

COMMON CORE BILLS
MAJOR PROGRESS

YOUR PENSION
SESSION UPDATE

MSEA ELECTION
WHO'S YOUR LEADER?

ACTIONLINE

The Magazine of the Maryland State Education Association Volume 14 Issue 4 April 2014

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
Your students and colleagues

SPECIAL FEATURE ▶

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The reality for LGBTQ—lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning—kids remains one where bullying and harassment are commonplace. For LGBTQ educators, roadblocks to conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity persist.

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A PROMISING HEADLINE

greeted educators on the *Baltimore Sun's* front page on February 26: "State to seek delay in teacher rating plan: Switch to Common Core raises fairness concern." MSEA has long pushed for a moratorium on counting state standardized test scores in evaluations and it's just common sense that a new, unproven, and unvalidated assessment—PARCC—does not belong in teacher evaluations. The proposed delay would cover the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.



The state sought this delay through its recent Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver extension, spurred by the U.S. Department of Education's (USDE) program to allow states to apply for waivers to avoid failed No Child Left Behind accountability policies. Those policies set untenable goals and punished schools for failing to reach them.

Unfortunately, USDE and state departments of education have used these waivers to force states to adopt policies—particularly on evaluations—that are simply flawed. Maryland's waiver is no exception, committing to the use of test scores for 20% of a teacher's evaluation and for high-stakes decisions beginning in the 2016-17 school year.

It's alarming. There is no research that links using state tests in evaluations with improved teaching or learning, only red flags. And Maryland law is clear: local school systems and educators' associations develop and mutually agree upon the specific criteria of the local's evaluation model, including what student growth measures are incorporated and how they are weighted. There is no requirement that the state's standardized assessment be used in locally developed evaluation models.

MSEA has pushed back hard on this issue. Legislation making its way through the General Assembly (see pp. 4-5) could stop MSDE and USDE from using the waiver process to get around state law, and ensure that state test scores do not impact high-stakes personnel decisions for at least the next two years. We're committed to getting this right. We want our evaluations dictated by common sense and Maryland law, not USDE and MSDE.

Betty H. Waller
MSEA PRESIDENT

Watch Betty's video at marylandeducators.org/aldigital
Contact Betty at bweller@mseane.org

COMMON SENSE for **COMMON CORE**

Landmark Common Core Bills Pass Maryland General Assembly



If you provide the resources I need to teach the standards, not only will I teach them, my students will perform well. But don't say, "This is what we want and our students will perform," then give them a test on unrelated content that requires computers we don't have. Where's the trust? Give us the resources and I will give you the results.

—Margot Savoy
Middle School
Language Arts Teacher
Charles County

We did it! The General Assembly passed MSEA's package of education reform legislation—Common Sense for Common Core—proof that your advocacy made a huge impact on legislators. These bills can help us finally put some common sense back into Maryland's implementation of Common Core, PARCC, and evaluations.

Here's the short version of the win: there's a moratorium on counting test scores in your evaluation until at least the 2016-17 school year; a new workgroup will address problems with the implementation of Common Core and new evaluation models; and legislators will now have oversight to help prevent the state and federal departments of education from unilaterally mandating what goes in your evaluation. Now all that's left is for Gov. O'Malley to sign the bills into law.

"The amount of pressure, work, and stress that's been

placed on educators this year is ridiculous," said MSEA President Betty Weller. "We needed to find legislative solutions that said enough is enough and that helped get these reforms right for educators and students."

"Every educator reflects on their practice and determines how they can improve," said delegate and teacher Eric Luedtke (D-Montgomery). "It's foolish to think that we don't need to do the same as a state. There are clearly many shortcomings to the implementation process, and we need to shed light on them and address them so we can get this right."

YOUR EVALUATION

Key bills on the agenda were House Bill 1167 and Senate Bill 676. "These bills ensure that state test scores cannot count in evaluations until at least the 2016-17 school year," said Weller. "One of our top priorities has been to establish a moratorium on counting test scores in evaluations, and legislators overwhelmingly agreed."

"It makes no sense at all to evaluate our educators on not yet valid or aligned PARCC test scores," said bill sponsor Sen. Nancy King (D-Montgomery).

"Teachers and principals shouldn't have to look over their shoulders worrying whether bad data will impact their job security."

This legislation also makes it even more evident that it is the local school system and association that develop evaluation systems—not the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). That's what it says in the Education Reform Act of 2010, but it's not the way MSDE has acted. Now, local autonomy needed to develop, sustain, and protect outstanding evaluation systems—like Montgomery County's nationally recognized Peer Assistance and Review program—will be further re-inforced. "We needed this bill because MSDE is continuing its attempts to force all locals to include PARCC scores as 20% of evaluations," Weller said.

HB 1167 and SB 676 passed both the House and Senate chambers by overwhelming, bipartisan votes.

INCREASING EDUCATOR INPUT

The second bill of the Common Sense for Common Core legislative package—House Bill 1164—creates a Common Core

CALENDAR

April 14-20 | Week of the Young Child Early childhood education pays off. That's why MSEA made a case for Senate Bill 332, which includes a \$4.3 million grant program to expand pre-K programs in low income areas. But that's just a drop in the bucket of what universal pre-K will cost. Funding remains an issue for an initiative that we know works.



April 22 | Earth Day
How many Earths does it take to support your habits? Find out using the animated Ecological Footprint Calculator at earthday.org. Surf through the site for videos (don't miss Jaden Smith's video on The Canopy Project), the Green Schools Leadership Center, and Common Core-friendly inter-disciplinary lessons about climate change.



workgroup. MSEA will have representatives on the workgroup to assure that educators' voices and experiences are heard loud and clear as the group reviews the professional development needs and technology gaps necessary to successfully implement the new standards and administer PARCC.

