

# ActionLine

■ NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

MARYLAND STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION • NEA

## EVALUATIONS, COMMON CORE STANDARDS, AND PARCC ASSESSMENTS



### A JUGGLING ACT FOR MARYLAND'S TEACHERS



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A makeover that matters:  
The school lunch

FASSE, HCEA ESP  
professional  
development days

ESPs: Standing up for  
public education

TEACHER OF THE YEAR  
Rhonda Holmes-Blankenship

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**MSEA'S 2012 CONVENTION AND REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
Did you attend this year? If not, find out what you missed!



Look for the digital ActionLine icon throughout this issue, then visit [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital) to see videos, take surveys, and get more information about the featured articles and events.

# President's Message

Betty Weller, President

## We're taking action on proposed new discipline regulations



**I am proud that so many MSEA members are standing up and advocating for safe schools and our kids.**

Recently, MSEA has been in much more frequent communication with the Maryland State Department of Education and the state superintendent than in the past—and that's a good thing. It started with Interim State Superintendent Bernie Sadusky, and State Superintendent Lillian Lowery has made promising efforts to keep the lines of communication open with us from day one. She and I already have spent a great deal of time together discussing the issues that are important to educators and students.

With the proposed changes to teacher and principal evaluation systems, curriculum, and assessments featured in our cover story, we must focus on good communication to ensure that the reforms help students. We've seen this focus in many counties, as educators and school systems work together on models that are good for students and provide teachers with the feedback and professional development needed to improve their practice. These are also good things.

But, it would be naïve to think that we won't disagree at times. We're currently at odds about the all-important issue of student discipline. Unfortunately, the State Board of Education recently published proposed regulations on student suspension and expulsion which would challenge our efforts to create safe schools and a positive learning environment for all students and school employees.

The proposed regulations restrict a school system's flexibility to determine disciplinary consequences for disruptive students by limiting expulsion and long-term suspension to students whose conduct is deemed violent or poses serious danger to others in the school. Since there is no consideration of alternative settings, many disruptive students would remain in the classroom setting, affecting the learning and safety of other students. The current proposal may also jeopardize the safety of students who may be called as witnesses, subjecting them to harassment and bullying.

At press time, members had sent more than 3,300 emails to the State Board urging them to withdraw the regulations, gather input from educators and local school systems, and make sure these regulations address the intervention programs, relevant professional development, alternative learning programs, and other priorities that are necessary for a safe learning environment before they are adopted. MSEA will continue to reach out to the State Board. I hope that our efforts will bear fruit when the State Board takes action on these regulations on January 22. Whatever happens, I am proud that so many MSEA members are standing up and advocating for safe schools and our kids.

Through these important discussions at the state and local level, we've seen that communication and collaboration is possible. Whether we agree or disagree, an open door communication policy helps us get on the same page. It helps us share why a plan crafted in a policymaker's office may not work as well in practice as it did in theory. It helps us make sure that workloads are manageable and professional development is relevant. And it helps us create the best public schools for our students—a goal that drives all of us, whether we are teachers or administrators, ESP or parents, MSEA or MSDE.

## MSEA out front on proposed new certification regulations

The State Board has proposed regulations changing teacher certification. MSEA supports the majority of these changes, but "Option Four" would undermine the current standards-based certification process. MSEA, the Maryland Independent College and University Association, and many others have urged the State Board to reconsider.

"MSEA is working with other organizations to preserve the high standards of our profession," said President Betty Weller. "We stand ready to work with MSDE to identify alternatives for strengthening the profession."

There are now three options to renew or qualify for Advanced Professional Certification (APC): Master's Degree, Master's Equivalency, and National Board Certification. However, Option Four requires none of the coursework or professional development teachers need to improve their craft and ensure that there is a highly qualified educator in every classroom. Instead, Option Four requires teachers to submit evidence of highly effective teaching for three of the last five years preceding the issuance or renewal of the APC. This would tie certification to the new evaluation systems, which have not been tested for accuracy and validity.

Teachers may choose Option Four as a quicker and less rigorous certification route, unaware that it may be the most difficult method. If a teacher does not receive a highly effective rating, they will need to begin the process over again. Teachers in this situation may not be certified until they have met the requirements. For some, it may be too late in the year to do so, especially if the APC expires in July.



Watch Betty's video at [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital).

**ActionLine** asked Jesse, Renee, Laura, and Jamie: What new tool or strategy do you employ that has helped improve the way you deliver instruction?

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE NEW TOOL OR STRATEGY? Share it with MSEA members at [marylandeducators.org/membervoices2012](http://marylandeducators.org/membervoices2012) and we'll include it in digital *ActionLine* and at [marylandeducators.org](http://marylandeducators.org)!



VISIT Visit [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital) to watch videos of Jesse, Renee, Laura, and Jamie.



### New online class resources

In our program, we teach CompTIA A+ and Network Plus Certification and it employs online study tools, both as classwork and for homework. The tools become their resources as they study for their certification exams and college credit.

We've also been using EverFi, a financial literacy tool that walks students through

a game-like environment with an avatar they create. We've been piloting the program for the company, which offered it to us for free. The availability of the online expert and grand master interfaces of CompTIA to support learning, and the EverFi program to promote financial literacy, have been the two greatest things for my students.

**JESSE MCGEE** Network Operations Teacher • Thomas Edison High School of Technology • Montgomery County • Member for seven years

### More interactive learning resources

I would say the use of technology. I get to use PowerPoint, the Promethium board, and whiteboards. The kids have use of interactive tablets, which really allows them to participate actively so it's not as boring as it was back in the traditional classroom days.



We're moving away from a sit-at-your-desk and listen to a lecture environment to one where students can interact. This broadens their knowledge and encourages participation. Ultimately the scores will go up.

**RENEE HOLLIS** Special Ed Team Leader/Math Teacher Woodlawn Middle School • Baltimore County • Member for 10 years

### I sing!

I have a new behavioral management method that I started employing about three years ago. I started it with a student who was very resistant to following directions and it just sort of bloomed. Basically I sing off-key when students are off task or not following directions. It works like a charm because it adds a positive element of humor to any kind of behavioral management situation.



Parents love it as well, because they know I'm not using any negative behavioral management. Now, if you can sing, I guess you have to practice poor singing, but that's not an issue for me.

**LAURA AURANDT** 6th Grade Language Arts Teacher • New Market Middle School • Frederick County • Member for 14 years

### Aligned curriculum and online resources for reading program



Anne Arundel County has a big push for technology, so we all have smart boards in our classrooms. We also have a new reading program called Treasures. Everything is leveled and the vocabulary transfers from the core group to small groups.

There is also a component called ConnectEd, where the teachers and parents have access to all the same information. Parents and students just log on to work together at home. It unites the parents and teachers.

**JAMIE LYON** 2nd Grade Teacher • Broadneck Elementary School • Anne Arundel County • Member for five years

# Starting LINE News you need to know

## MSEA stands up for students with launch of anti-bullying program

MSEA kicked off its new anti-bullying campaign on November 14 at an assembly at Patapsco High School in Baltimore County with special guests actor Tray Chaney, 92Q DJ Konan, and Dr. Michael Ford, an MSDE behavior specialist tasked with addressing bullying. It's the first of several stops around the state for the initiative.

At the assembly, Chaney performed "Mike Bully: Stand Up for Our Future," and Ford offered his advice to students: "If you are bullied, tell your teacher, then tell the principal, then your deputy superintendent. If nothing happens—call me."

Following the program a roundtable discussion focused on strategies for stopping bullying and identifying the support systems that schools need to create a positive, safe environment.

"As adults, we're always trying to frame this conversation to say it's all about tolerance," said teacher Emanuel Andre. "I think that we have to go further. The conversation needs to be framed around appreciation. Not just acceptance—not just tolerance—but appreciation."

Does your school have an innovative anti-bullying program?

Send your anti-bullying best practices and your contact information to: [AntiBully@mseanea.org](mailto:AntiBully@mseanea.org).



