

Division of Operations

Opening Windows and Doors

To: All Staff

From: Scott W. Washington
Chief Operating Officer

The Howard County Public School System is committed to promoting safety and wellness for its children and employees. Therefore, keeping all windows and doors closed for safety and for the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to perform correctly is essential.

As part of our procedures to manage risk at a system level, please be mindful of the following:

- Opened windows and doors allow pests to enter the building, including dangerous ones like wasps and bees. When propped open, birds, bats, rodents, and snakes may enter opened windows and exterior doors.
- Opened windows and doors during the spring and summer months can inadvertently introduce unfiltered, unconditioned outdoor air into the building, which may contain grass, pollen, fungi, and mold. Additionally, this can negatively affect occupants with allergies and induce asthma.

The HVAC systems serving HCPSS buildings have air filters that trap allergens and pollutants, preventing them from entering occupied areas. Therefore, outdoor air ventilation should not be provided through open windows and doors. All required outdoor air ventilation is provided through the HVAC systems. Additionally, open windows and doors can also create the following conditions that are detrimental to the indoor environment:

- Elevated indoor air relative humidity and the risk for humidity mold.
- Drafts, undesirable air patterns within classrooms, and changes to the building air balance.
- Inability for the HVAC systems to maintain the design space cooling and heating setpoints.

The Office of Safety & Security requires that all exterior/perimeter doors and windows remain closed and secure. Maintaining a secure perimeter minimizes opportunities for people who do not belong in the building to gain access, which helps prevent potential incidents. Additionally, when a door is opened, a staff member must monitor the access through it so it can be closed immediately. These procedures will assist with the safety of students and staff while they are in HCPSS facilities.

We hope you find these procedures easy to follow. If you have any questions regarding this Circular, please do not hesitate to call the Office of the Chief Operating Officer at 410-313-1550.

SWW/PvG/vw