"Common Core's promise remains, but as we implement the standards we are seeing many areas that lack resources or any acknowledgement of the unintended consequences on students and educators," said Weller. "We'll make sure the workgroup addresses member concerns and recommends real solutions that address shortcomings rather than paper over them."

Included among the areas the workgroup would examine are:

- ▶ How Common Core and PARCC affect students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from backgrounds of poverty
- ▶ How local school systems are including teachers in discussions around improving Common Core implementation

▶ How new evaluation systems are impacting school systems' abilities to implement Common Core

The workgroup would submit its findings and report to the governor, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly by the end of this year. Their report will help legislators as they consider future legislation and education funding. At press time, HB 1164 had passed both chambers and minor differences were likely to be resolved in conference committee.

RECLAIMING EDUCATION REFORM

House Bill 1001 and Senate Bill 910, sponsored by Del. Sheila Hixson (D-Montgomery) and Sen. Richard Madaleno (D-Montgomery), protect educators by giving the General Assembly oversight for future Elementary and Secondary Education Act waivers. With this law, the Legislative Policy Committee, a bipartisan group of senators and delegates in leadership positions, will be in place to review and respond to any future waivers submitted by MSDE.

The complicated waiver process was created by the U.S. Department of Education

(USDE) as a way for states to avoid the ineffective and dispiriting labeling and consequences of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). However, USDE has exchanged freedom from NCLB accountability measures for commitments to their own priorities—including the rushed implementation of evaluations that include test scores.

In her testimony supporting the House bill, MSEA Vice President Cheryl Bost said: "In MSDE's pursuits of relief from No Child Left Behind, they have submitted waivers that fail to conform to Maryland's Education Reform Act of 2010 and commit school districts to a rushed reform timeline." No votes were cast in opposition to these bills.

"Maryland's public schools have long been a national leader and, thanks to the General Assembly, Maryland is now a national leader for how a state can come together and help students, educators, and schools get the necessary time, flexibility, and resources to get these major changes right," said MSEA President Weller. "I look forward to standing beside the governor when he signs these much-needed bills into law."



Our Common Sense for Common Core legislation is critical. Local school systems will have an opportunity to slow down the CCSS to ensure that they and the new curriculum are being implemented properly. And, it will mean the curriculum and the assessments are aligned so that teachers and students have the best opportunities for success.

**—Ted Payne
MSEA Director
Carroll County**

More content, videos, and resources at marylandeducators.org/aldigital



April 30 | "I Cannot Tell a Lie"

Let's be honest—George Washington probably did tell a lie or two, but that quotation isn't one of them. The myth spread after an early biographer used it to illustrate one of Washington's many exemplary character traits: honesty. Celebrate National Honesty Day with a discussion of honesty, integrity, loyalty, and fairness.

MAY Discover and celebrate the culture, traditions, and history of your Asian American and Pacific Islander students. In the past decade, student enrollment from this demographic, which includes China, Hawaii, Japan, Korea, The Philippines, Vietnam, and the Indian sub-continent—India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan—has doubled in many of Maryland's counties.



TRAINING CADRES PREPPING TO LAUNCH PROGRAM IN YOUR COUNTY

This isn't news: the implementation of Common Core has been a disaster in Maryland. In fact, we gave it an F- in the December issue of *ActionLine*.

Last fall, more than 85 percent of MSEA members said that significant challenges remained in their building to understand and implement the Common Core State Standards. That's in part because efforts by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and its Educator Effectiveness Academies saw limited success in providing the training educators need to approach Common Core with expertise and confidence.

Now, using a \$100,000 NEA Great Public Schools grant, MSEA, in partnership with MSDE and with training support from NEA, has created professional development focused on improving educators' understanding of the standards and the pedagogical shift it means to their practice. MSEA's More From the Core training started in March, when MSEA Common Core Leadership Cadre trainers—two educators from each county—met in Annapolis for a two-day session with MSDE and NEA.

Each local cadre will have expertise in Common Core pedagogy and their county's Common Core-based curriculum and resources so that professional development can be targeted to the needs and requirements of each school district. Based on data, cadres will customize delivery to their local districts, whether through offsite workshops, webinars, or online options.

How to use MSEA's More From the Core training

- Look for More From the Core training announcements from your local association for sessions this spring or at the start of the 2014-15 school year.
- Attend, then add your More From the Core certificate to your portfolio to show self-directed professional development.
- Plan to attend even if you're not in a tested area. Problem-solving, critical thinking, and evidence-based response are all essential student skills in CCSS.

CREATING INFORMED, STRATEGIC SLOs FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The inclusion of student learning objectives (SLOs) in new teacher and principal evaluations offer educators a welcome alternative from using high-stakes testing as the only measure of student growth. However, ensuring that the promising SLOs are firmly understood and in place has been a problem. Once again, lack of foresight in the implementation of reforms has cost educators time, confidence, and opportunity. Without critical professional development—training on writing SLOs, pre- and post-assessments, and rubrics—educators remain in a difficult position to take advantage of their promise.