Jeannette Young and Gloria Collins, Education Support Professionals of Baltimore County, and Angela Lovern and Sherri Curtis, Howard County Education Association, helped celebrate Education Support Professionals Day at MSEA's headquarters in Annapolis on November 14.

## MSEA brings books and smiles to Baltimore City school children

More than 180 pre-K, kindergarten, and first-grade students at Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School took home their very own brand new book on October 16 as part of the Clara Floyd "It's All About the Kids" Early Literacy Program. The initiative, an early reading project launched by MSEA in partnership with the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU) and First Book, honors former MSEA President Floyd through a grant from the MSEA Foundation.

Each of the school's pre-K, kindergarten, and first-grade children will receive an additional two books thanks to MSEA's grant, which also will provide books to several other Baltimore City elementary schools. At Coleridge-Taylor, an ongoing



President Betty Weller passes out copies of *Dotty* to nearly 200 pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade students at Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School.



renovation of the school library will also make many additional books and other resources available to students.

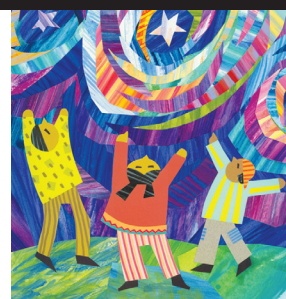
In all, "It's All About the Kids" will distribute more than 8,000 books to young readers across the city, helping them start their own book collections at home.

Weller joined BTU President Marietta English, school principal Harold Barber, and parents and community partners for the October 16 assembly that included a reading and book signing by *Dotty* author Erica Perl.

## We're honoring progress!

MSEA's Dorothy Lloyd Women's Rights Award, named after the longtime association director of publications, honors persons, groups, or programs for their accomplishments in the field of girls' and women's rights. *Deadline for nominations: January 7.*

Visit [marylandeducators.org/dotlloydaward](http://marylandeducators.org/dotlloydaward) for award rules, guidelines, and nomination forms. Sponsored by the MSEA Women's Concerns Committee.



## ESP: STANDING UP FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND MARYLAND'S FUTURE

With a document in hand signed and sealed by Governor O'Malley, President Betty Weller proclaimed November 14 Education Support Professionals Day in Maryland at a reception at MSEA headquarters in Annapolis. "Education support professionals make every day happen in our schools. They are the first to greet students on the school bus and teachers every morning at school," said President Weller. "They organize, communicate, maintain our buildings, and nurture our students in classrooms, front offices, libraries, and more. I'm proud of our members for their work on behalf of students and for their growing presence and influence as advocates in their local associations."

# YOUR 2013 MSEA ELECTION

IT'S ONLINE!

## ONLINE VOTING BEGINS JANUARY 25

"When delegates to the 2012 convention passed new guidelines that moved our voting procedure from paper ballots to online voting," said President Betty Weller, "they clearly took a forward-looking position that will simplify the voting process, increase participation, and save money. I'm proud we've joined many other associations in modernizing our voting procedures."

Beginning January 25, you can research this year's candidates and vote online at the secure MSEA Election 2013 online voting website, [marylandeducators.org/mseaelection2013](http://marylandeducators.org/mseaelection2013). You also can reach the site by visiting the MSEA homepage, [marylandeducators.org](http://marylandeducators.org), and clicking "Vote Here." To vote, you'll need only your MSEA membership number—found on the mailing label of *ActionLine* and on your new MSEA membership card and fob—and the last four digits of your Social Security number.

## LEARN ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

Biographies, statements, and photos for officers, such as president, vice president, treasurer, board of directors, and NEA directors, will continue to appear in the print edition of *ActionLine*.

This year, members will elect two officers to serve on the NEA and MSEA boards of directors. Candidates for those positions who met the nominations deadline of November 16 will appear in the print edition of the January/February *ActionLine* and they will be included in a special Online Election Guide on the Election 2013 website beginning January 25. The new digital *ActionLine* also will feature officer candidate information and a link to the Online Election Guide.

Candidate information for delegate to the NEA Convention, held annually in July, will no longer appear in the print edition of *ActionLine*, but will be featured in the Online Election Guide. Members can refer to the guide as they complete their ballots.



## Win a grant for up to \$3,000 for a sports program from one of NEA's top member benefits programs!

Thousands of MSEA members are saving money by bundling their auto and home insurance policies with California Casualty. Now your high school can save money by applying for a grant of \$1,000-\$3,000 to support a sports program that's been impacted by reduced county and school budgets.

Applications must be submitted by an active employee of the high school for which the grant is being requested and a current member of their local association. Last year, Chesapeake High School, Baltimore County, and Havre de Grace High School, Harford County, received grants to support their school's athletics program.

Applicants will be notified of their application status by April 30, 2013. If awarded a grant, checks will be made payable to the high school and delivered no later than May 15, 2013. A selection committee will review all applications and determine award recipients and grant amounts.

*The deadline for receipt of applications is January 15, 2013. Visit [calcasathletics-grant.com](http://calcasathletics-grant.com) for complete guidelines and apply online or download the form to mail or fax.*

## GOVERNOR O'MALLEY ON LINE 1!



President Betty Weller taking action at an MSEA Tele-Town Hall.

MSEA hosted a Tele-Town Hall in advance of Election Day with more than 4,300 members on the line to ask Governor Martin O'Malley, President Betty Weller, and Delegates Eric Luedtke (D-Montgomery) and Maggie McIntosh (D-Baltimore) questions about the Dream Act, marriage equality, gaming, and more.

This was the third Tele-Town Hall sponsored by MSEA in the last year. Previous Tele-Town Halls focused on fixing maintenance of effort and preventing state cuts to education and public services. The 30-60 minute calls give members the opportunity to learn more about the issues affecting their jobs and families by speaking with top decision-makers.

MSEA is planning more Tele-Town Halls for members in the future. So if your phone rings, make sure you pick it up—it may just be Gov. O'Malley ready to answer your questions!

# EVALUATIONS, COMMON CORE STANDARDS, AND PARCC ASSESSMENTS



## A JUGGLING ACT FOR MARYLAND'S TEACHERS

EDUCATION REFORM IN MARYLAND IS HAPPENING, AND IT'S HAPPENING NOW. IF YOU HAVEN'T READ OR HEARD ABOUT IT, YOU WILL.

If you're a teacher or principal, you know that this year is the pilot year of a new statewide evaluation framework—set in motion by the Education Reform Act of 2010—that is projected to be fully implemented for all teachers and principals next year.

You also know that on the heels of the new evaluation system is the

full implementation of the Common Core Standards, also scheduled for 2013-2014. Next come the PARCC Assessments in 2014-2015—the much anticipated replacement to the MSAs.

It's a juggling act that every educator is looking forward to with a mix of understandable anxiety about the logistics of implementation in the short term, and the promise of a new

era of feedback and high teacher and student achievement in the long term.

The three-part reform effort is a lot to take in, says MSEA President Betty Weller. "While the pressures of such changes are formidable, teachers are standing up for their students' success by being deeply involved in creating an evaluation framework that will meet their needs.





## WHAT ARE THE PARCC ASSESSMENTS?

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is developing new assessments that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

PARCC is a consortium of 25 states working together to develop an assessment system aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Maryland is a Governing State in the PARCC consortium.

The new assessments will be anchored in college and career readiness; provide comparability across states; and be able to assess and measure higher-order skills such as critical thinking, communications, and problem solving.

The PARCC Assessments are scheduled to be implemented in Maryland in the 2014–15 school year and will replace the Maryland School Assessments.

Source: Adapted from Maryland State Department of Education

believe it isn't a successful approach to teacher evaluation or student growth."

MSEA responded quickly and decisively when word of MSDE's unilateral decision reached Annapolis. In a letter to local association presidents offering MSEA support and guidance, Weller urged them to hold firm to their collaboratively developed models and reach out to their school superintendents to support mutually agreed upon models.

"There are still some things to iron out in some counties, but we've been heavily involved at the state and local levels in creating evaluation systems that will provide actionable feedback to help educators continuously improve their instructional practice.

