

OUR PROFESSION. OUR VOICE.  
**CONVENTION**

MSEA 2015 ELECTION  
**YOUR GUIDE**



**ANTHONY BROWN**  
FOR MARYLAND GOVERNOR  
*Learn more, p. 6*

# ACTIONLINE

The Magazine of the Maryland State Education Association    Volume 15 Issue 1    October 2014



**THESE TEACHERS ARE TAKING BACK THEIR PROFESSION**

SPECIAL FEATURE

## What's the Bottom Line?

Delivering the PARCC Assessment to Maryland's Students

Visit [marylandeducators.org](http://marylandeducators.org) for MSEA's Board of Directors and local affiliates directory.

## SPECIAL FEATURE ►

# Delivering PARCC

For more than a year, you've been hearing the controversy over the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), the standardized tests that measure student progress. Learn what's up with two of the biggest concerns about PARCC—equity and infrastructure.



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MSEA 2015 ELECTION  
NOMINATION  
GUIDE

# CONT

## 4 UP FRONT

It's Anthony Brown vs. Larry Hogan in this year's gubernatorial race. Don't miss this issue by issue comparison of each candidate's public positions on important education issues. Then meet four energized classroom teachers whose campaigns for public office are putting educators, students, and schools in the spotlight.

## 6 SHORT TAKES

We're bringing the hottest education issues directly to members at the 2014 Convention with free workshops and special events plus lots of fun activities and a fresh new exhibition hall.

## 9 300 WORDS

You can use MDAppleBallot.com to find and research MSEA's recommended pro-public education candidates in your county, district, and statewide. Spread the word and use the site's features to share on Facebook and Twitter.

## 10 TEACHER'S TOOLKIT

Meet Prince George's County third grade teacher Bruce Burks and see the tools he uses to keep his classroom on task and focused.

Get more content, videos,  
and resources at  
[marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL](http://marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL).





# EVENTS

## 11 MSEA DISPATCH

Inside MSEA with Executive Director David Helfman and a word from the legal team about what you can and can't say on the job about political issues and candidates.

## 18 MY TURN

Meet Cecil County's Roberta LaPorte and some of her fellow paraeducators. They all spend their summers supporting children with developmental disabilities at Camp C.A.R.E. in Rising Sun.

### *ORGANIZE, AGITATE, EDUCATE, MUST BE OUR WAR CRY.*

We've all heard the famous quote from Susan B. Anthony. But did you know she was talking about organizing in school districts? The sentence before that famous quote, which she wrote in 1893, reads: "We must organize every school district of every county of each State in which the battle of the ballot for woman is to be fought."



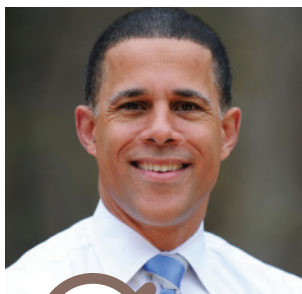
Organizing must be our bread and butter as an association. Local associations are strong when members are organized—educated, engaged, and ready to mobilize. When we use the power of organizing we can win stronger contracts, elect the right candidates, and empower ourselves to truly lead the profession. But it's not easy. It's far larger than me, or our board of directors, or local presidents, or our staff. It's all of us, working, organizing, agitating, and educating together.

You may be thinking, "That's all fine and good, but my background is as an educator, not an organizer." Mine too—and that's ok. Educators can be sensational organizers. And here's some good news: at this year's MSEA Convention, NEA organizing guru Floyd Cox is going to lead a special training called "How Do We Get What We Want?" He'll share strategies and success stories on how to organize successfully in your building and local, whether the issue is professional, political, or your supervisor. Learn more about details on page 6—you won't want to miss it!

In the end, it's about building and exercising our power. When we do that by organizing effectively, the sky's the limit, as so many activists before us—whether they were working for women's suffrage, civil rights, or better schools—have proven.

*Betty H. Weller*  
MSEA PRESIDENT

Watch Betty's video at [marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL](http://marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL).  
Contact Betty at [bweller@mseanea.org](mailto:bweller@mseanea.org).



## ANTHONY BROWN IS MSEA'S CHOICE FOR GOVERNOR HERE'S WHY



### ANTHONY BROWN

### THE ISSUES

### LARRY HOGAN

Anthony Brown pledged to work closely with state and local association leaders on budget, personnel, and education reform matters.<sup>1</sup>

**WORKING WITH EDUCATORS**

Larry Hogan refused multiple times to complete MSEA's candidate questionnaire or interview with MSEA.<sup>1</sup>

Brown will lead efforts to update the state funding formula, including creating a Thornton 2 commission.<sup>1</sup>

**SCHOOL FUNDING**

Hogan has promised to slash the state budget by billions, which would result in massive cuts to education funding.<sup>2</sup>

Brown has pledged to invest more in public school construction, with a goal of an annual capital budget investment of \$500 million.<sup>2</sup>

**SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION**

Hogan was part of the Ehrlich team that proposed school construction budgets \$400 million short of recommended levels.<sup>3</sup>

Brown opposes vouchers and any school voucher program that takes vital funds away from Maryland's public schools.<sup>1</sup>

**VOUCHERS**

Hogan supports vouchers, redirecting taxpayer money from public to private schools.<sup>4</sup>

Brown supports more funding for community colleges, containing tuition costs, and expanding career and technology education.<sup>3</sup>

**COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND CAREER READINESS**

Hogan proposes eliminating the Department of Education, forcing dangerous cuts in funding, including eliminating the Pell grant program.<sup>5</sup>

Brown has pledged to provide voluntary universal pre-kindergarten for all four-year-olds by 2022.<sup>4</sup>

**UNIVERSAL PRE-K**

Hogan opposes voluntary universal pre-kindergarten in Maryland.<sup>6</sup>

Brown supports Maryland's charter school law and believes that charters must be held to the same standards and accountability as other public schools.<sup>1</sup>

**CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Hogan supports overhauling Maryland's charter school law to make it easier for charter schools to open with no oversight by local school districts.<sup>7</sup>

Brown opposes contracting out any services currently or traditionally provided by public school employees.<sup>1</sup>

**PRIVATIZATION**

Hogan has not stated his position on the privatization of public jobs.<sup>8</sup>

Brown has championed MSEA's position of empowering local unions and school districts to develop evaluation models that best meet their needs. He opposed giving the misaligned MSA test last year.<sup>5</sup>