Maryland is among eight states to receive a three-year NEA Great Public Schools grant to support training on SLOs. Those states—Idaho, Maryland, New Hampshire, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, and Wyoming—and their SLO training teams are meeting April 13-17 to share resources, ideas, and successes and to establish the foundations for their programs. Maryland's team, which includes President Betty Weller, Vice President Cheryl Bost, MSEA members, MSDE SLO experts, and MSEA staff, will lead the project, building and training a cadre of two trainers from each county to deliver the workshops and serve as go-to SLO experts whom teachers can count on for advice and support. Maryland's grant of \$423,000 supports cadre training, local training, events, and materials.

"Capacity was a problem for MSDE—there just wasn't enough time, and there weren't enough trainers to get to everyone," said Weller. "Our strategy means that high-quality training—supported by MSEA, MSDE, and NEA—will be available in every district. We'll create a training cadre that is expert by MSDE's standards and also skilled in local SLO resources and expectations. We'll deliver training that aligns with both state and local requirements so there will be no gaps."

When to expect MSEA's SLO training

Local cadre trainers will be trained during MSEA's Summer Leadership Retreat on July 28-30. They'll hit the ground in each local at the start of the school year to deliver support to members on SLOs.

CALENDAR

May 3 | MSEA Teacher Appreciation Day Meet up at MSEA's Annapolis headquarters 10 a.m.-4 p.m. for treats and refreshments, and visit with MSEA leaders and colleagues. Then take to the streets for discounts in shops and restaurants throughout historic downtown. Make a weekend of it—special hotel rates for members available! Learn more at marylandeducators.org/TeacherAppreciation2014.



May 17 | National Bike to Work Day Communities across Maryland will hold rallies, parties, pit stops, and other fun events to celebrate cycling to work on Friday, May 16. Bike to Work Day is a great way to rediscover biking and kick start a fun everyday transportation option. Will you bike to work? Share with us on facebook.com/marylandeducators/



HAUNTING OUR HALLS IDENTIFYING PREDATORS AND VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

May 5 | Prince George's County Educators' Association | 5 p.m.

You can't say it doesn't happen in your city or town, because it probably does. And increasingly, it reaches into our schools as well. Human sex trafficking—including children and teen sex trafficking—is real and it's a threat to Maryland's families and students.

On May 5, MSEA's Human and Civil Rights Committee is hosting *Haunting our Hallways: Identifying Predators and Victims of Human Trafficking*, featuring Deena Graves. Graves

is the founder of Traffick911, an award-winning organization in Fort Worth, Texas that provides training, resources, and awareness campaigns. In 2013, Traffick911 opened the first of several small safe houses to be built on a 168-acre campus where victims of sex trafficking under the age of 18 can flourish in a homelike setting.

"Schools are prime recruiting grounds," says Graves. "We recently had an intelligent, high-performing 13-year-old girl who was overheard by a predator complaining about

her parents and her cell phone restriction at an after-school sports event. The predator had become a regular at sports activities and was assumed to be a relative of a student. The predator enticed the girl to his car with the promise of something her parents had prohibited and for the next 10 days, she was sexually assaulted by more men than she can remember.

"This is happening in schools and awareness is the very best defense," Graves adds. "Our training equips educators with what to look for and what to do about it."

The Women's Law Center of Maryland described our state as a "goldmine" for human trafficking because of its proximity to

several large East Coast cities and its major highways, airports, and waterways. Graves's Traffick911 website says that with a \$32 billion a year profit, trafficking is the fastest-growing crime in the world. The United Nations says 99% of victims are never rescued.

Stand up for the most vulnerable victims of sex trafficking—learn more about child and teen sex trafficking and how educators like you can help. Register today at marylandeducators.org/HauntingOurHallways.

Learn more about sex trafficking, and download resources and fact sheets, in the digital edition of *ActionLine*, marylandeducators.org/aldigital.

MSEA DIGITAL AD CAMPAIGN TARGETS LEGISLATORS TO SUPPORT COMMON SENSE

With two weeks left in the legislative session, MSEA launched a targeted digital ad campaign to help push our Common Sense for Common Core bills over the finish line.

The ads were geographically targeted to the State House in Annapolis, so legislators couldn't miss the ads' message: improve Common Core for students and educators. To increase grassroots activism, ads customized to educators and parents were included in the campaign and linked to marylandeducators.org and ready-to-send emails to their legislators.



More content, videos, and resources at marylandeducators.org/aldigital

May 30 | International Jazz Day

"Jazz has the power to make men forget their differences and come together," said music legend Quincy Jones. "Jazz is the personification of transforming overwhelmingly negative circumstances into freedom, friendship, hope, and dignity." Learn more at jazzday.com.



International Jazz Day

May 29 | Learn About Composting Day

Compost finally gets the respect it deserves with a whole day celebrating its earthy goodness. Why compost? Food scraps top all other materials that clog urban landfills, and landfills produce the carbon monoxide and methane gas that's heating up the earth. Plus, it's really good for your garden. Get the basics at gardenorganic.org.uk.



TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS AT THE SPRING RA

Elected officials both statewide and at home cast votes that affect your job, your contract, your safety, and your school funding, but they all depend on your vote on Election Day. That's why endorsing candidates and working to get them elected is so important.

At MSEA's Spring Representative Assembly (RA), delegates voted to recommend Senator Brian Frosh in the race for Maryland's next attorney general. The endorsement followed a process that included a candidate questionnaire, interviews, and remarks before the RA. Eighty-six percent of delegates voted in support of the endorsement. Delegates also voted to endorse Comptroller Peter Franchot for a third term.

In his interview, Frosh strongly stated his opposition to MSDE's attempts to unilaterally mandate that local teacher and principal evaluation models include 20% state standardized tests. "There is no such mandate in statute," Frosh said. "And the superintendent cannot override an agreement between the school system and the exclusive employee representative." We can protect local evaluation models when the attorney general understands and upholds education law.