"As long as these initiatives move forward, as they have been, with MSEA and teachers consistently at the table," Weller continued, "I am optimistic that when teachers and administrators are given the tools and resources they need to work at the top of their game, we will see marked gains in student achievement."

## Your evaluation

When the 2010 legislation passed, MSEA knew that the new evaluation systems the law required would take patient and studied collaboration with MSDE and local school systems.

The formation of the Educator Effectiveness Council put MSEA front and center in the development and refinement of the evaluation model. The council is co-chaired by President Betty Weller; Vice President Cheryl Bost, Bridgette Blue (Prince George's), Maleeta Kitchen (Howard), and Dawn Pipkin (St. Mary's) also serve on the council, representing member's interests by fighting for fair, effective, and transparent evaluations aimed at increasing student achievement.

"We've come a long way," Weller told delegates at the MSEA convention in October. "No longer do test scores trump every other factor in the evaluation framework, which would have reduced students to Scantron sheets and completely marginalized educators' professional practice.

There's also greater nuance in the evaluation categories with a whole new category for teachers who are developing."

Since 2010, Weller and MSEA staff experts have met with local associations across the state to support collaborative efforts with their local school systems.

But just as the no-fault pilot evaluations based on MSDE regulations adopted by the State Board of Education in June became a reality for school systems across the state, MSDE played a new card.

The Teacher and Principal Evaluation Guidebook, published this year, provided guidance for local or state evaluation models to use state assessments as at least 10 percent of a teacher's evaluation.

But in September, MSDE backed away from the guidelines, when it increased the requirement for local school system models by raising the weight of state assessments in a teacher's evaluation to 20 percent.

While all school districts were told they had to comply with MSDE's mandate, some local school systems and local associations had already mutually agreed upon percentages ranging from 5 to 30 and had begun implementing their pilot programs at the start of the school year in August.

"We've been working with locals for two years to assist them as they work with their school districts to create evaluation models that reflect the specific needs of their school districts," Weller said. "We can't make the same mistake the federal government did with No Child Left Behind. A one-size-fits-all approach failed then and we

## THE NEW TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL EVALUATIONS

- The purpose is to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and classroom practices of educators to improve student achievement through professional development.
- Evaluation results should give a more detailed look at educator performance so that targeted and supportive professional development can be provided in a timely manner.

- The Educator Effectiveness Council developed the overall framework guiding the state and local models. LEAs select either the state evaluation model or mutually agree to develop their own model.
- In counties participating in Race to the Top, 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation rating will be based on professional practice (planning

and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, professional responsibilities, etc.).\*

- The other 50% of a teacher's evaluation will be based on multiple measures of student growth.\*

\*Excluding Montgomery and Frederick counties.

Source: Adapted from Maryland State Department of Education

## Frederick and Montgomery counties: Exempt from Race to the Top mandates



The implementation of Maryland's new Common Core state curriculum, PARCC Assessments, and educator evaluations are very much connected. Educators will teach the new State Curriculum, administer assessments based on that curriculum, and be evaluated, in part, on their students' achievement in these areas.

Student growth must be a component of every evaluation model used in the state—it's required by law in the Education Reform Act of 2010. But in Frederick and Montgomery counties, the only two school systems in the state that didn't sign on to the federal Race to the Top, evaluation models collaboratively developed by school districts and local associations have more flexibility and in the case of Montgomery County, a more proven track record. The system's nationally recognized 15-year-old Peer Assistance and Review program remains the centerpiece of the county's evaluation process.

REFORM INITIATIVE	2011–2012	2012–2013	2013–2014	2015 AND BEYOND
<b>New Maryland Common Core State Curriculum</b>	Transition plans and writing new curriculum			Full implementation of new state curriculum
<b>PARCC Assessments</b>	Assessment development begins	Pilot field testing, research, data collection	Full field testing, research, data collection	PARCC Assessments fully implemented
<b>New Teacher and Principal Evaluations</b>	Pilot in 7 school districts	Statewide field test	Evaluation system fully operational	

Source: Adapted from Maryland State Department of Education

St. Mary's County is one district confounded by the change. "The most recent MSDE guidance finds us challenged," wrote St. Mary's County Public Schools Superintendent Michael Martirano in a letter to State Superintendent Lillian Lowery, "as we are already deep into this school year, deploying an evaluation system to every teacher in every school that met the requirements as they were originally presented. . . . We have spent numerous hours building capacity and support with our teachers and association representatives."

"We want every teacher and principal to be evaluated using an evaluation framework that meets the needs of their individual school systems and will be transparent, rigorous, and valid instruments to give teachers actual feedback," Weller added. "Evaluations should help them improve what they do in the classroom every day. That's the way this reform can help improve education for our students."

### Common Core and the PARCC Assessments

But wait Maryland educators, there's more. If a newly created evaluation model isn't enough on your plate, don't worry. Here comes the Common Core Curriculum and PARCC, parts two and three of Maryland's public education makeover.

MSEA expects the new evaluations to provide better feedback on how

teachers can improve their professional practice and improve student learning, but the added impact of a new curriculum and new assessments thrown into the mix paints a daunting picture of the next two years.

There is no denying that the prospect of a new evaluation system, implemented as teachers embark on a new curriculum, and using state assessments based on the old curriculum (the new PARCC Assessments are not scheduled to be implemented until 2014-2015) doesn't look well-planned.

Teachers will be teaching to the Common Core Standards next year, but testing with the MSA. "It's a problem not only in strategy," said Vice President Cheryl Bost, "but in content. Some content that may have been in fourth grade may be in fifth grade in Common Core, but the testing will still be in fourth grade. We're going to find those misalignments throughout the grades and that is a big issue, especially when tied to teacher evaluations."

"It's a challenging situation," Weller added. "We're not opposed to reform; we want to be a part of reform. We want our students to achieve more."

"We're not sure, however, that asking teachers to juggle three important reforms at the same time—all critical elements in the long run—is the most efficient or effective way to implement them. Plus, we're in a fiscal situation at

the state and local levels that means fewer resources for the professional development teachers need and deserve around these issues, as well as larger class sizes for them to manage."

If you're a classroom teacher, you've probably attended in-school meetings about the Common Core Curriculum led by your school's four-member team of three faculty members (representing language arts, STEM, and math programs) and your principal.

The teams attended the two Educator Effectiveness Academies held by MSDE over the summers of 2011 and 2012 where they developed transition plans to support school staff as the new curriculum is implemented.

Concerns about school staff readiness for the changes bothers both Weller and Bost, specifically the scope of the professional development and its alignment to the Common Core Standards.

Are the state and counties providing effective professional development on the new standards? How will we know the professional development has been adequate and effective? Can meaningful evaluations—no matter how good the evaluation instrument may be—be made based on untested professional development, a new curriculum, a new evaluation model, and an outdated test?

"If we are really serious about having a world-class education system,"

Weller said, “we have to look at reform as more than an event or crisis every few years. And despite the juggling act we’re faced with now, this should not be something to be feared—it is something to be embraced as an improved approach to teaching and learning.

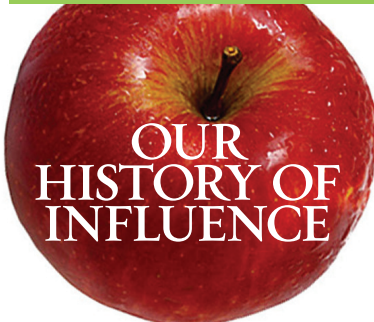
“Our teachers and principals can’t live in fear of losing their jobs because a

group of students performed poorly on a test. MSDE must be prepared to rigorously analyze the results of our efforts: Was it the curriculum? Was it the teacher? Was it the students? Was it the test?

“We need to be prepared to fine-tune the process as our resources and needs change. This process cannot become stagnant; it must

be ongoing,” Weller added. “And throughout this period of intense change, MSEA will be providing support to educators, making sure these reforms are continually evaluated for effectiveness, and staying focused on improving outcomes for our students in the classroom.”