**LOCAL CONTROL WITH TEACHER EVALUATIONS**

Hogan has indicated he would err on the side of local control when it comes to teacher evaluations.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MSEA Candidate Questionnaire, 8/22/13; <sup>2</sup> Ready to Work, anthonybrown.com; <sup>3</sup> Keeping College Affordable, anthonybrown.com; <sup>4</sup> Running Start Maryland, anthonybrown.com; <sup>5</sup> MSEA Candidate Questionnaire, 8/22/13; Baltimore Sun, 1/16/14

<sup>1</sup> MSEA's candidate questionnaire and recommendation process; <sup>2</sup> Capital Gazette, 4/11/13; <sup>3</sup> FY04-07 Capital Budget Review; <sup>4</sup> DMV Daily Dose, 2/13/14; <sup>5</sup> Laurel Leader, 10/29/92; <sup>6</sup> Capital News Service, 5/11/14; WEA, "The Marc Steiner Show," 6/19/14; <sup>7</sup> Republican Debate, League of Women Voters, 6/6/14; <sup>8</sup> No response to MSEA Candidate Questionnaire, 7/23/13-8/8/14; <sup>9</sup> CNSMaryland.org questionnaire, 3/10/14





Candidates Dick Weaver (red shirt), Devon Rothschild (blue shirt), and Bob Lord (plaid shirt) with Carroll County association members at a neighborhood canvass in September.

# CARROLL COUNTY EDUCATORS FIGHT BACK



In the past six months, thousands of MSEA members have rallied to lobby, volunteer on candidate campaigns, and contribute to MSEA's political action fund. Why? Because the choices made by the winners on Election Day—from school board to governor—affect public education.

For years, school funding in conservative Carroll County was at the mercy of county commissioners convinced that slashing school funding to a bare minimum was the only approach.

Public meetings had become more and more contentious and ill-informed politicians made poor decisions as they cut taxes and closed schools at the expense of students' futures, educators'

morale, and community pride. "One reason I chose to run for county commissioner is because I could not stand by as the current board of commissioners dismantled the school system," said physical education teacher Dennis Frazier, now a Republican candidate for county commissioner. "By constantly underfunding the school board they have caused an exodus of school personnel. I believe a quality education is a right and that right was being taken away."

Members decided to fight back. They supported a pro-public education slate of candidates for the June primary, used MSEA's voter contact program, and mobilized hundreds of members to phone bank and knock on the doors of targeted voters. On Primary Day, voters were met by educator members at every polling location.

Pro-public education candidates, including Frazier, won four of the five county commission races. A record-breaking 80 percent of Carroll County members voted in the primary—more than any other local association by far.

## ON THE COVER



Four trailblazing classroom teachers, association members, and candidates Amanda Stewart, Eric Ebersole, Jessica Fitzwater, and Dennis Frazier know that one of the

very best ways to advocate for public education is from the inside—whether it's inside county council chambers or the halls of the State House.

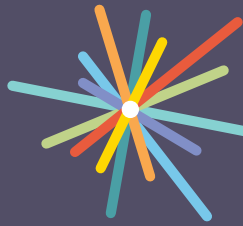
Their knowledge, courage, and respect for students and the education profession is being heard loud and clear by the thousands of voters they meet on the campaign trail. These educator candidates—and thoughtful voters—know that elected officials have the power to change public education and their communities for the better.

### WHO'S WHO

**Left to right:** High school math teacher Amanda Stewart is running for county commissioner in Charles County • Howard County high school math teacher Eric Ebersole is a candidate for state delegate in District 12 • Elementary music teacher Jessica Fitzwater is running for county council in Frederick County. • Carroll County physical education teacher and wrestling coach Dennis Frazier is running for county commissioner.

Want to learn how you can volunteer on the campaign trail? Visit:





Our Profession.  
Our Association.  
Our Voice.

[marylandeducators.org/Convention](http://marylandeducators.org/Convention)

2014 MSEA CONVENTION OCTOBER 17-18 OCEAN CITY

### Our Association—600 Delegates Elected by YOU to Represent YOU

- At MSEA's 147th Representative Assembly, more than 600 delegates elected by members from across the state discuss, debate, and vote on MSEA's activities, policies, and programs, including our four-year legislative platform.
- Delegates get fired up by speeches from Betty Weller, NEA Vice President Becky Pringle, gubernatorial candidate Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown, and attorney general candidate Brian Frosh. They also provide focus for the Board of Directors and staff for the coming year, and raise funds for state and local pro-public education candidates in this year's PAC competition.
- MSEA members show off their talents at Thursday night's first-ever MSEA's Got Talent. Don't miss celebrity judges, like WBAL-TV's Tim Tooten, great performances, and lots of fun! *Learn more at [marylandeducators.org/Convention](http://marylandeducators.org/Convention).*

### Our Voice—Empowering Members, Influencing Public Education

- Join the conversation by downloading the new MSEA Convention app! Find event and speaker details, create your convention schedule, enter to win contests, and much more. Visit [marylandeducators.org/Convention](http://marylandeducators.org/Convention) to learn more.
- A special discussion on organizing, facilitated by NEA's Floyd Cox, provides an opportunity for members to fine-tune the focus, energy, and success of our association-wide organizing efforts. Learn more below.
- The RA—MSEA's highest policymaking body—ensures that your voice is heard in Maryland's education debates, MSEA's policy, and the organizing priorities of the association. *Don't miss it—October 17 and 18 in Ocean City! Visit [marylandeducators.org/Convention](http://marylandeducators.org/Convention) regularly for details, including a full workshop schedule, presenter bios, details on special events, and much more.*

### OUR PROFESSION—FREE WORKSHOPS PLUS SPECIAL PROGRAMS OPEN TO ALL

- Common Core and Specialized Education Series—Choose from four workshops featured in this special series.
- Workshop strands include: Boosting Student Achievement, Improving Instructional Strategies, Building Relationships with Students and Families, and Your Personal and Professional Life.
- Yes You Can! MSEA's two-day classroom management workshop. Learn more and register at [marylandeducators.org/YesYouCanCredit](http://marylandeducators.org/YesYouCanCredit).
- Our brand new Exhibition Hall showcases education vendors, MSEA's Member Trade Show, and Apple-a-Day Health Fair all in one convenient location.

## SPECIAL 2014 CONVENTION SESSION— HOW DO WE GET WHAT WE WANT?

**“The only way on earth to influence the other fellow is to talk about what he wants and show him how to get it.”**

—Dale Carnegie

### Friday, October 17 • 1 p.m.

Union organizing—like community organizing—depends on individuals to create and sustain change. You can help build a stronger local association, and increase the influence and power of educators by improving how you organize educators in your school and in your community.

