of communication to keep you apprised of students' progress and school events, we are increasing our use of email to be even more effective and efficient in reaching parents and guardians. When you finish reading this letter, or at a time of greater convenience, I'd like you to go to <http://catonsvillehs.bcps.org>, our school's website. There are several features at our website that will serve to improve the timeliness and accuracy of our communication with students, parents, and our community. For example, you'll be able to access our school calendar and check schedules for our teams. The "Contact Us" link will take you to each faculty member's voice and email. I strongly recommend that you add <http://catonsvillehs.bcps.org> to your bookmarks and that you check our site regularly. BCPS will no longer be using *eschoolnewsletter*, but we will keep you posted if CHS decides to use a different service.

Included in this mailing you will find a membership envelope for the Catonsville High School PTSA. I urge you to join and to become an active member of this vitally important association. The services provided for our students by the PTSA are numerous and impressive. Funding school projects, providing services for teachers and students, and organizing the **award-winning after-prom party (1st meeting is Wednesday, September 2nd at 6:00pm—all other PTSA meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm)** are but a few examples of the critical role played by the Catonsville High School PTSA in the success of our school. Please join by returning the dues envelope to school the cost is **\$10.00 for a parent & student (two members); \$20.00 for a family (more than two members)**; you may also join at the ninth grade orientation on Thursday, August 27th or at *Back-to-School Night* on Thursday, September 10th at 7:00pm. You

will also find membership information about the **CHS Sports Boosters Club** enclosed. This organization provides invaluable support for our extensive athletic program as well as benefits for members. Especially if your child is involved in the CHS athletic program, please consider membership in the **CHS Sports Booster Club**.

Please review the information that follows, as it should prove helpful in making the 2009-2010 school year successful.

ORIENTATION FOR INCOMING STUDENTS

On **Thursday, August 27th at 7:00 p.m. in the school auditorium**, we will host our annual orientation for students new to Catonsville High School. As part of the evening's activities, students and parents will have a chance to tour the school and locate classrooms. If your family is new to Catonsville High School, we look forward to seeing you on August 27th.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IS OFFERING AN ORIENTATION FOR FRESHMEN STUDENTS AND PARENTS

August 27th – A meeting will be held in the library at 6:00pm (before the 7:00pm 9th Grade Social/Orientation) for introduction of the special education staff and a brief explanation of the Catonsville High School special education program.

September 10th – Tenth – twelfth grade students with parents meeting in the library at 6:00pm (before the 7:00pm Back to School Night) for introduction of the special education staff and a brief explanation of the Catonsville High School special education program.

OPENING DATE OF SCHOOL

The 2009-2010 school year will begin for all students on Monday, August 31st. We will follow a four period schedule, with first period beginning at 7:45 a.m.; fourth period will conclude at 2:15 p.m. *Please note that on the first day of school, August 31st, students should report to first period to begin the school day.* **Students are expected to bring their mailed schedule with them.**

SCHOOL HOURS OF OPERATION

Students may enter the buildings at 7:05am in order to ensure safety and proper supervision. Students are expected to leave the building at the conclusion of the school day (2:15pm) unless participating in a school-sponsored, supervised activity.

AGENDA BOOKS

This year every student will receive at no charge a 2009-2010 agenda book that includes a daily calendar with dates of all school events and holidays. It is the expectation that students record homework assignments and due dates for important projects in their agenda books. The agenda book also serves as a means of communication between home and school. The "Hallway Passport" is located at the back of the agenda book and is used when students are granted a request to use the lavatory or leave the classroom. All students are expected to have the agenda book with them at all times in order to use the *Hallway Passport*. If an agenda book is lost, one needs to be purchased in the front office ASAP for \$5.00.

ATTENDANCE

A key component to school success is regular attendance. We continue to need parental support in this vital area. It is important for everyone to remember that in a four-period day schedule, every absence is the equivalent of missing two days under a traditional seven-period school day. Remember that vacations are not excused absences even if make-up work is completed. We respectfully ask that family vacations not be scheduled during the school year. We also ask that doctor and dental appointments be scheduled after school hours. Remember that accruing 10% (usually 5 days) of unexcused absences results in a failure for the quarter, and 20% unexcused/excused absences (usually 9 days) may result in failing the class work portion (50%) of the course for the quarter. The number of absences is reduced by half for a course meeting on an A/B day schedule.

EARLY DISMISSALS

Students who need to leave school early should obtain an early dismissal pass from the office. Parent requests for early dismissal should be made in writing and should include a telephone number at which the parent may be reached to verify the request. Students should present early dismissal requests to a secretary in the main office prior to the beginning of first period classes. Parents are reminded that students are to be picked up in the main office or the nurse's office. For safety reasons, students are urged not to wait in the front lobby or outside of the school for a ride. To eliminate classroom disruptions, parents are discouraged from requesting early dismissals throughout the day, except in emergencies.

BULLYING, HARASSMENT, OR INTIMIDATION

On July 1, 2008, the Maryland General Assembly directed the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the local school systems, to develop and adopt a model policy prohibiting bullying, harassment, or intimidation in schools. The Maryland State Board of Education approved its model policy on February 24, 2009.

As a result of MSDE's model policy, the Board of Education of Baltimore County approved the new Board of Education Policy and Superintendent's Rule 5580, "Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation," which prohibits students from engaging in intentional conduct involving bullying, harassment, or intimidation, which can substantially interfere with a student's educational opportunities, or any acts of retaliation against those who report instances of bullying, harassment, or intimidation.

The "*Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation Reporting Form*" is used to track alleged instances of bullying, harassment, or intimidation. The form is available at your local school or on the Baltimore County Public Schools' Web site under the "Student" and "Parent" tabs. You may contact the school for additional information or assistance at any time.