## MSEA AND TEACHER EVALUATIONS



MSEA’s commitment and influence on the design of a fair and equitable evaluation model for teachers and principals began as legislators studied the Education Reform Act of 2010 (ERA). With MSEA’s input at the fore, legislators ensured that local school systems retained important flexibility and local control over the development of evaluation systems.

MSEA collaborated with MSDE and the governor on the ERA and brokered compromises among policymakers and

stakeholders to make sure that we had a strong evaluation system that provides professional development and mentoring to support the development of strong teachers and principals.

“MSEA’s position has always been that we should engage in a thoughtful, reflective process that will result in a rigorous and meaningful evaluation tool that meets the needs of each school system,” said MSEA President Betty Weller.

## HERE’S A TIMELINE OF THE IMPORTANT ROLE MSEA HAS PLAYED AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS TO ENSURE THAT EVALUATION MODELS TRULY SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING.

### JULY 2010

- ⇒ Beginning in July 2010, MSEA has held monthly meetings with the seven original pilot counties—Baltimore City, and Baltimore, Kent, Prince George’s, Queen Anne’s, and St. Mary’s counties—to provide assistance, resources, and guidance to develop a teacher evaluation plan that meets the needs of each local.

### OCTOBER 2010

- ⇒ MSEA hosted two seminars with Charlotte Danielson, author of *A Framework for Teaching*, at MSEA’s 2010 Convention. Danielson’s discussion and Q/A with MSEA members included:
  - ▶ The Framework for Teaching
  - ▶ Making the most of teacher evaluations
  - ▶ Assessing teacher effectiveness

### DECEMBER 2010

- ⇒ President Betty Weller named co-chair of the Maryland Educators Effectiveness Council (EEC). She served first with Superintendent Nancy Grasmick, then with Interim Superintendent Bernie Sadusky. Vice President Cheryl Bost and three other MSEA members were also appointed to the EEC.

### 2011

- ⇒ MSEA attended MSDE focus groups across the state and continuously offered input on the design of the models.

### 2011–PRESENT

- ⇒ MSEA leaders and staff made presentations to MSEA’s Board of Directors, local affiliates, local school systems, collective bargaining councils, and association representative meetings around the state to share the MSEA model and guidelines to consider when developing a local model.

### JANUARY 2011

- ⇒ MSEA’s Teacher Effectiveness Evaluation Model was presented to the Educators Effectiveness Council.

### OCTOBER 2011

- ⇒ President Weller and MSEA staff were invited to share MSEA’s progress, positions, and concerns about teacher evaluations at the superintendents’ fall conference in Ocean City.

### FEBRUARY 2012

- ⇒ MSEA hosted a webinar for members on teacher evaluation.

### JUNE 2012

- ⇒ President Weller and Vice President Bost were influential in extending the timelines for the EEC to continue its work. Weller and Bost also stressed the importance of not just implementing a new evaluation plan, but discussing the lessons learned to date from the pilot counties.

### SEPTEMBER 2012

- ⇒ President Weller sent a letter to local presidents and UniServ directors which detailed MSEA’s position on changes made to the student growth component of the state teacher evaluation model.

### ONGOING

- ⇒ Since Superintendent Lillian Lowery took office, President Weller, Executive Director David Helfman, and Dr. Lowery have met regularly to discuss MSEA’s concerns related to the design, change of criteria, and implementation of the state evaluation model, and lack of collaboration between local school systems and local associations in developing a local model.

# DELEGATES STAND UP FOR MSEA AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

POLICY, POLITICS, DEBATE, AND FUN MARK THE 2012 CONVENTION



*With the highest honor, the highest responsibility, and the highest privilege of educating the next generation, we will continue to stand up to every challenge that we face, and I am looking forward to working and fighting alongside you.*

MSEA President Betty Weller

Jenni Yun, a first-year teacher and delegate from Howard County experienced the rewards of activism as an undergrad at University of Maryland where she was president of Kappa Delta Pi, the international honor society in education. "Getting to know what lies beneath education policy gets me more interested and motivated to do more as a teacher," Yun said.

"When I came into the system, I wanted to get involved and learn more so that I can become a better educator, not just sit there and let other people tell me what to do. My association is supporting me as a teacher and I want to see what I can give back."

Yun attended the HCEA caucuses to determine her delegation's position on elections and new business items, and attended workshops designed especially for new teachers. "It was nice to talk with other new teachers and to learn techniques that I can take back to the classroom."

On October 19, MSEA President Betty Weller took the helm of her first MSEA Convention and Representative Assembly to the applause of more than 500 delegates. Elected by members of local associations across the state, the delegates represented nearly 70,000 teachers, education support professionals, certificated specialists, and student and retired members as they addressed the business of the association.

While delegates got down to work, electing a new member of the MSEA Board of Directors, endorsing a member to run for the educator trustee position to the board of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System, and addressing more than 10 new business items that drive the association's position on policies and procedures, it was fun and informative, too.



Watch videos of Jenni Yun, Howard County, and Paul Britt, Prince George's County, at [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital).

Special educator Paul Britt, Prince George's County, who attended the convention for the third time, came to workshops, including Meeting the Needs of Students within the Autism Spectrum. "I reflect all the time on how I teach my regular special ed students," Britt said, "but I occasionally have an autistic student who comes through my door and I find I have to adjust my thinking. Coming to a workshop like this allows me to reflect from a slightly different perspective and reminds me that I need to treat that student differently. It's like a refresher course."

### CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

"I've been a proud MSEA member as a first year teacher, a working mom, and now as a recent new grandmother," said President **Betty Weller** in her first speech to convention delegates. "At every stage of my career, the association has never let me down—it has always had my back. And now, as your president, I will have your back—standing up and advocating for what we, together, as an association, believe is best for Maryland schools and students."

Weller addressed the challenges facing Maryland schools and educators and introduced a video featuring MSEA members sharing the extra steps they take to help students. "For every challenge," she said, "there are educators ready to stand up."

Weller also addressed the challenge each local association is facing as new teacher and principal evaluation systems are piloted across the state and Common Core Curriculum and new PARCC Assessments loom on the horizon. "As we implement these major reforms, educator involvement is especially important. Why? Because education reform without educator input is doomed to fail." Read more about evaluations and Common Core on page 8.

Delegates elected **Theresa Dudley**, Prince George's County, to complete Vice President Cheryl Bost's term as a member of the MSEA Board of Directors, and endorsed the candidacy

of **Ken Haines**, Prince George's County, for trustee on the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System Board.

**Governor Martin O'Malley** spoke to the delegates in the Representative Assembly Hall, then opened things up at a first-ever town hall, where 200 members asked questions on topics that ranged from Race to the Top and standardized testing to pensions and the new evaluation framework.

Ryan Burbey, president of the Harford County Education Association, told the governor that the important Public Education Labor Relations Board legislation, due to expire in June 2015, had protected the rights of members and stopped unfair bargaining practices in the county. "Can we count on you," Burbey asked, "to support legislation that permanently extends the Labor Relations Board?"

A simple, "Yes," gave members the answer they wanted to hear.