Proven organizing principles like one-on-one conversations with colleagues about the challenges you face—think changing evaluations, stagnating salaries, and difficult administrators—are the stepping stones to change. They set the tone for the collegial, professional, and rewarding relationships that are the foundation of every successful movement.

Learn how you can use conversations and other proven organizing principles and practices to build a powerful association and get what you want and need to be a successful educator in a time of constant change.

**Don't miss this special session hosted by NEA's nationally known organizing guru Floyd Cox.**



## MSEA DELEGATES TO CONSIDER NEW ELECTION GUIDELINES AT 2014 RA

There's been a lot of talk the past few years about the state-wide distribution of MSEA's delegate seats to the NEA Representative Assembly. A close look at yearly election results shows that urban associations, with large numbers of voting members, have won the majority of available seats, leaving MSEA local affiliates without equitable member representation on the national stage.

This year, MSEA's Board of Directors recommends that MSEA's yearly election of state NEA delegates include both regional and at-large state delegates. The proposal—an amendment to MSEA's Nominations and Election Guidelines—will be reviewed and voted on by delegates at the Representative Assembly in Ocean City, October 17–18.

With passage by the RA, members can run as a regional state delegate, an at-large state delegate, or both. The at-large election process remains the

same with every voting member able to cast a vote for at-large candidates. Without passage, all delegate candidates will appear on the ballot as at-large candidates.

The proposed regional election process works like this: Members can run as a regional state candidate in their region. Only members in that region can vote for their regional state delegate. See *the regional map at [marylandeducators.org/MSEA2015Election](http://marylandeducators.org/MSEA2015Election)*.

Each region will have a customized ballot. The number of delegates in each region is approximately one delegate per 2,000 members, based on membership as of August of the year preceding the election.

Members can also run in their local association elections to serve as a local delegate to the NEA RA. Should the candidate win election to multiple seats to the NEA RA—regional, at-large, or local—only one seat can be accepted.

## MSEA'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY ART CONTEST

**Get ready to party!** Starting in 2015, we'll be marking MSEA's 150 years of bringing together educators to advocate for great public schools. To help celebrate, we're inviting educators and their students to create art that honors the power of public education and the legacy of MSEA members' activism. Entries will be judged by a panel of MSEA members with winners in each of the categories—member and student—receiving top prizes of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250. Winners will be invited to a reception at MSEA to honor and unveil their work hung in MSEA's Annapolis lobby and headquarters common areas.

### DATES TO REMEMBER

- \* **November 3**—Your sketch is due. Send to [agladden@mseanea.org](mailto:agladden@mseanea.org) or mail to: MSEA/150th Anniversary Art Contest 140 Main Street, Annapolis, MD 21401.
- \* **November 14**—Winners are notified.
- \* **February 20**—Completed artwork is due at MSEA headquarters no later than February 20, 2015.

Get the details and learn more at [marylandeducators.org/artcontest](http://marylandeducators.org/artcontest) for more!

In anticipation of the passage of the proposal, you'll find these options on the Nominations & Intent Form on page 18 of this issue.

More content, videos, and resources at [marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL](http://marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL)



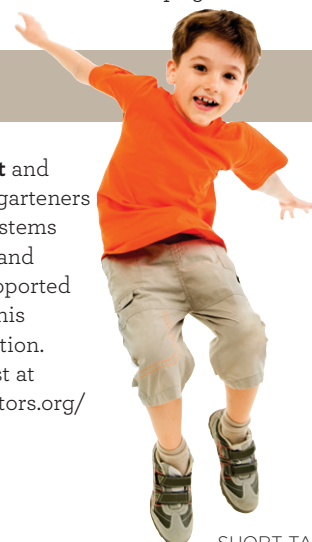
**November 21–22 • Become a voice for change, action, and progress** in your school, local association, and community.

Don't miss MSEA's newest leadership programs sponsored by the Women's Leadership and Minority Leadership training programs. In Skills for Emerging Leaders, you'll discover your leadership voice and how to use it to advocate for educator and student success. In Developing Culturally Competent and Responsive Educators, you'll explore social justice, cultural self-awareness, and cultural competence.

**Listen to MSEA's latest podcast** and jump for joy with excited kindergarteners who are taking county school systems by storm. Hear how the parents and



children are supported by teachers in this season of transition. Find the podcast at [marylandeducators.org/podcast](http://marylandeducators.org/podcast).



# POST-LABOR DAY START? STUDENTS' LABORS LOST



We've all had the thought: if only summer would last a little longer. There's a proposal in the works in Annapolis that may do just that—but with serious negative consequences for educators and students.

Ocean City businesses have been pushing for a Maryland equivalent of Virginia's "King's Dominion Law," which keeps schools from starting before Labor Day. But this isn't about shifting time in school from late August to June—supporters don't want to extend the school year to make up the days.

The result? A range of consequences, from cutting professional development and planning time, to fewer days of instruction before students sit for high stakes AP, IB, PARCC, and other tests.

A post-Labor Day start could also worsen achievement gaps, since students from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds suffer from a far greater summertime brain drain than their peers who are more likely to be participating in summer programs and reading regularly. "We shouldn't mandate a policy that encourages well-off families to vacation at the beach over Labor Day weekend while poorer children slip further academically," said MSEA President Betty Weller.

Local school systems already have the power to start school after Labor Day. Your board of education juggles inclement weather planning, athletic calendars, and the input of parents, educators, and community members to develop a calendar that works for the county. "School calendars should be developed locally with the best interests of students in mind. We don't need another top-down mandate, particularly one that has only the best interests of Ocean City businesses in mind," said Weller.

Keep an eye out for this issue resurfacing when the General Assembly goes back into session in January.

Check out the digital edition of *ActionLine* to read a letter from MSEA, district superintendents, and boards of education to Governor O'Malley opposing the post-Labor Day mandate. [marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL](http://marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL)

# MAKE A BIGGER DIFFERENCE ENGAGE, ORGANIZE, MOBILIZE

**WE ARE  
WCEA  
MSEA  
NEA**

Successful community and union organizers know that getting members excited and involved in the issues and causes that affect them is the key to a stronger and more influential organization. That's the thinking behind MSEA's new Innovative Engagement and Organizing Grants—a funding program to support local associations and their members to become stronger and more influential at school, at county council and board of ed meetings, and on the issues that matter most.