MEMBER ORGANIZING An important Supreme Court decision expected in June may affect fair share agreements both locally and across the country. Fair share ensures that all educators cover the costs of negotiating and enforcing their contracts—services that protect and support their jobs—whether or not they are members. The Supreme Court case was initiated by the National Right to Work Committee, an organization with the goal of destroying unions.

The two-year budget, with \$5 and \$10 dues increases, that delegates approved was conservatively prepared assuming the outcome would affect MSEA's ability to collect those fees. "Hopefully the Supreme Court decision won't affect us," said MSEA Treasurer Bill Fisher. "After much discussion, delegates made sure that should

the decision support fair share, the second year dues increase of \$10 could be revisited at this year's MSEA convention in October."

"Thanks to the mindful stewardship of our budget committee and delegates, MSEA continues to protect and defend public education, educators, and students," said President Betty Weller, "while being supported by dues that rank 37th in the country—well below the national average."

TAKING THE PULSE OF THE DELEGATES Chris Lloyd, a National Board Certified middle school career and technology teacher and vice president of the Montgomery County Education Association, moderated a special session with delegates discussing—and texting—their opinions of high profile ed reform issues and the threat of privatizing ESP jobs.

Lloyd, along with facilitators Rowena Shurn (Prince George's County) and Marilyn Green (Kent County), received texts from delegates on the topics at hand, which were splashed on the RA's big screens:

On the impacts of privatization of ESP jobs ... "Loss of community involvement in the building" "Nameless, faceless workers who take shortcuts" "System failure" "Union busting"

On what makes an effective evaluation of an educator ... "Effectively trained and consistent administrator using a holistic approach" "Less of a gotcha and more sharing of knowledge" "Evidence of goals to accomplish student growth but not based on 100% achievement"

On what student data should be used in an SLO ... "Pre-test and post-test data using apples-to-apples tests. Post-test before May should not be valid." "Accurate classroom data" "Any relevant classroom data that is connected to your curriculum"

"Our discussion was an engaging and innovative way for members to express their views on three significant professional issues," said Lloyd. "It was a wonderful way to use a combination of technology and face-to-face conversation."

CALENDAR

May 17 | Armed Forces Day
Thank you, soldiers!



Lead, Organize, Vote, Educate!

How will you influence the outcome of 383 elections across Maryland? You're the very best messenger to organize voters to support pro-public education candidates. Join MSEA's army of volunteers and help elect the best candidates for strong schools, strong contracts, and a strong MSEA—we can't do it without you!



marylandeducators.org/volunteer

Mark Your Calendar

for days of actions on April 26, May 10, and May 17. Sign-up to volunteer at marylandeducators.org/volunteer.

MSEA's Latest Podcast | Why the MSA?

Why did Maryland's students take an outdated test that didn't match the new Common Core curriculum? Hear how educators and students at Samuel P. Massie Academy in Prince George's County prepared for the test. marylandeducators.org/podcast

Minimum Wage

True or False? Maryland has the **nation's highest median income,**



but 21 states—**all poorer than Maryland**—have a higher minimum wage.

TRUE

FALSE The minimum wage in Maryland is enough to get by comfortably. Maryland still has the **bare federal minimum** of \$7.25 per hour—or only \$15,000 per year.

Passing the Raise Maryland Bill—which lifts the state minimum wage to **\$10.10 per hour**—would bring half a million low-wage workers and their families out of poverty.



TRUE

Early in the General Assembly session, Governor O'Malley introduced legislation—**Senate Bill 331 and House Bill 295**—to raise the state's minimum wage to \$10.10 by 2016, and index it to the cost of living so it doesn't lose value over time. The measure



nor O'Malley introduced legislation—**Senate Bill 331 and House**

also included a raise for tipped workers, increasing their pay from 50% to 70% of the minimum wage.



This, said MSEA, is legislation badly needed for all hourly employees, their children—those still in school and on their own—and their families. **Why is MSEA so concerned about the minimum wage in Maryland?**



MSEA lobbyist Bob Rankin told legislators why in testimony to the House of Delegates: “Teachers cannot teach a child who is so hungry their ability to think suffers. **Teachers cannot teach a child who isn't there because they have sicknesses that drag on due to lack of healthcare. Teachers cannot teach an empty desk** because the child's family is continuously moving to find work.”



But, of course, it's not only students and their families who need the raise. Maryland

educators, both **teachers and ESP, often work second jobs to support their families** or to save for purchases like a home or to pay for college.



Delegates voted to raise the wage to **\$10.10 by 2017** but cut pay for tipped workers, ignoring the governor's recommendation. Tipped workers currently receive 50% of the current minimum wage—\$3.63—and now that wage is frozen so as earnings go up for other hourly employees, tipped

workers, mostly women and young people, are left behind.



Friends of public education have taken a strong position on raising the wage. Here's what they had to say: Senator Brian Frosh—

“Since this campaign began last



January [2014], more than 23,000 people have signed a petition calling for a higher minimum wage. Lawmakers have received **nearly 8,000**

personal letters—not form letters—from constituents sharing their stories about the difficulties they face

earning the lowest wages.”

Delegate Maggie McIntosh—



“The minimum wage was **\$4.25 when I was elected** so it's been raised a few times since

then. I don't recall mass job layoffs or waves of businesses shuttered because the federal government or General Assembly acted to put more money in workers' pockets so they can **take care of themselves and their families.**”



Delegate Sheila Hixson—“In Montgomery County, we've set our minimum wage even higher than this proposal, up to **\$11.50 by 2017**. However, just because our county acted to raise the wage doesn't mean that every county should set their own rate.”