*We expect for the locals to be at the table. Because let me tell you, I know better than anyone that if the teachers aren't there, we aren't going to get any of this work done. None of it.*

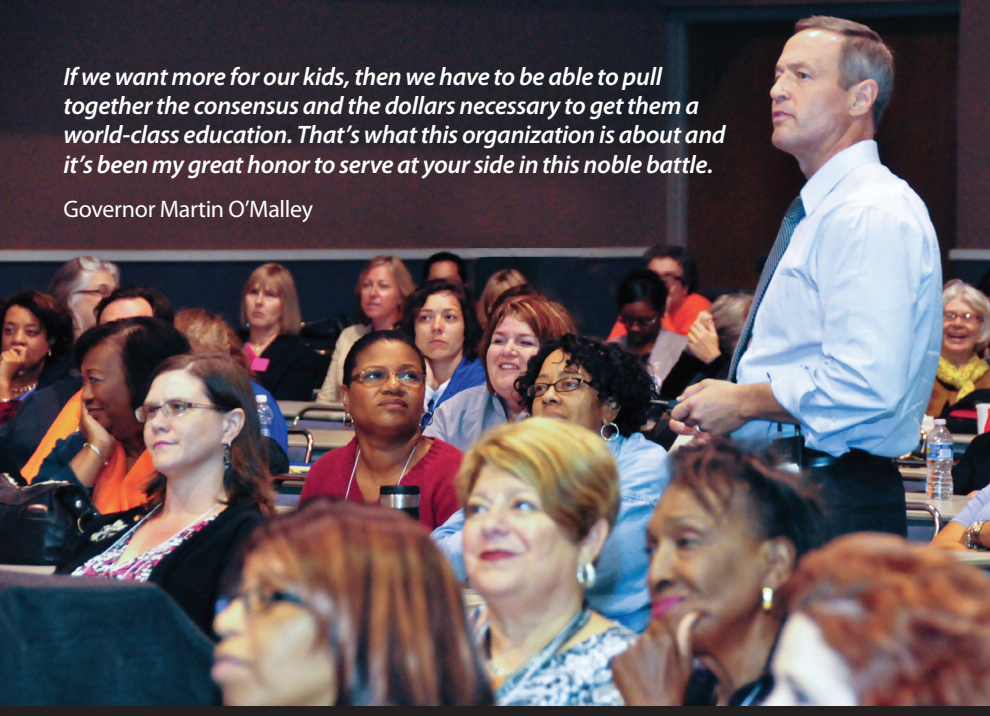
Superintendent Lillian Lowery



Get easy access to videos of convention events, plus links to convention photo galleries and a report on the new business items debated by delegates at [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital).

*If we want more for our kids, then we have to be able to pull together the consensus and the dollars necessary to get them a world-class education. That's what this organization is about and it's been my great honor to serve at your side in this noble battle.*

Governor Martin O'Malley



Visit MSEA's YouTube channel, [youtube.com/user/MarylandEducation](https://www.youtube.com/user/MarylandEducation), to watch all the videos from 2012 Convention highlights, including speeches, Governor O'Malley's Town Hall Q&A, Tray Chaney's "Radical Readers" performance, and more.

PAC fundraising efforts," said Sean Johnson, MSEA's director of legislative and political affairs. "They know that the fight for our students, our jobs, and the future of public education requires their investment in PAC and commitment to political action."

But it wasn't all work and business at the convention. For delegates arriving Thursday night, **Region Feud** offered laughs, camaraderie, and Kindle Fires to the winning team from the South Region. MSEA's annual takeover of **Seacrets** brought hundreds of delegates for dinner and dancing. And MSEA's Read Across Maryland middle school initiative took center stage on Friday in the RA Hall when "The Wire" actor **Tray Chaney** performed his rap song, "Radical Readers."

After brief remarks on Saturday morning in the RA Hall, **Superintendent Lillian Lowery** took questions from delegates. "We're feeling very disenfranchised on many issues, not the least of which is the state-mandated teacher evaluation," said Debbie Pappas, president of Allegany County Teachers Association. "The communication is poor—most things get communicated to the local systems but it doesn't filter down to us. We want to be there to support many initiatives."

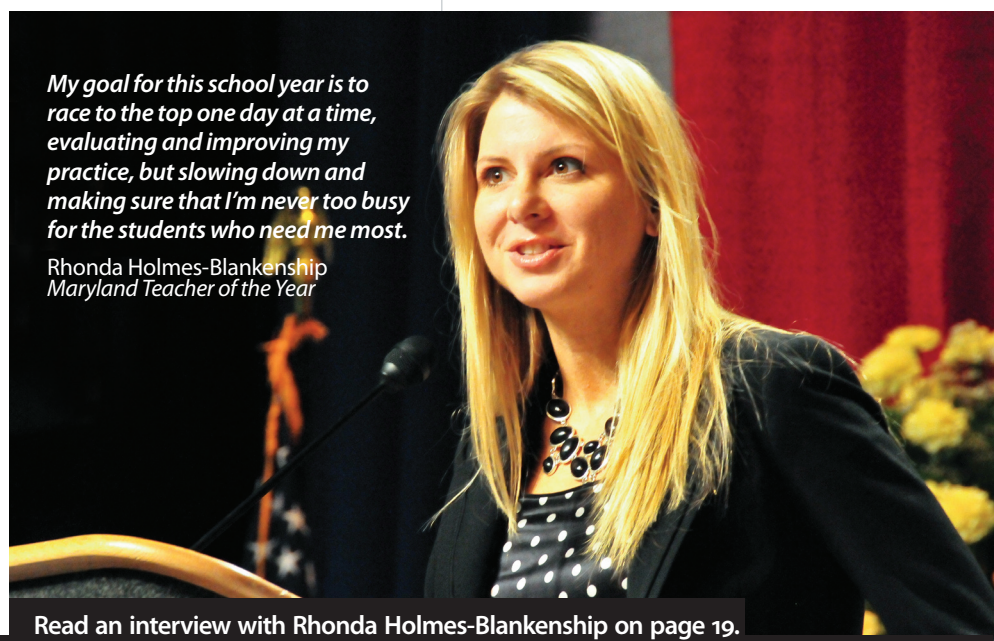
Lowery agreed, noting she recognized it immediately when she came to Maryland. "We have said to [the superintendents and assistant superintendents] that we expect for the locals to be at the table, because I know better than anyone, if the teachers aren't there we aren't going to get any of this work done."

Lowery added that MSDE has hired a position that reports directly to her to help address the problem. David Volrath, she said, "will be working directly with district leadership, including local union leadership, to make sure that everyone is at the table and everyone has a voice."

Delegates took MSEA's political action committee (PAC) theme, **Don't Fight Alone**, literally this year when local associations stepped up to the PAC challenge to strengthen educators'

political voice by signing up for payroll deduction. Delegates increased their participation rate in payroll deduction by 50 percent, a significant boost to MSEA's efforts to support pro-public education candidates in the critical 2014 statewide elections.

By the end of the convention, 18 delegations—more than half—could boast 100 percent of their delegates contributing through payroll deduction; six more reached 75 percent. "Convention delegates put their money where their mouth is and really took the lead in our



*My goal for this school year is to race to the top one day at a time, evaluating and improving my practice, but slowing down and making sure that I'm never too busy for the students who need me most.*

Rhonda Holmes-Blankenship  
*Maryland Teacher of the Year*

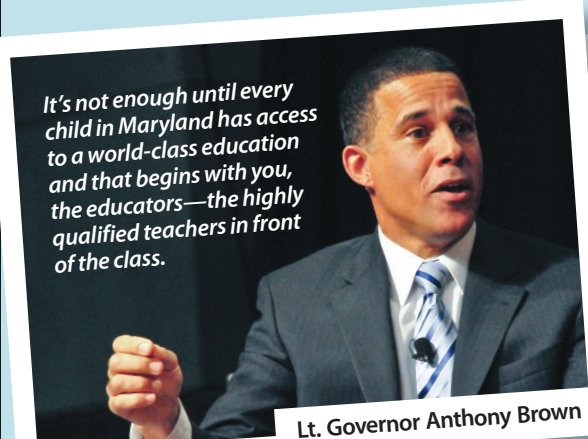
Read an interview with Rhonda Holmes-Blankenship on page 19.

# Prospective candidates for the 2014 governor's race

MSEA is committed to being strongly engaged in the 2014 governor's race so that our next governor will be the champion for Maryland's public schools that our students need. That's why we invited the likely or frequently rumored candidates for governor, both Republicans and Democrats, to join us at convention this year. We were happy to welcome five Maryland leaders to the Representative Assembly, the body that will ultimately vote on MSEA's gubernatorial endorsement for the 2014 race.

President Weller interviewed each on their vision for Maryland's future, their past work with educators, and an outstanding educator who had made a difference in their lives.

Watch Weller's Q&A with the prospective candidates at [marylandeducators.org/conventionvideos](http://marylandeducators.org/conventionvideos).