It's a member-driven program with grants awarded to creative ideas that address the specific organizing needs of a local association. This year, *ActionLine* will take a look at each of the five winning grants, starting with the Wicomico County Education Association, where members have taken back their association after a year of upheaval. Grantee Stephanie Lewis explains:

"We were faced with possible disaffiliation from MSEA and NEA when a small group of disgruntled members decided they could go it alone and run WCEA as an independent small business," explains Lewis. "They brought in the Center for Independent Employees, an organization notorious for destroying unions and collective bargaining. Against all odds, we mobilized to save our association for current and future educators.

"We applied for the grant to build the power and influence of WCEA. We want to help our members renew their engagement and commitment and to become better informed about the power, professional support, and resources available to them through a strong WCEA/MSEA/NEA.

"After such a difficult year, it was important that we all come together. We hosted an all-member Back-to-School Bash where new and veteran members could meet their leadership, ask questions, and share concerns.

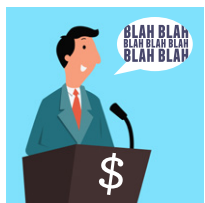
"Next, we're taking our organizing and mobilizing message to schools, holding representative assembly meetings across the county to meet more of our WCEA members and answer their questions. There's a training component, too, where we'll work on building a stronger member-driven association that will help deliver the support and resources that Wicomico's educators and students need."

In the next issue of *ActionLine*, learn how Washington County is building leadership and organizing skills through member-to-member conversations.



# The Best Candidates for Public Education

Not everyone does their homework for Election Day and it shows—often it's **the candidate with the biggest bank account**, rather than the best ideas, who wins. It's hard to believe, but **most voters don't vote in important local races like school board and county level offices!**



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with the biggest bank account, rather than the best ideas, who wins. It's hard to believe, but **most voters don't vote in important local races like school board and county level offices!**

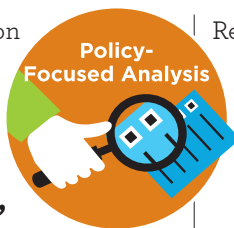


Non-Partisan Outreach

We all pay the price. But homework has gotten a lot easier this year. **MDAppleBallot.com**, MSEA's new online version of the famous paper Apple Ballot, is the very best tool to find educator-recommended pro-

public education candidates in your district. All you need is a **computer, mobile phone, or tablet.** It's super easy after that. Log on to MDAppleBallot.com and **enter your zip code and county.** You'll get a complete list of local candidates (and their campaign websites) who have been **interviewed and recommended by the association leaders in your county.**

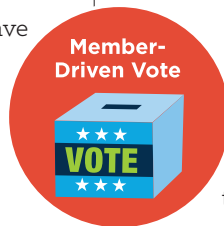
Statewide candidates have been vetted by MSEA'S strict recommendation process that begins with a questionnaire and ends with a yes or no vote by delegates at MSEA's



Policy-Focused Analysis

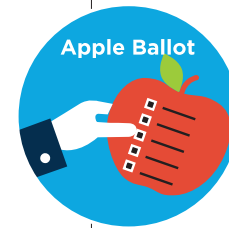
Representative Assembly. Learn more about the process on the homepage so you're satisfied that **MSEA's process is member-driven, democratic, and impartial.** Once you've studied your candidates, print your ballot, then stash it in your wallet or purse **so you'll have it handy on Election Day.**

Next check out the Action Center and take care of some other important business. Encourage your friends and family **to vote!** With one click, you can send them a link to get their own ballot to take to their polling place. Remember, the **#1 reason people vote**



Member-Driven Vote

**is because they were asked and educators like you are always the best messengers for offices like board of education.**



Apple Ballot

**Keep sharing!** Look for the Facebook and Twitter icons and start a conversation on your social media pages.

**New in town?** Click the polling place icon. **Want to volunteer?** Supply your contact info.



**Want to stay in the loop?** Sign up to receive important education updates by entering your email and mobile phone number.

IT'S EASY TO DO YOUR ELECTION DAY HOMEWORK AT

**MDAPPLEBALLOT.COM**

Make your **vote** count for your **students**, your **school**, and your **career.**

## Bruce L. Burks, Jr.

Third Grade Teacher  
Phyllis E. Williams Elementary School  
Prince George's County

**1 STOPWATCH** My students respond well knowing that they are being timed—that there is a beginning and end to everything that we do. It gives them the motivation and confidence to stay on task knowing everyone is playing by the same rules.

**2 CLIPBOARD** My clipboard serves as my placeholder for my lesson plans, notes on the altered day plan, and as a behavior management tool. We use PBIS and my students know that I can take note of their behavior at any time.

**3 BIBLE** We all know that a good day at school can suddenly take a turn for the worse. That's where my faith comes in—I look at the students and say, "It's okay. Things will change. Let's move on."

**4 PICTURE OF MY SON** I work hard to connect with every one of my students because I would want my son Drew to have a teacher like me. People say that I glow when I talk about him and that's just what it feels like to me.

**5 BOW TIE** Many of my students have never physically laid eyes on a male wearing a tie, let alone a teacher who looks like them wearing a bow tie. My students are fascinated as I sit down with them at our morning meeting, chatting and tying my tie. To me, it's a lesson about pride and confidence that I hope will be remembered for a lifetime.

**6 BOXING WRAPS AND WEIGHT LIFTING GLOVES** I'm a big believer that we need to value our physical upkeep as much as we do our social, emotional, and spiritual. I don't box or lift weights competitively—it's for physical endurance and strength. The trip to the gym gives me a time and place to relax and unleash.



①



②



③



④



2



⑤



⑥



## INSIDE MSEA WITH DAVID HELFMAN



### Your Voice ...

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”

John Quincy Adams must have been talking about great educators.

Great schools inspire. Teachers play an indispensable role. So do bus drivers, cafeteria workers, secretaries, classroom assistants, pupil personnel workers, school psychologists, counselors, speech pathologists, administrators, and so many others.

What inspires you to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more...particularly when it comes to your professional life at school? Share your story with your colleagues—both in-person and at our first-ever Twitter chat with President Weller and Vice President Bost on November 20 at 4 p.m. We’ll talk about how you inspire your students and colleagues. Use #MSEAinspires to follow along.

Share your inspiration, and get inspired by your colleagues from across the state!

### ... And your vote.

Who has the ability to help make—or keep—your school great?