BUS STOPS

Please refer to the enclosed listing of all bus stops for Catonsville High School to find the location that corresponds to your address. Please arrive at the bus stop by 6:55 a.m. on the first day of school. If for some reason the code of your bus stop does not appear, please go to the bus stop closest to your home on the first day. Bus cards will be issued to serve as your identification card and will be checked by the bus driver.

STUDENT SCHEDULES

Four class schedule is enclosed in this mailing. These are the classes that were approved by you in March and May. Please see the enclosed flyer from the Student Services Department regarding any questions you may have about your schedule.

CAMPUS PARKING

Due to the building renovations no student parking will be allowed on the lots around or near the school. Students are permitted to park on campus *with permits* in accordance with the following guidelines:

- *All students* may park in the Valley Road lot or Hilltop Road lot – *permit required*.
- *Students may not park in spaces designated for faculty, staff, visitors, grounds crew, and in fire lanes.* Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken for violators—including loss of parking privileges.
- *Students please be considerate of our neighbors and follow all Baltimore County laws when parking off campus.*

Please note:

1. Students must register and parking permits will be available in the main office at no cost. Permits are required for parking in the Valley Road and Hilltop Road lots. Stickers must be placed in the lower left corner vehicle's rear window. As permits/stickers are not transferable a sticker must be obtained for each vehicle in multi-car families.
2. Students are strongly advised to lock their cars and secure valuable items. CHS is not responsible for damaged or stolen property. Parking is at students' risk.

TELEPHONE USE

Students are requested to use the public telephone located outside of the cafeteria and to limit telephone use to their lunch period. Should students need to make emergency calls during the school day, they should obtain a pass from their teacher and report to the office.

USE OF CELL PHONES, CD PLAYERS, IPODS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students' cell phones, personal CDs, iPods, MP3 players, and any other type of electronic device must be switched off at the sound of the first bell and must remain out of sight. These devices must be kept *off and away during the school day*. Please understand that students who violate this policy will have these devices confiscated and returned only to the student's parent or guardian. The school is not responsible for electronic devices that are lost, stolen or damaged. Parents are requested not to contact their student(s) through electronic devices during the school day.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

An emergency form is enclosed in this letter. This information is mandatory! Please complete this form and return it to your first period homeroom teacher on the first day of school. Students will receive a locker from their teacher upon the return of the emergency form. If you have an active email account, be sure to include it on the emergency card. Students must return this information for safety precautions.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION UNIFORMS

Physical education uniforms will be available from gym teachers during the first week of school. Complete uniforms will cost \$25 for girls and boys.

CATONSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL'S CODE OF CONDUCT, COURTESY, AND CIVILITY

Catonsville High School students and faculty adhere to high standards of behavior at Catonsville High. It is our belief that adherence to these guidelines will continue to improve our school. Students will receive these guidelines in their student handbooks; parents are encouraged to discuss these items with students prior to the opening of school.

As members of the Catonsville High School community, we believe:

- Every person is valuable and should be treated with respect.
- All members of the school community should be honest, courteous, and civil.
- All students should respect the differences among us and strive to see unity in diversity.
- All students should work to solve disagreements in a mature manner.
- All students should respect the views of others even when they disagree.
- All members of the school community benefit from a safe and clean learning environment.
- All members of the school community should take pride in our school, take pride in what we do, and make the most of our years at CHS.

Safety at Catonsville High School

For the past several years, the students, parents, faculty, and administration at Catonsville High School have taken a very strong stand against school violence. CHS has always been a school that has provided students with a safe and orderly environment, and it is our sincere intention to preserve this atmosphere.

With this in mind, we will continue our policy of not tolerating violent behavior. Students will not be allowed to settle disputes through fighting; rather, they will be offered appropriate alternatives to resolving disputes. Any students, however, involved in a physical altercation may find themselves charged with a Category III offense namely, "Violent behavior which creates a substantial danger to persons or property." These students, based on a thorough investigation, may be suspended to the Board of Education with the recommendation that they be expelled from school. Additionally, students involved in fights may be charged by Baltimore County police. This policy will be followed in cases of student violence. The policy will be applied consistently, without regard to the race, sex, or religious beliefs of a student.

The Catonsville and Arbutus communities have been very supportive of this effort to provide all children with a safe and orderly environment. No issue is more important to our success. We are committed to teaching young people that problems can and must be solved in a non-violent manner.

Catonsville High School—as all high schools in Baltimore County—has a school resource officer assigned as a full time staff member. Officer Sundia Gaynor, of the Wilkens Precinct, is the CHS school resource officer. He works with students, parents, teachers, and administrators to preserve Catonsville High School's safe and orderly environment. Security cameras have been installed at Catonsville High School and will help us monitor the school's interior and exterior.

SCHOOLWIDE INTERIM REPORTS TO BE ISSUED

Catonsville High School will continue to issue an interim report to every student. This report will have an update of student progress for every course the student is taking; all four subjects will be listed on the same report. These reports will be mailed to parents/guardians at the halfway point of every quarter. The students will also receive a copy of their interim in homeroom.

I look forward to a great 2009-2010 school year. Students, I urge you to become active in Catonsville High School life. Students, we are enthusiastic about the array of extracurricular activities offered—plan to join one or more of our teams, clubs, and organizations. Parents, we strongly encourage you to become involved as well. Join the **PTSA**, become a member of the **Sports Boosters Club**, and never hesitate to stop by to talk to me about school issues. Please check the enclosed CHS calendar and be sure to attend ***Back to School Night*** on **Thursday, September 10th at 7:00pm**. Catonsville High School enjoys an outstanding reputation. Our tradition of excellence has been built upon outstanding student achievement, a dedicated and committed staff, and strong parental and community support.

I look forward to seeing you in August.

Sincerely,

Deborah Bittner
Principal