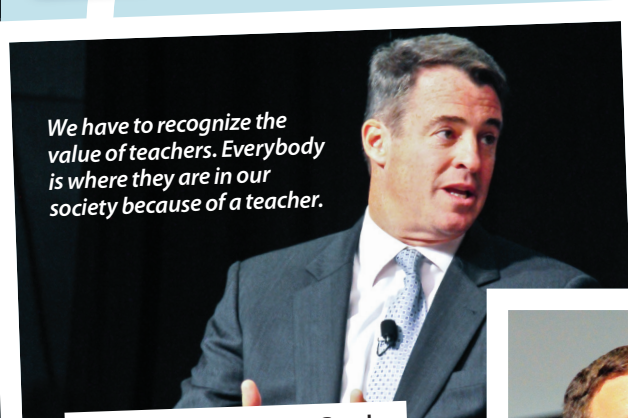
*It's not enough until every child in Maryland has access to a world-class education and that begins with you, the educators—the highly qualified teachers in front of the class.*

Lt. Governor Anthony Brown




*Fifteen years from now we're going to see some exciting developments by the students you're teaching, so thank you for your great service.*

State Comptroller Peter Franchot



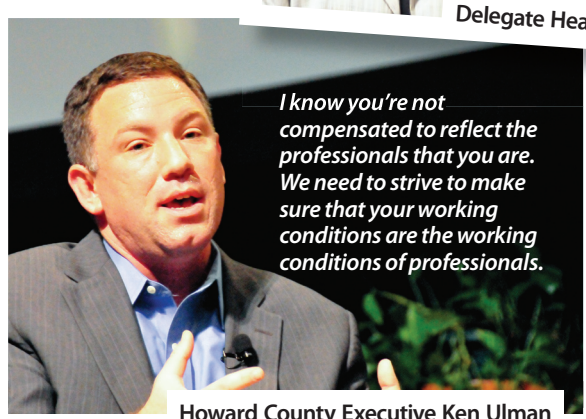
*We have to recognize the value of teachers. Everybody is where they are in our society because of a teacher.*

Attorney General Doug Gansler



*You should be focused on creating great, creative, and critical thinkers and not just having to teach to the next test.*

Delegate Heather Mizeur



*I know you're not compensated to reflect the professionals that you are. We need to strive to make sure that your working conditions are the working conditions of professionals.*

Howard County Executive Ken Ulman



### Former local president elected to Howard County school board

A longtime education activist and former local association president was elected to the Howard County school board thanks to a strong effort by members of the Howard County Education Association (HCEA).

"Our members put a 40-year veteran of education and union work on our board of education," said HCEA President Paul Lemle. "Ann DeLacy is an expert on education policy, and she's an incredibly strong activist for students and their teachers.

"HCEA volunteers staffed phone banks, canvassed neighborhoods, and talked to undecided voters throughout early voting and on election day," Lemle added. "They are, without a doubt, responsible for this win—a win shared by students, educators, and the community."

Getting their candidate elected on November 6 is only one way HCEA is making their presence felt in the county. Nearly 400 members have joined or increased their contribution to MSEA's Fund for Children and Public Education. The Fund will support future education-friendly candidates in the 2014 elections.

*Anna Gannon, a Howard County K-5 grade technology teacher and an MSEA director, and her niece Tyera bundled up on November 6 to campaign for winning board of education candidate Ann DeLacy.*

### Frederick, Harford counties host professional development for ESPs

In Frederick County, 300 education support professionals made the most of their Staff Development Day by attending a full day of classes and workshops all aimed at increasing their effectiveness on the job. In its fifteenth year, the event is the oldest of all association-sponsored ESP programs and is part of Frederick Association of School Support Employees' negotiated agreement with the school district.

With hands-on classes like Navigating the Frederick County Public Schools Website, Word Tips and Tricks, and a United Health Care presentation, ESPs left with a better handle on skills they need to stay informed about the school system, communicate better in emails and in person, and be fully informed about their benefits and how to use them.

In Know Your Rights, MSEA attorney Saurabh Gupta shared with support professionals ways to stay safe and protected at work. "We talked

*FASSE member Nicholas Sizemore clicked his way through the Frederick County Public Schools website in one of more than 10 classes offered at the association's annual ESP staff development day.*



about how to handle issues such as intervening in fights, student assaults on employees, allegations by students of abuse and/or assault, as well as protecting an individual's employment status if he or she is forced out on an extended leave because of an injury on the job," said Gupta.

"Knowing when to consult your UniServ Director is one of the most important things you can do to protect your job," he added. "Getting support before an issue gets beyond your control is critical."\*

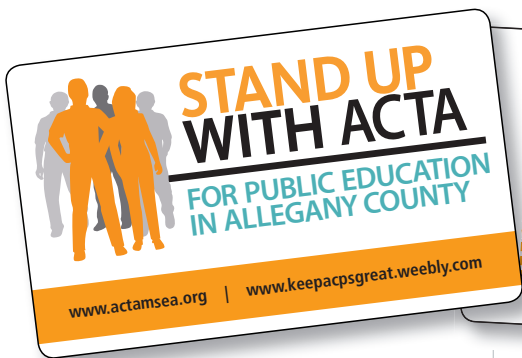
In Harford County, workshops such as Beginner Sign, Sign Language II, Technology Etiquette, and a number of self-improvement workshops marked this year's Harford County ESP Professional Development Day.

"We had almost 300 support professionals attend our seventh annual professional staff development day," said Victoria Bridges, president of the Harford County Educational Services Council (HCEC). "Our goal is to bring presentations and workshops that will help our members on the job. Whether it's learning how to communicate better with students, parents, and colleagues, learning new skills to enhance our jobs, or getting tips on protecting our health, the information people leave with is something they can use immediately at work or at home.

"We're proud of taking leadership of this event," Bridges continued. "We build confidence and gain members in HCEC with every event, and that means stronger advocacy for our members."

*\*Any local association can request MSEA's Legal Rights and Responsibilities program. Contact MSEA Legal Affairs, 800.448.6782, ext. 3668, or snolan@mseane.org, to learn more.*





Are you concerned about the county budget and what it means for public education in Garrett County?

**You're not alone.**

- Our schools are already feeling the negative effects of inadequate funding.
- Programs have been cut.
  - Dozens of teaching positions have been lost through attrition.
  - Text book and technology purchases have been cut back.
  - Class sizes are growing.

**What can we do about it?**

- We can:**
- ✓ **STAND UP** for our children's future.
  - ✓ **STAND UP** for quality public education.
  - ✓ **STAND UP** for adequate funding for your schools.

**Will you help?** How will you STAND UP with GCEA for Public Education and Garrett County's students?

- I WILL:**
- \_\_\_ Visit the STAND UP Website and learn more.
  - \_\_\_ Send an email to our county commissioners.
  - \_\_\_ Sign the STAND UP Petition.
  - \_\_\_ Attend a county commissioners meeting.
  - \_\_\_ Attend a STAND UP town hall meeting.

**Contact information:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Allegany and Garrett counties launch public awareness campaign focused on school funding**

Residents in Western Maryland can expect to hear from members of the Allegany and Garret County education associations in the coming months. Local associations in each county are organizing members and launching campaigns to focus educators, parents, the public, county officials, and state legislators on critical funding issues that are undermining progress for students and schools.

The counties are suffering from cuts to teaching positions, programs, and resources like textbooks and technology while class sizes are growing. "We're asking each member to commit to taking small steps that involve some action beyond

Local associations in Allegany and Garrett counties are using these cards to start a conversation on school funding.

their building," said Garrett County Education Association President Mike Pula. "We know with the stakes this high, our membership and the public will be compelled to take action."

"We need to bring the issue to the forefront and let folks know that local educators are very concerned that inadequate funding is jeopardizing the quality of education their children receive," added Allegany County Education Association President Debbie Pappas.

"We're going to be reaching out to our PTA, community leaders, and most importantly our members," Pappas added, "to help deliver the message to our local elected officials that adequate school funding is their responsibility."