At press time, Senate Bill 331 was still in the Finance Committee with senators negotiating a compromise between the House and Senate versions.

Tony and Pam Jones

Carpentry and Culinary Arts Teachers
North Point High School, Charles County



1 CHEF'S KNIFE AND SHARPENER We use a chef's knife to mince, slice, and chop vegetables, make expert cuts called julienne, brunoise, and chiffonade, and slice and disjoint meats. The sharpening steel is essential for clean and efficient cuts.

2 MANDOLINE Students learn to slice, julienne, and create decorative cuts using a mandoline.

3 CLASSIC SAUTÉ PAN A must for expert pan-frying, sautéing delicate vegetables, and deglazing the pan for rich, flavorful sauces.

4 THE CIRCULAR SAW The most important saw for a framing carpenter and the first power tool my students use. I tell students that they can build a house with their tool belt and this saw.

5 FRAMING SQUARE Used in our advanced program, when students learn how to build rafters and stairs.

6 TOOL BELT My students love putting their tool belt on for the first time.

7 HAMMER I bought this hammer when I first started teaching. It's helped to teach many kids how to drive a nail.

INSIDE MSEA WITH DAVID HELFMAN



Your pension has been in the news a lot recently, as lower than anticipated revenues have led lawmakers to look at pension funding as a means to bridge the funding gap.

What's it mean for you? First, rewind to 2000. The pension fund was 101.2% funded.

By 2011, it was only 64.7% funded. Why? First,

the stock market crash of 2008 took a big chunk out of the fund. And the General Assembly's decision in 2001 to adopt the corridor system, which allowed the state to make less than the employer's full contribution, had further depleted the funding status. In 2011, the General Assembly addressed this by cutting benefits, increasing the employee contribution rate from 5% to 7%, and planning to add an extra annual \$300 million into the system to improve the funded status.

In 2013, the state eliminated the corridor system and committed to paying the annually required contribution. Fully funding the annual contribution protects pension benefits for everyone in the system; the add-on payment will help reach the 80% funded status faster.

After more challenging budget projections this year, the General Assembly considered several options, including deep cuts to K-12 funding. In the end, legislators passed a budget that funds the full annual contribution of more than \$1.5 billion, and that limits this year's add-on payment to \$100 million.

At the same time, the state committed to annual contributions plus add-on payments that grow to \$300 million in five years and remain at that level until the funded status of the system reaches 85%.

MSEA worked hard to protect pension benefits for the future and school funding for this year, as well as ensuring that the state keeps its word on making the add-on payment. While we are disappointed that this year's supplemental payment is only \$100 million, we are encouraged that our advocacy forced the state to a better long-term funding commitment and keeps Maryland as the only state that makes any supplemental payment beyond the annually required contribution. We must continue to be tireless advocates to protect our defined benefit pension system and to guarantee that promised benefits will be there for current and future retirees.

A WORD FROM MSEA'S LEGAL TEAM

What Does Tenure Mean?

In Maryland, tenure is granted to teachers who successfully complete a probationary period of three years with the same school system.

During the probationary period, a teacher's contract may be non-renewed for any reason—or no reason—if notice is provided by May 1 of any of the first three years. If a probationary teacher would like to resign, notice must also be given by May 1 of any year.

Tenure and Due Process

When a teacher achieves tenure, they are guaranteed “due process” protections, but that doesn't mean they can't be dismissed. Due process is the minimum procedural requirements that a school district must satisfy when dismissing a tenured teacher.

At a due process hearing, a superintendent must prove the charges against the teacher, and the teacher has an opportunity to present and cross-examine witnesses in response. For those who are MSEA members, an MSEA attorney who is an expert in education and labor law provides representation during all events giving rise to the charge(s). If an incident occurs that you feel may require such advocacy and/or representation, your first step is always to contact your school association representative and your MSEA UniServ representative.

Tenure Portability

The 2010 Education Reform Act, which changed the probationary period for tenure from two to three years, also made tenure portable from one Maryland county to another. Now tenured teachers can carry their established tenure with them between counties if they have a satisfactory performance evaluation and there is a break in service of no more than one year. Then, so long as the teacher meets the new district's performance standards at the end of the first year, tenure may be granted in the new county.

Questions? Contact your MSEA UniServ Director or MSEA's Center for Legal Affairs. For more information, visit marylandeducators.org/LegalAid.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION & GENDER IDENTITY

YOUR STUDENTS AND COLLEAGUES

NEA WAS AMONG THE SPONSORS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN FOUNDATION'S INAUGURAL TIME TO THRIVE CONFERENCE IN FEBRUARY. READ THE CAMPAIGN'S GROUNDBREAKING REPORT "GROWING UP LGBT IN AMERICA" AT MARYLANDEDUCATORS.ORG/ALDIGITAL.

FEELING LIKE YOU LEAD TWO SEPARATE LIVES. LIVING IN CONSTANT FEAR OF NAME-CALLING, BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AND EVEN ASSAULT. LOOKING IN THE MIRROR AND FEELING LIKE THE PERSON YOU SAW THERE WASN'T REALLY YOU. WONDERING IF ANYONE ELSE WILL EVER UNDERSTAND.

That's the reality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning—LGBTQ—kids. Even in 2014.

And for LGBT educators, *even in 2014*, the situation remains difficult in their classrooms, with their administrators and supervisors, and with parents.