Chances are the power is in the hands of your school board, county executive, council, or commissioners, state legislators, or governor. The power to determine who is in those offices is in your hands.

Dream more for this election. What could be done if we elected more pro-public education champions?

Learning more is the first step to making it happen. Visit MDAppleBallot.com to find out who’s sought—and received—support from colleagues in your local association. They’re the candidates who will help us make all our schools great.

Do more by sharing these recommendations with colleagues, family, and friends.

And become more by inspiring your students. What an impression it can make to be able to announce that 100% of school staff exercised their right to vote!

## A WORD FROM MSEA’S LEGAL TEAM

### It’s Election Time—What You Can and Can’t Say on the Job

Your political activism drives association success in state and local elections, and over and over again, that activism has proven vital. But in an election year, when campaigning for your candidates and issues is so important, you must be very mindful of your audience.

As an educator, your off-campus conversations and activities in political events is likely protected by the First Amendment. But if your activities lead to a disruption in school—or in educator/student or educator/administration relationships—you could be heading for a problem.

That same protection doesn’t exist when you’re on the job, standing in front of a classroom of students, or conversing with parents about student, classroom, or school issues. In these situations, you’re designated a spokesperson for the school district—that means the administration determines what you can and can’t say on the job.

At election time, this becomes particularly important.



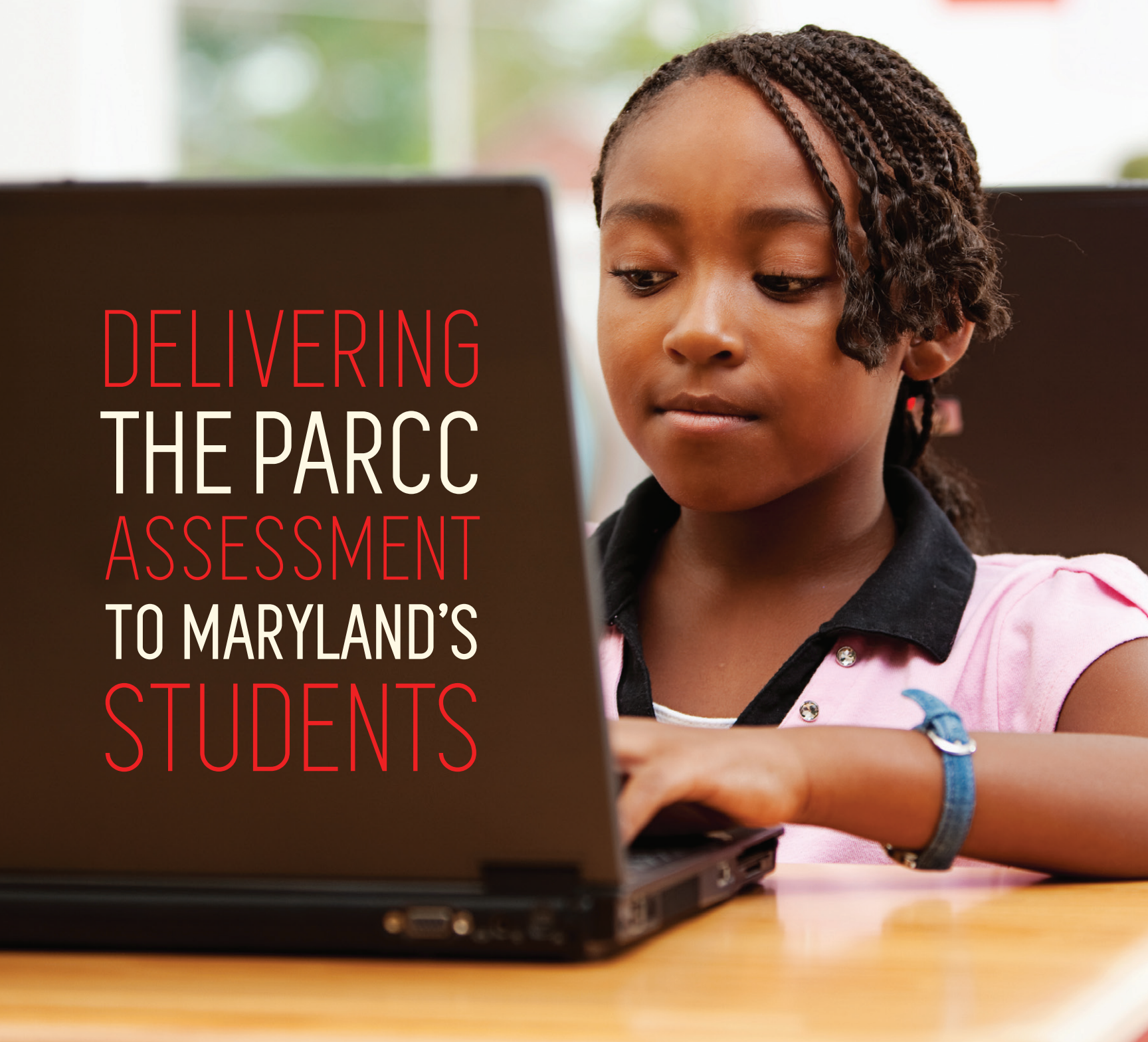
### Here’s what you need to know to stay on the safe side:

**DON’T** discuss your preferred political candidates in the presence of students.

**DON’T** wear political buttons of any kind while in the presence of students.

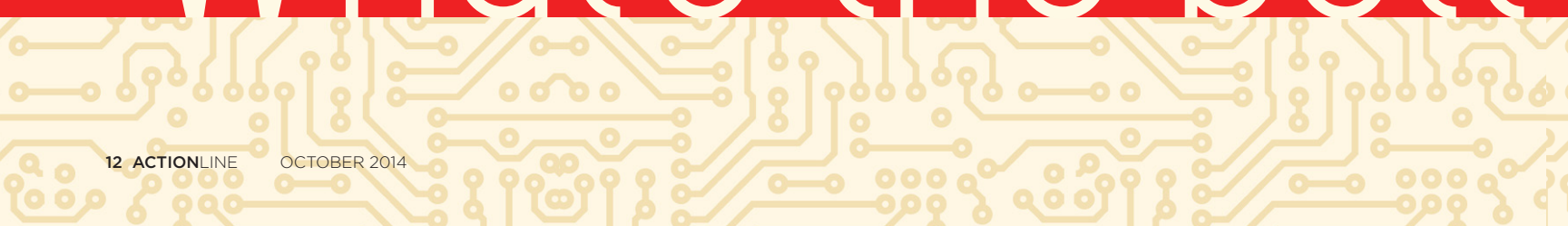
**DO** keep any discussion of the election, political parties, or candidates non-partial and relevant to the curriculum.