**important dates**

**NOVEMBER**

28-Dec 1 National Council of Urban Education Associations Fall Conference *Seattle, WA*

**DECEMBER**

- 7-8 Minority Leadership Training Program Equity Series *Harbourtowne Resort, St. Michaels*
- 10 MSEA West Coordinated Bargaining Council (CBC)
- 11 MSEA East CBC
- 13 MSEA Urban CBC
- 14 MSEA Board of Directors Meeting
- 24-Jan 1 *MSEA offices closed for holidays*

**JANUARY**

- 8 MSEA East CBC
- 8-9 MSEA Board of Directors Meeting
- 9 First Day of General Assembly  
MSEA's General Assembly Open House
- 10 MSEA Urban CBC
- 11-12 East Regional CBC Training  
*Harbourtowne Resort, St. Michaels*
- 17 MSEA Southern CBC
- 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast and Minority Recognition Awards  
*Martin's Crosswinds, Greenbelt*
- 21 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
*MSEA office closed*
- 26 National Board Jump Start Follow-up Seminar  
National Board Advance Candidate Seminar  
National Board Renewal Seminar
- 28 MSEA West CBC
- 30 Retired Advisory Council Annual Lobby Day *MSEA Headquarters*

**Our members are going green!**

**CONGRATULATIONS to Arnetta Gibson, Baltimore City; Cheryl Womack-Whyte, Baltimore County; and Amy Smith, Cecil County, for winning \$100 in our Going Green contest announced in the last issue of ActionLine. They signed up for FrontLine, the enewsletter about the political and policy issues affecting Maryland educators, and Learning Lounge, the monthly enewsletter focused on professional development.**

**Stay informed about issues like teacher evaluation, student resources, and school funding. Sign up for FrontLine and Learning Lounge today at [marylandeducators.org/enews](http://marylandeducators.org/enews).**

**Frederick County members help elect three education-friendly candidates to school board**

The Frederick County Teachers Association (FCTA) enlisted member volunteers like Deb Schray (pictured above) to help elect Zakir Bengali, Katie Groth, and Joy Schaefer to the county school board. "Ensuring that board members who want to work with educators rather than against them were elected was crucial this year," said FCTA President Gary Brennan. "With pro-public education members like Dr. Bengali, Ms. Groth, and Ms. Schaefer in place, we hope to build a collaborative relationship with our school board that is focused on solving real problems while preserving what is great about our school system."



## On the Job

### Here's a makeover that really matters: The school lunch

If you work in a school in Maryland, you can't miss it—the new and improved school lunch. With childhood obesity rates soaring, portion control gone out of control, and family meals being pushed aside to make room for overwrought schedules, parents, schools, and communities are taking a second look at what it means to nourish our children.

The new lunch program kicked in at the beginning of this school year. Thanks to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, which passed unanimously in 2010, the overhaul marks the first significant improvement to the nutrition standards for the National School Lunch Program in 15 years. Championed by First Lady Michelle Obama, the legislation is one piece of her Let's Move campaign to fight

childhood obesity. According to the Centers for Disease Control, nearly 20 percent of children and adolescents are obese; one of three low income preschool children are obese or overweight before their fifth birthday. Introducing healthy foods at school is one way to improve nutrition for millions of children.

It's a culture shift that has affected everyone from the frontline cafeteria employees and supervisors to food suppliers upset over portion control and whether the tomato sauce on a pizza would be counted as a vegetable (it is). Now school cafeterias must provide fresh fruits and vegetables with every meal, increase the offerings of whole grain foods, provide age appropriate portions and calories, and stay within the guidelines on saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium.



Sharon Eburg, vice president of FASSE, and Frederick County food services supervisor, with Judith Gordon, Frederick County Public Schools food service manager. Gordon, Eburg and her colleagues, and food service employees across the county worked together to make a seamless transition to healthier lunches.

These changes didn't happen without plenty of training and planning, says Frederick Association of School Support Employees Vice President Sharon Eburg, and that's made for the comfortable transition for both cafeteria staffers and students in Frederick County. "We've been offering fresh fruits and vegetables for almost a year, and we had already implemented the new portion controls and calorie counts," said Gordon, who supervises five elementary, middle, and high schools in Frederick County. "Our students weren't taken by surprise."

New recipes introduce nutrition-rich foods, too. "We've prepared baked butternut squash with brown sugar that the kids really liked. And they are loving the new whole wheat pizza crust and chicken nuggets with whole wheat breading," Eburg added. "School staff tells us that they've seen students eat foods they never, ever thought they'd see them try!"

New school menus make sure students are getting a better, more nutritious lunch. Just look at this sample before and after menu! Students are now offered both fruits and vegetables every day of the week. Menus have substantially increased offerings of whole grain-rich foods and low-fat or fat-free milk varieties. Portions and calorie counts are based on the age of the child. New menus are aimed at reducing the amounts of saturated fat, trans fats, and sodium.

#### CHECK OUT A BEFORE AND AFTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LUNCH

#### BEFORE



**TOTAL**  
• Saturated fat: 10.8  
• Trans fat: 1 g  
• Sodium: 1381 mg



##### Hot dog on Bun with Ketchup

- Saturated fat: 7 g
- Trans fat: 1 g
- Sodium: 990 mg

##### Canned Pears (1/4 c)

- Saturated fat: 0.1 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Sodium: 3 mg

##### Carrots/Raw Celery (1/4 c)

- Saturated fat: 0.1 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Sodium: 21 mg

##### Ranch Dressing (1.75 T)

- Saturated fat: 2.1 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Sodium: 214 mg

##### Lowfat (1%) Chocolate Milk (8 oz)

- Saturated fat: 1.5 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Sodium: 153 mg

##### Whole Wheat Spaghetti with meat sauce (1/2 c)

- Saturated fat: 0.4 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Sodium: 189 mg

##### Whole Wheat Roll/Margarine

- Saturated fat: .7 g
- Trans fat: .4 g
- Sodium: 448 mg

##### Broccoli/Green Beans (1 c)

- Saturated fat: 0.1 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Sodium: 33 mg

##### Kiwi Halves (1/2 c)

- Saturated fat: 0 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Sodium: 3 mg

##### Lowfat (1%) Milk (8 oz)

- Saturated fat: 1.5 g
- Trans fat: 0 g
- Sodium: 127 mg

##### Low Fat Ranch Dip (1 oz)

- Saturated fat: 0.4 g
- Trans fat: 0.1 g
- Sodium: 258 mg

##### TOTAL

- Saturated fat: 3.1 g
- Trans fat: 0.5 g
- Sodium: 1058 mg

#### AFTER



Who can pass up Porcupine Sliders, Smokin' Powerhouse Chili, or Squish Squash Lasagna? Check out the winning Recipes for Healthy Kids, submitted by food service professionals from schools across the country. Plus watch Sharon Eburg's video, see a before and after the makeover school lunch menu, and discover Maryland's Farm to School program at [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital).

## Teacher of the Year Rhonda Holmes-Blankenship: “I want to be a voice for both teachers and students.”



Rhonda Holmes-Blankenship with one of her English classes at Rising Sun High School in Cecil County.

PHOTO: ADELMA GREGORY-BUNNELL/COURTESY OF THE CECIL WHIG

High school English teacher Rhonda Holmes-Blankenship is Maryland's newest Teacher of the Year. For Holmes-Blankenship, an unremarkable student with stresses outside of school life, the intervention and encouragement of teachers helped her find new focus. As a teacher, Holmes-Blankenship uses her experience to understand the roadblocks potentially successful students face, helping struggling students find their way to achievement and the prospect of a better life.

But that's not all she brings to the classroom. She is a National Board Certified teacher who writes county curriculum, is a member of her School Improvement Team, participates in professional learning communities, facilitates school and county professional development, and mentors student teachers.

*ActionLine* spoke with Holmes-Blankenship recently to learn more about her career, how she approaches her teaching practice, and her plans as Teacher of the Year.

### In what ways, beyond teaching in the classroom, have you become more connected to your profession?

As I have sought opportunities to grow professionally, I have become more deeply connected to the profession by collaborating with my colleagues.