What's the problem? There's an anti-bullying program in nearly every school. Gay marriage is legal in Maryland. The state just passed the Fairness for All Marylanders Act, which bans discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Turn on the TV and you might see ads from the 90-year-old Honey Maid graham cracker company which include two dads with their new baby in what *USA Today* called a "new, multicolored, multisexual world of advertising."

But in public schools (and often at home) sexuality seems to still be in the closet and that means LGBTQ kids are left with fears and questions that the adults in their lives often just aren't ready to talk about with them. They turn to their accepting peers and the internet for information and comfort.

For educators, it means that those who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual may be out to their colleagues, but not students or parents; for those who are transgender, it means hoping for the expert professional development that would support understanding differences in gender identity.

Educators interviewed for this article said there is an odd disconnect between what is happening in the world and what is happening in their school, district, or with parents regarding sexuality and gender identity.

"There's a culture of silence around sexuality in education and I think part of that is based on this antiquated notion that homosexuality, bisexuality, and gender identity is about sex, and talking about sex with kids is inappropriate and uncomfortable," said Todd, a 29-year-old elementary teacher who came out in high school, but is not out at his school.

"Being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender is about relationships and identity, not sex. I think not focusing on that is a real disservice to kids. A positive, empowering school environment for kids, colleagues, and families would be one that is more explicitly supportive.

"We know the cumulative socializing effect that schools have, and we know that there are LGBTQ students in every class. When we're not sending supportive messages that let them know they are safe and valued, they're internalizing that," Todd added. "This decision not to make a decision is still a decision and misinformation, persistent cultural roadblocks, and lack of commitment on the part of part of public education seem to win out every time."

"We have LGBTQ alliances in the high schools in my district," said Karen, a middle school physical education teacher, "but when we've tried to start one here, we're told that parents wouldn't be receptive. I guess they think middle school students don't have a sexual identity."

Research has found that's simply not the case. More and more students are identifying as LGBTQ in middle school. The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) says those students experience more verbal and physical harassment than LGBTQ high school students, and significantly more physical assaults. And, GLSEN added, most middle schools lack the resources and supports that can improve LGBTQ students' experiences and mitigate the negative effects of a hostile environment, such as Gay-Straight Alliances and supportive educators.

Without open dialogue and support about sexual orientation and gender identity in schools, educators don't feel supported much more than students. Karen says that stereotypes like that of the lesbian physical education teacher persist. That feels like a threat to her relationships with parents, so she's out to her colleagues and administration but not her students.

“WE’VE TRIED TO START [AN LGBTQ ALLIANCE] HERE, BUT WE’RE TOLD THAT PARENTS WOULDN’T BE RECEPTIVE. I GUESS THEY THINK MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS DON’T HAVE A SEXUAL IDENTITY.” —LISA

“Parents still have the final say in communities and from a PE perspective, there’s the locker room issue. If I’m straight, I’m just in the locker room; if I’m a lesbian, I’m suddenly a sexual person in the locker room.”

“That there’s part of my identity that someone could take objection to and make my professional life difficult makes me feel vulnerable,” Todd says. “I don’t hear real strong advocacy about it from unions or from the school system.”

Bisexuality can be confusing and sometimes simply dismissed by straight people. More people are coming out as bisexual ... but not in school. “At school, I don’t think I have the same emotional need to come out as other LGBT people,” said James, a bisexual high school teacher. “Bisexuality affords me a little more cover. I can maintain a public face that isn’t a complete lie to myself.”

Even as very serious issues of LGBTQ bullying persist in schools, it is perhaps the issues of gender identity that are the most challenging and painful for transgender students and educators, as well as for their peers. A transgender person is one whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth; this realization is often accompanied by a traumatic path of discovery and self-acceptance. Suicide attempt rates for transgender people is an alarming 41%—nine times the national average. For youths who have been bullied, the rate is 51%.

ActionLine talked to Sam, a young transgender man and 2013 graduate from a high-ranking central Maryland suburban high school, and Caitlin, a transgender educator in a suburban high school in her early 40s. Though their ages differ by more than 20 years, their experiences are strikingly similar—confusion, rejection, self-loathing, self-harming, and taking the steps they needed to be truly themselves.

For both Sam and Caitlin, confusion at their assigned gender (their gender at birth) began at three or four years old. Caitlin’s first humiliation came when she tried to line up in the girls line in a kindergarten class and was told she couldn’t. “I then realized that

I would need to hide who I was. ... In middle school, when hiding became more difficult, I was attacked, beaten, and sexually assaulted. I thought it was my fault.”

Sam said that he didn’t know that transgender people existed “until I discovered it online when I was a young teen, and then I knew that what I was feeling was gender dysphoria. I was convinced I was a freak and that my parents would reject me.” Sam’s self-harming, which began when he was just 11, escalated and he was hospitalized. “I realized I couldn’t keep living the way I was, pretending to be female, or I’d end up dead, so I started trying to change stuff.”

“My high school drama teacher knew something was wrong,” Caitlin said, “and during my study period, she would give me the key to the props room and I would lock myself in. I would put on the women’s costumes and be myself for that period. ... That was the only thing that kept me from committing suicide.” Caitlin later twice attempted to take her life.

In high school, Sam started to wear the clothes he wanted, cut his hair shorter hoping his parents wouldn’t notice, and changed his name on Facebook. “It was really hard for a while. A lot of people harassed me at school and in public, but I knew I felt better about myself and that’s all that mattered to me.” But the treatment Sam received from teachers and counselors at school is shocking. “I found very little support from counselors and teachers in high school. I experienced a few teachers who made very cruel jokes about gay and trans people. As the only visibly queer person in most of my classes, it was really humiliating.”