Beyond the classroom, school administrators can’t impose rules limiting how you talk with colleagues during breaks or during conversation outside the presence of students. That’s why you’ll find information about association-endorsed candidates posted on the association bulletin board, in your mailbox, and in employee lounges that are off-limits to students.



DELIVERING  
THE PARCC  
ASSESSMENT  
TO MARYLAND'S  
STUDENTS

What's the bott







# online?

## You've been hearing it

for more than a year, and no doubt you'll keep hearing of controversy over the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)—the new standardized tests that measure student progress on the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards, aka the Common Core.

Two of the biggest concerns that are keeping policymakers and educators up at night are seemingly on different ends of the testing experience.

The first is the cost of delivering the test, which requires a huge investment in the technological infrastructure to support thousands of students taking an online test simultaneously.

The second is a looming fear that the achievement gaps between rich and poor students, and white, African American, Asian, and Latino students will be exacerbated by the different levels of familiarity that students have with technology. Because the tests demand that students have keyboarding skills, as well as comfort with manipulating objects on screen, educators fear that students whose families are not wealthy enough to have computers, tablets, or the internet at home will be at a huge disadvantage when it comes to taking the test.

"PARCC tests should be a measure of content mastery, not simply computer skills," said MSEA President Betty Weller.





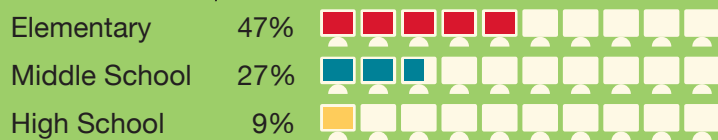
“There are huge reasons to be concerned with the use of PARCC for high-stakes decisions for educators, students, and schools,” said President Weller. “This year, if scores drop and achievement gaps widen it is going to be extremely difficult to isolate the causes.”

## Who’s Ready for PARCC

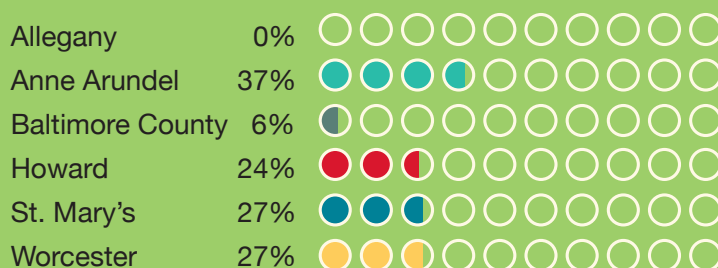
The best scenario for success delivering PARCC is when schools can administer the test while still having the infrastructure to support online learning for students who are not taking the test. To do that, the recommended school bandwidth needs to be at least 100 kilobits/second. Below that level, schools may not be able to support administering PARCC, regular online learning, and everyday internet/computing needs.

## Statewide school readiness for PARCC + regular online learning 14%

### Readiness by school level



### School readiness for PARCC + regular online learning, county by county



Source: MSDE Report, Preparedness to Implement New Computer-Based Assessments, December 2013

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The fact is, many schools in Maryland may not be ready to deliver PARCC. Massive technology needs—estimated in a state report from December 2013 at \$100 million—exist across the state. The December report, Preparedness to Implement New Computer-Based Assessments, was delivered to the Legislative Budget Committee. It raised a lot of eyebrows and landed on the cover of the *Baltimore Sun*, which quoted Senator Paul Pinsky. “I just want to be sure that we’re prepared,” said Pinsky. “If not, we might need to look at slowing down. You don’t jam this down a local jurisdiction’s throat when they’re not ready for it.”

The amount of new technology needed to give the online test was only part of the issue, however. The other issue was how the sheer volume of testing would impact the ability of schools to hold a normal instructional day during the longer than ever before testing window.

For the 2016–17 school year, the report said that the number of students taking online state standardized tests will jump from the 2012–13 count of 301,036 (MSAs and HSAs) to the 1,144,448 who will be taking the PARCC test—an increase of 280%. The testing window expands from what was a two-week window for MSAs to two 20-day windows, one in March for the Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) and one in May for the End-of-Year Assessment (EOY).

In the report, the nonprofit Education SuperHighway analyzed districts’ technological readiness to accommodate the larger window and sheer number of students taking PARCC. The results were far from encouraging. A stunning 85% of schools in the 11 districts surveyed would not have been able to administer PARCC and hold a normal instructional day that involved classroom or staff technology use. Taking the test requires days of computer access, yet MSDE reported that the number of elementary, middle, and high schools able to support test-taking without interfering with online learning for non-tested grades

and regular day-to-day school operations only neared the 50% mark at the elementary level. For surveyed schools with 750+ students, none were ready to deliver PARCC live and online learning simultaneously.

The report also included analyses of districts' technology needs and concerns. Their requests painted a stark picture. However, MSDE hedged on their reports, writing that, "While some of the needs assessment items are warranted, MSDE does not fully support the full list of requests as reported [by individual districts]."

Cecil County reported to MSDE needs of approximately \$1 million for equipment and infrastructure to ensure quality testing and instruction. Without the investment, they said, they could meet the testing timeline but not without "deferring online instruction to middle and high school students, changing second semester course offerings, and temporarily redistributing equipment to add testing capacity."

Fortunately, the county has made some progress since the report came out. "At the time," said Cecil County's IT Services Manager Wally Wills, "our goal was to prevent having instruction conform around testing. So we quickly adjusted our budget priorities and deferred [several expenditures] in FY15 to purchase Chromebooks for each school, based on their needs."

"We've been working to replace our school wireless networks since FY13, in anticipation of needing more wireless devices for instruction, online testing, and other initiatives. All of our middle and high schools and one-third of our elementary schools have been upgraded to a modern, dense wireless network. We believe we're heading in the right direction."

For Prince George's County, providing IT support at every school is the biggest challenge—plus electrical upgrades and some 5,000 computers. At the September Prince George's County Board of Education meeting, Chief Information Officer Wesley Watts explained how the

IT division is preparing for PARCC in a district where the number of students being tested will grow from 10-15,000 to 90,000 with testing taking place at every school simultaneously.

"I'm not worried about the network bandwidth," Watts said. "I'm worried about us being able to support 90,000 students."