The National Transgender Discrimination Survey illustrates the alarming extent of transgender harassment in Maryland: 81% of respondents who were out as trans while in grades K-12 indicated that they had been harassed on the basis of their gender identity; 38% reported that the harassment escalated to physical assault; and 16% reported sexual violence. According to data from GLSEN, those who are able to persevere had significantly lower GPAs, were more likely to miss school out of concern for their safety,

“BEING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, OR TRANSGENDER IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS AND IDENTITY, NOT SEX. I THINK NOT FOCUSING ON THAT IS A REAL DISSERVICE TO KIDS. A POSITIVE, EMPOWERING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR KIDS, COLLEAGUES, AND FAMILIES WOULD BE ONE THAT IS MORE EXPLICITLY SUPPORTIVE.” —TODD

and were less likely to plan on continuing their education. Sam was in and out of school from 6th–10th grades with emotional- and anxiety-related illnesses.

Caitlin struggled with her gender identity through college and grad school and began her teaching career as a male. But in the past five years, her experience transitioning has been difficult. Her middle school students just wanted to know where she shopped, but for the adults, the process was very, very complicated—even the effort to change her name took two years. As she styled herself as a woman, yet was unable to be honest with her students about what was happening, they “got a bizarre picture of what was going on.” Human resources said they didn’t want a trans person teaching at middle school, so she transferred to a high school.

At the high school, Caitlin had been promised a staff diversity awareness program that would specifically address transgender people so her colleagues would have some background about gender identity. Five years later, there still has been no training for staff or students. “Before my first day, I talked to counselors and suggested that someone talk to my colleagues and students. They said, ‘That’s a bad idea—we’ll be taking your power away from you.’”

“Staff members and faculty members refused to gender me properly—even in front of students. Parents misgendered me in meetings and counselors would not correct them. Teachers told students that they thought what I was was wrong.” That was just three years ago, and while more staff members have become increasingly accepting, Caitlin is still abused by students in the hallways.

Sam is out to everyone now. “I knew it would be so hard to explain to everyone, but people were asking questions. I wanted to start hormones and I knew people would notice that. So I started hormones and started living as male full time. It felt like that’s when my life actually started. Now I’m living as my real self and I’ve never been happier.”

For so many LGBTQ students and LGBTQ educators, life is a daily struggle. Even as our society shifts towards greater awareness and acceptance, it’s obvious that across-the-board equity, compassion,

NOTES FROM A TRANS KID

✧ Schools need to give trans kids access to gender neutral bathrooms and locker rooms, or the one that matches their gender identity, without making a big deal out of it. My school refused to give me access to the only gender neutral bathroom in the building, which was in the nurse’s office. I talked to my counselor and she spoke to the staff in the nurse’s office who said I could use the bathroom without a problem. But when I tried to go use the bathroom I was questioned by the staff every time, and they sometimes refused to give me access.

✧ Teachers and staff should use the correct name and pronouns as requested by the kids.

✧ For me, the hardest part of school emotionally was being called by the wrong name and gender by teachers and students. Being questioned and harassed by other students about my gender and sexuality was also difficult.

✧ The worst thing was having teachers make jokes in front of the class. Teachers need to know better than to make jokes targeting trans and gay people.

✧ Teachers and counselors should not be sharing information about a student’s trans status with anyone unless it’s ok’d by the kid.

✧ One terrible experience was when a substitute teacher who read me as male accused me of sitting in the wrong seat because they didn’t think my birth name [on the class roster] was me.

—Sam

FIND INTERVIEW EXCERPTS, IMPORTANT RESOURCES, STATISTICS, AND MORE IN THE DIGITAL EDITION OF *ACTIONLINE*, MARYLANDEDUCATORS.ORG/ALDIGITAL

and understanding are still a long way off. But the bravery and candor of students and educators like Sam, Caitlin, Karen, and Todd is helping to pave the way for an easier road for students and educators.

2014 MSEA ELECTION RESULTS

BILL FISHER
Charles County
Treasurer



MSEA's Board of Directors Drives Association Agenda *Six education activists elected to MSEA's Board of Directors*

Newly elected leaders to the MSEA and NEA boards of directors include both veteran and newcomers. Bill Fisher was elected to a second term* as treasurer. Elected to second terms* as directors are Anna Gannon, Ted Payne, and Doug Prouty; joining them as first-time MSEA directors are seasoned state and local activists Doug Lea and Blair Todd. Lea, elected as one of MSEA's three representatives on the NEA Board of Directors, is the first National Board Certified teacher to serve on MSEA's board.

"This is one of the most challenging environments for educators that many of us have experienced. The tsunami of education reforms that we're facing make it all the more important that we elect strong, vocal, and experienced colleagues to advocate for our interests," said President Betty Weller.

"Our board of directors has guided MSEA with the goal of producing results that will make a difference for all Maryland educators and their students. We've strengthened local and statewide advocacy and training to help empower our members, created new regional professional development programs on Common Core and SLOs to provide members with essential professional development at home, and lobbied for policy changes in Annapolis to push back on the tsunami of education reform," Weller added. "I'm proud of what we've done and look forward to working with new and returning board members in the future."

**MSEA officers and directors may serve two consecutive three-year terms. See the current board and their terms at marylandeducators.org.*

MSEA Elects Delegates to the NEA Annual Representative Assembly

MSEA members elected 40 state delegates who will represent MSEA at the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) this summer; another 250 locally elected delegates representing MSEA's 39 local affiliates make up Maryland's RA delegation. They'll join more than 9,000 fellow educators from across the country June 26–July 6 in Denver to discuss the issues that affect public education and set association policy and activities for the year ahead.