Their team is currently doing school-by-school site visits and will perform an infrastructure pilot in February.

"We're making sure that we have the network bandwidth in place, that the labs are ready, the classrooms are ready, the wireless is ready, and the devices are ready. We're also working [with the testing department] so that the testing coordinators and the IT techs are synced together, that they know one another, they know who to call if there's an issue, and they know what to do. ... It is going to be a challenge."

## EQUITY

Taking the test is one concern. But the results—and their interpretation—are another huge concern.

For some states that gave the first wave of Common Core-aligned tests in 2013, achievement gaps widened significantly. For example, in New York the black/white gap went from 12 to 19 points on 3rd grade English Language Arts (ELA) scores and from 14 to 25 points on 8th grade ELA scores. In the most dramatic example, the gap between white and Latino students went from 3 to 22 points on the 8th grade ELA test. The picture in math scores was largely the same.

Add to this mix the digital divide—the huge disparity of computer and internet access between students. In a May 2013 report, the US Census Bureau dove into the data. The report found that while 82% of Asian households and 76% of white households used the internet at home, just 58% of Hispanic households and 56% of black households did. In households

with income greater than \$50,000, 92% or more had a computer at home and 80% or more could access the internet; in households making less than \$25,000, 56% had a computer at home and less than half accessed the internet.

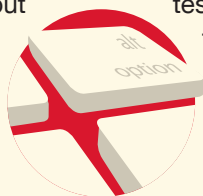
Educators fear that forcing students to take online tests that presume and depend on their computer skills will put some students at a disadvantage. "It's like expecting a student who hasn't taken driver's ed or spent any time driving a car to ace their driver's test," said Weller.

It's a tricky problem to untangle. Some education research has found that the answer isn't simply putting students who wouldn't otherwise have computer or internet access in front of a screen. Studies have found that giving all students access helps students from higher income families make gains on reading and math, while other students stagnate. The lack of parental familiarity and guidance with computers, researchers theorize, contributes to the lack of gains for poorer children. The end result, unfortunately, is a still widening achievement gap.

While the use of computers and the internet in a structured school setting could still help all students, the need to tie up so many devices and labs during PARCC's 40-day testing window will challenge the ability of schools to consistently expose students to technology and equalize their skills.

"There are huge reasons to be concerned with the use of PARCC for high-stakes decisions for educators, students, and schools," said Weller. "This year, if scores drop and achievement gaps widen, it is going to be extremely difficult to isolate the causes."

"Was it lack of technology? Was it the digital divide? Was it the nature of the test? Was it the lack of alignment with the materials or standards? These are all huge questions that we must resolve before even being able to consider the role of teaching on student scores."



# MSEA Election 2015

Your Profession. Your Association. Your Voice.

It's your profession and your association—now it's time to make sure your voice advocates for both. Become a candidate for MSEA's Board of Directors or run for one of the nearly 50 seats representing MSEA at the NEA Representative Assembly next summer in Orlando! Help MSEA continue to influence education policy in Annapolis and across the country.

## Be a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando

When you're a member of the Maryland delegation you'll attend the NEA Representative Assembly in Orlando, Florida, July 1-6 alongside MSEA President Betty Weller, Vice President Cheryl Bost, and the rest of the MSEA leadership team. You'll be front and center helping to set the policies, national legislative

program, budget, and more for the national association. Learn how MSEA supports travel, meals, and accommodations for MSEA delegates to the NEA RA! Visit [marylandeducators.org/MSEA2015Election](http://marylandeducators.org/MSEA2015Election)

**Special note:** Delegates from across the state will vote on amended Nominations and Election Guidelines at the 2014 MSEA Convention, October 17-18. The proposed guidelines allow for the election of both regional and at-large delegates to the NEA RA.

**LEARN MORE** about the proposed changes to the way MSEA members elect NEA RA delegates—see page 7, or visit [marylandeducators.org/MSEA2015Election](http://marylandeducators.org/MSEA2015Election).

1.

**November 21, 2014**  
Nominations deadline. Nomination & Intent and Biography forms due at MSEA headquarters in Annapolis.

2.

**January 26, 2015**  
MSEA Election 2015 ballot posted at [marylandeducators.org/MSEA2015Election](http://marylandeducators.org/MSEA2015Election)

3.

**February 20, 2015**  
Voting deadline.

4.

**March 2, 2015**  
Election results validated and released.

## Become a candidate—here's how:

Candidate information will appear on the official MSEA Election website on January 26, 2015 in alphabetical order by position based on their submissions. Those submitting a photo, biography, and statement will appear first.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Complete and submit both the official Nomination & Intent and Biography forms.
- Include a Biography Form for each position sought.
- Original or high resolution digital photos. One photo only.\*
- Include a personal statement if desired. See forms for word limits.
- Resumes are not accepted.
- List no more than three association positions in each category on the Biography Form.

\*Photos will not be returned

### NOMINATION GUIDELINES

- Candidates for president and vice president must have been active MSEA members for the past three years.
- Candidates must be willing to run and serve.
- Administrator and retired members may not run for NEA director positions.

**Retired members**—See the special MSEA–Retired Election 2015 notice inserted into this issue of *ActionLine*. Use the attached Nomination, Intent, & Biography Form to run for a delegate seat at the NEA RA or a position on the Retired Advisory Council.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MSEA 2015 ELECTION—**  
[marylandeducators.org/2015election](http://marylandeducators.org/2015election)

- Get specifics on each of the positions on the ballot, including the responsibilities and expectations
- Get forms, read election rules, study guidelines
- See MSEA's current leadership team



# NOMINATION & INTENT FORM

Deadline: November 21, 2014

## Active members may run for one of the following offices:

MSEA Director, NEA Director, or MSEA President or Vice President. Those elected will also serve as delegates to the MSEA and NEA Representative Assemblies.

### To be nominated to run for MSEA Director, check this box:

**MSEA DIRECTOR** 4 SEATS 8/1/15 – 7/31/18

### To be nominated to run for NEA Director, check this box:

**NEA DIRECTOR** 1 SEAT 9/1/15 – 8/31/18

### To be nominated to run for MSEA President, check this box:

**MSEA PRESIDENT** 8/1/15 – 7/31/18

### To be nominated to run for MSEA Vice President, check this box:

**MSEA VICE PRESIDENT** 8/1/15 – 7/31/18

## Candidate may run in one or both of the below.

### To be nominated to run for MSEA At-Large Delegate to the 2015 NEA Representative Assembly, check one:

**ACTIVE:**  Teacher  ESP  Student Member

Substitute  Administrator

### To be nominated to run for MSEA Regional Delegate to the 2015 NEA Representative Assembly, check one:

**ACTIVE:**  Teacher  ESP  Substitute

## Complete the required form below.

NAME *As you wish it to appear on the ballot*

ADDRESS

CITY

ZIP

HOME/CELL PHONE

SCHOOL/SCHOOL PHONE

EMAIL ADDRESS

LOCAL ASSOCIATION

ETHNIC GROUP *voluntary*

## Letter Of Intent

I hereby state my willingness to run as a candidate for MSEA office and/or for NEA State Delegate in the 2015 MSEA/NEA Election. I agree to abide by the MSEA/NEA policies and bylaws and to adhere to the Code of Ethics, as adopted by the Association.

SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE

DATE

# BIOGRAPHY FORM

Deadline: November 21, 2014

NAME *As you wish it to appear on the election ballot*

SCHOOL *Name of school and county*

POSITION *Check one*  Teacher  Substitute

ESP  Student Member

Administrator

MSEA MEMBER FOR \_\_\_\_ YEARS | NEA MEMBER FOR \_\_\_\_ YEARS

ASSOCIATION POSITIONS HELD *List only 3 in each category*

LOCAL \_\_\_\_\_

MSEA \_\_\_\_\_

NEA \_\_\_\_\_

## YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

*Candidates may attach a personal statement.*

### Word limits as follows:

MSEA Director, NEA Director, President, Vice President: 150 words.

MSEA Regional and At-Large Delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly: 25 words.

*Statements exceeding the word limit noted above will be deleted at the last complete sentence that is at or under the limit. If the first sentence exceeds the word limit, no personal statement will be published.*

*Nominees will receive confirmation of receipt of forms, biography, and photo.*

**Forms must be received by:  
November 21, 2014, 5 p.m.**

**To verify delivery, use registered or certified mail, return receipt requested.**

**Mail or deliver to:** Trish Bendler/Kristy Anderson  
Nominations and Credentials Committee  
MSEA  
140 Main St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401

# Roberta LaPorte

*Paraeducator*

Kenmore Elementary School  
Cecil County

PHOTO: STEPHEN CHERRY PHOTOGRAPHY © 2014



*Left to right* Members of the Cecil County Education Support Personnel Association: Stacy Rose, Elkton High School; Lisa Schneider, Kenmore Elementary School; Dianna Melrath, Kenmore Elementary School; Jamie Washington, North East Elementary School and Roberta LaPorte; Kenmore Elementary School.

**“At camp, it’s all about the children feeling as carefree as they can, having a good time, and enjoying each other.”**

Roberta LaPorte has been a paraeducator in Cecil County for 22 years, dedicating her time and energy to students with developmental disabilities. For 19 years, she’s been supporting those students in a very different environment. She’s the director of Camp C.A.R.E., Cecil County’s only program for children and young adults who need the support and care of full-day services. But it’s not just Roberta who brings the skills of a paraeducator to the Camp C.A.R.E. team—nine of her colleagues have become counselors to the 50 young people who have the times of their lives for three weeks every summer.

**ROBERTA** | In our summer program at Camp C.A.R.E. we get to see the children in a very different way. At school, we see so many of our students grow in amazing ways, learning new skills and becoming better equipped each day to improve their lives.

Our camp is at our Community Center Park where there is a fishing pond, playground, baseball fields, and level outdoor space which makes it perfect for our campers. And we can take the campers to wonderful activities because we have two nurses on staff the entire day which means campers can ride the bus together to all of our activities. We go to the movies, go bowling, and never miss our annual trip to Six Flags America.

At camp, it’s all about the children feeling as carefree as they can, having a good time, and enjoying each other. My school colleagues are the perfect camp staffers because they know and understand the needs of the campers no matter the challenge. They are full of ideas, energy, enthusiasm, and humor. It takes a lot to give up their summers for such demanding work and for each and every one of us, the rewards are priceless. I guess you could say our passion for our work comes from the happiness we see in the faces of our students and campers when they experience success, feel the joy of fun and friendship, and truly know the meaning of our camp motto—“I was born to be somebody!”

# You could read all of this ...



or you could visit our online  
**Retirement Planning Center.**

**Exclusively for NEA members**, the complimentary, one-stop Retirement Planning Center offers all this and more:

- ▶ **Timely tips and articles tailored to your life stage**, whether you're already retired or just starting to plan.
- ▶ **FREE monthly Kiplinger's Retirement Reports.** They're a \$40 value each year.
- ▶ **The NEA Retirement Income Calculator**, complete with details of pension plans in all 50 states.

Visit [neamb.com/retire](http://neamb.com/retire) to see how easy retirement planning can be. While you're there, sign up for our Retirement E-Newsletter. It's FREE and full of valuable planning tips, no matter where in life you are. Questions? Call the Member Service Center at 1-800-637-4636.

PERSONAL PROJECTION 2020 - 2055	
SOURCE	AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME
STATE PENSION FUND .....	\$3,500
SOCIAL SECURITY .....	\$ 1,200
SAVINGS .....	\$ 500

The **NEA Retirement Income Calculator** helps you project whether your savings will give you the income you'll need.

Make your future more secure at [neamb.com/retire](http://neamb.com/retire)

**nea** Member Benefits



FINANCE



INSURANCE



DISCOUNTS



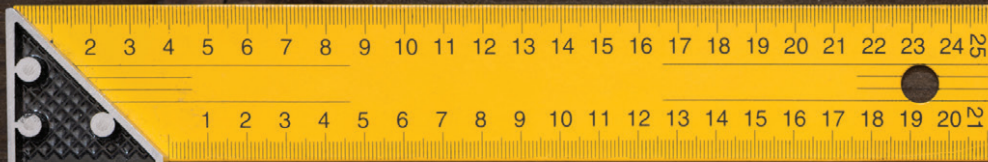
TRAVEL



PROFESSIONAL



Use all the tools at your fingertips.



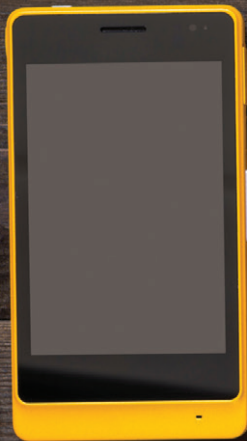
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