More than half of the members in the Howard County Education Association voted in this election—that's why 21 members from the local are on the MSEA delegation to the NEA RA. Why is Howard County so interested in what's happening at the national level? Find out in the digital version at marylandeducators.org/aldigital.

Getting Out the Vote

This year's top voting local teacher associations included the Howard County Education Association, the Education Association of Charles County, the Education Association of St. Mary's County, the Carroll County Education Association, and the Cecil County Classroom Teachers Association. ESP members of the Howard County Education Association, the Allegany County Educational Services Council, the Carroll Association of School Employees, the Garrett County Education Association, and the Classified Employees of St. Mary's County turned out the vote in good numbers.

As your treasurer, my primary job is to oversee the use of your dues, but I also work to encourage members to become involved in their local affiliate and in MSEA. Our officers may be public spokespersons, but it's MSEA members who make things happen.

As an MSEA member and director, I work to educate our legislators on our issues and needs. Please continue to contact me with your ideas!

I am also treasurer of your Fund for Children and Public Education. I want to be able to send our support to the candidates who you know are our friends. In the upcoming primary election, members will make the difference in who will be elected—policymakers who will support you and your students, or those who won't.

NEWLY ELECTED LEADERS SHARE THEIR EDUCATION AGENDAS

ANNA GANNON

Howard County
MSEA Director



Thank you, colleagues, for your support in the recent MSEA election. I am humbled and honored to be able to represent you again. I am encouraged that I can continue to work with MSEA to help promote quality and relevant professional development to all members. MSEA's unique training and professional development opportunities help to grow better educators and education activists. You can be a part of your professional association—support the programs that are offered and invite a colleague who is new to the association or not yet a member. Let's continue to grow a strong MSEA with strong members and new leaders!

DOUG LEA

Howard County
NEA/MSEA Director



As an NEA and MSEA director, it is important to attend to all aspects of our association. Issues such as collective bargaining, working conditions, and employee rights and benefits are cornerstones of our work. However, as the educational landscape evolves, I look forward to focusing on professional issues. Evaluation, professional learning, teacher leadership, collaboration, and improving labor/management relations are issues that impact our daily work as well as the long-term outlook of our profession. I am particularly interested in advocating for the ability of educators to grow into leadership positions without having to leave their classrooms or schools. Our systems should structure opportunities for us to serve the profession while enabling us to maintain our primary roles as educators.

TED PAYNE

Carroll County
MSEA Director



Thank you for re-electing me to the MSEA Board of Directors and for allowing me to continue my advocacy for public education. As you are well aware, we are facing attacks from every direction and we are challenged by issues that affect you in your classroom and at your worksite. I will continue my work to ensure that public education is treated fairly in Annapolis and that our united voice is heard. Let's work together so that our profession continues to be strong and so we can provide the superb educational opportunities every child deserves.

DOUG PROUTY

Montgomery County
MSEA Director



Thank you for re-electing me to MSEA's Board of Directors. I will continue working to ensure that MSEA is proactive in protecting our work with local school systems—ensuring that our evaluation systems are fair, transparent, and are focused on meaningful and timely feedback and structured support. We need to work with the new governor and legislature to keep funding for public education as the state's top priority. We have to work to return common sense into how we implement new curriculum and other major reforms so that these changes don't overwhelm our ability to do what's best for our students. Finally, we need to support local associations to realize concrete increases in salaries and benefits as the economic recovery restores local funding.

BLAIR TODD

Prince George's County
MSEA Director



Thank you to all of my union brothers and sisters across Maryland for electing me as a member of your board of directors. I plan to create more initiatives that will support educators so that we can do our best for Maryland students, including highlighting effective education stakeholders in our state, and pushing for strict legislation that requires local boards of education to honor financial agreements to educators. And, I plan to look for even more ways for MSEA to be at the forefront of education reform through member empowerment and activism. I believe that our union is only as strong as "U and I." Lastly ... funding: I want MSEA to continue to put pressure on our elected officials to make full funding of education the standard.

Find out who is representing MSEA at the NEA RA, including active, administrator, and retired delegates, at marylandeducators.org/msea2014election.



Garnette Hines

Teacher

Interactive Media Production

Easton High School

Talbot County

I BELIEVE the most important skill we can foster in our students is creative problem-solving. When students take classes in the arts or have projects that allow them to work creatively, they learn to think differently and make connections that bridge different subjects. I believe that our students' ability to think outside the box is crucial to their success in fast-growing fields like science and technology.

We offer students the Adobe Creative Suite in our school's interactive media and design program. We challenge and empower them by cultivating the skills they need to create layouts, digital illustrations, websites, animation, short films, interactive media, and games they see and use every day. They're investing in learning that they see as valuable to

their lives and what they will be doing in the future.

My students work with software that barely existed when I was in high school, and as technology continues to change, we learn and grow together. It's not enough for us to simply learn the latest software—students must be prepared to adapt and grow with innovation and change.

The beautiful new Digital Studio at the Art Academy Museum in Easton has given our students even more access to state-of-the-art software. Now younger students can take classes using the same software they'll be using in our program. Easton is a culturally rich community that has made technology and creativity a priority in the public schools—preparing our students to learn, grow, and succeed.

“We challenge and empower them by cultivating the skills they need ... They're investing in learning that they see as valuable to their lives and what they will be doing in the future.”



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