My mentor for the National Board Certification process was Josie Perry, a National Board Certified teacher at my school. It was invigorating to have a colleague evaluate my instruction with me, reading lesson plans, looking at student work samples, and watching video clips of my lessons. Whether I am participating in a book study or writing curriculum, collaborating with my colleagues widens my perspective, enriches my practice, and reaffirms my commitment to the teaching profession.

### What activities or professional development have been most empowering to you and helped you to feel that you are able to direct the future of teaching?

The National Board Certification process was critical in preparing me for the Race to the Top initiatives, especially the new teacher evaluation models. Prior to the NBC process, I was over-concerned with covering content; I felt pressured to have my students complete a certain number of units before the end of the semester.

However, achieving NBC is contingent on the teacher's ability to demonstrate clear and consistent evidence of student growth, so I learned to focus more on my students' mastery of standards rather than the quantity of content that we covered. Therefore, I definitely feel prepared to participate in a teacher

evaluation system that involves discussions about and evidence of student growth.

### How do you work with students to teach critical thinking skills when there is so much emphasis on standardized testing?

Ideally, when we teach critical thinking skills, we are preparing students for standardized tests. When I expose students to complex, thought-provoking texts and give them opportunities to explore, discuss, and write about those texts, I am helping them develop skills that will be assessed on standardized tests, but more importantly, I am preparing them for college and demanding careers.

### How do you think you can make an impact on the progress of teaching and learning as Maryland's Teacher of the Year?

I want to be a voice for both teachers and students. I recently read an article in *USA Today* about how accomplished teachers often feel that their voices are ignored and their talents are unrecognized.

Superintendent Lowery plans to hold Teacher Leader Conversations, bringing together teachers from across the state to share their experiences and ideas regarding current trends and policies in education. I attended the first meeting November 20, and I am looking forward to representing my colleagues.

As a voice for students, I want to emphasize the importance of preparing every student for the demands of college and careers. I believe that by empowering our best teachers and pushing every student to "want more," we can keep the American Dream alive for this generation and the ones that will follow.



Read the full interview and watch a video of Holmes-Blankenship's speech to the delegates at Convention 2012 at [marylandeducators/aldigital](http://marylandeducators/aldigital).

## Building bridges, building strength



Our strength comes not only from our numbers but from the outstanding skills and expertise we can call our own.

As school districts and state affiliates grapple with tight budgets, states are taking the lead in identifying economic and organizational efficiencies to create stronger associations. One of the groups spearheading this effort is the National Council of State Education Associations (NCSEA). Currently, I am serving as NCSEA president.

NCSEA works to strengthen state affiliates and NEA by advocating for state interests and working to advance a jointly developed agenda. Last year, NCSEA leaders engaged the NEA executive committee in discussions around shared priorities—member advocacy, improved school quality, organizing, communications, and affiliate fiscal health—which became the core of NEA's 2012-14 strategic budget.

NCSEA also facilitates states working together to support each other. For example, a task force led by the Ohio and Pennsylvania executive directors created guidelines for stronger fiscal controls. These guidelines are being adopted across the country, protecting member dues dollars from misuse.

States are also helping each other out in times of crisis. This year, numerous state affiliates sent staff to Arizona and North Carolina, where legislators had stripped the ability of members to pay dues through payroll deduction, a clear attack on educators' ability to organize. Staff reached out to members and converted their payroll agreements to electronic fund transfers. These staff did indispensable work to keep these state affiliates strong.

MSEA has benefited from collaborative state partnerships. This year, we combined forces with the Virginia Education Association and started to implement a computer backup and disaster recovery system. This project has the potential to reduce both our operating risk and expense. Recently, MSEA UniServ staff participated in negotiations training developed and presented by the Pennsylvania State Education Association. With contracts in nearly 500 school districts, PSEA has gained great expertise in negotiations training. Now educators in Maryland can benefit from the contract negotiations skills that MSEA's UniServ staff developed by working with PSEA.

This exchange of staff expertise has gone both ways. I am proud that MSEA staff has generously assisted our fellow state affiliates. When NCSEA called for volunteers, Marsha Meekins (UniServ in Frederick) and Randy Mickens (Government Relations) spent a month leading member election efforts in Virginia. Courtney Dowling (UniServ in Southern Maryland) spent the month in Florida deeply engaged in similar efforts. Marsha, Randy, and Courtney returned from these swing states exhausted and invigorated, with stronger skills and new friendships.

At NCSEA and here in Maryland, we're determined to improve these state-to-state partnerships and pass those benefits on to members. As an association, our strength comes not only from our numbers but from the outstanding skills and expertise that we can call our own—and can share with one another.

## 3 REASONS you should care about SEQUESTRATION

Starting in January, there will be \$1.2 trillion in across-the-board spending cuts (sequestration) over 10 years to reduce the deficit. This is on top of \$1.5 trillion in cuts that have already happened. Cuts are split equally between defense and domestic programs.

### HERE ARE THE TOP THREE REASONS YOU SHOULD CARE:

**1 The cuts won't ever heal.** If the automatic, across-the-board budget cuts kick in on January 2 then education funding would drop to pre-2003 levels, even though public schools now have 5.4 million more students. All federal education programs, including Title 1, IDEA, Head Start, and English language learner grants, would face a \$4.8 billion reduction in 2013.

**2 It really hurts children.** More than 9 million students would lose essential services. Head Start cuts would eliminate slots for almost 80,000 young children; almost \$1 billion in cuts to IDEA would impact nearly a half a million students with disabilities; education programs for homeless children would be cut by \$5.3 million; and School Improvement Grants would be cut by \$44 million, hurting 67,000 students in our neediest schools.

**3 Education jobs are at stake.** More than 78,000 jobs across pre-K-12 and higher education would be eliminated. These across-the-board cuts would cost up to 2.1 million jobs when you factor in the professions outside of education.

Learn more about education and sequestration at [edvoices.com/blog/2012/11/07/education-sequestration-cuts](http://edvoices.com/blog/2012/11/07/education-sequestration-cuts).



Watch David's video at [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital).



## STAND UP WITH MSEA IN OUR PRO-STUDENT, PRO-EDUCATOR, AND PRO-PUBLIC EDUCATION AGENDA FOR THE 2013 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

“Our top priority for the 2013 General Assembly is to continue advocating for the investments in our students, educators, programs, and services that have made Maryland’s public schools tops in the nation for four consecutive years,” said Gary Brennan, chair of MSEA’s legislative committee. “With appropriate and reliable resources, we know we can recruit and retain high quality educators across the state and provide the world-class education that every student deserves.”

### MSEA’s priorities for 2013 include:

#### CONTINUED INVESTMENTS IN OUR SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, AND EDUCATORS

We must continue advocating for full funding of Thornton and support legislation that mandates funding the geographic cost of education index to ensure students have the resources they need no matter where they live. In addition to the investments in the classroom, now is a critical time to add funding in the capital budget to modernize facilities and build new schools.

#### STATEWIDE FAIR SHARE FOR SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

The collective bargaining process is critical to ensure that educators’ voices are a part of local decisions made about schools. Many counties already have fair share (also called agency fee), which requires that non-members pay their fair share for legally required representation at the bargaining table and negotiated benefits provided by local associations. But in some counties, non-members are riding on the coattails of active members. We must end the patchwork approach to ensure fairness and strengthen our profession with statewide fair share legislation.

#### PRO-STUDENT INITIATIVES THAT HELP STUDENTS ACHIEVE IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

Whether it is investing in common sense and proven initiatives like Maryland Meals for Achievement, which provides an innovative classroom breakfast program for students, or expanding career technology education programs, we know what tools students need to succeed in the classroom and be prepared when they graduate.

**The MSEA legislative program and agenda will have the association engaging in hundreds of other education-related bills. Our efforts to support students, schools, and school employees include:**

#### REJECTING VOUCHERS AND NEO-VOUCHERS, LIKE THE BOAST BILL

Governor O’Malley and the General Assembly must reject schemes that divert public money to private schools that fail to meet the same high standards of accountability as public schools and that are not required to uphold the First Amendment and other rights and protections of students and employees.

#### PROTECTING MARYLAND’S CHARTER SCHOOL LAW

Maryland’s strong charter school law strikes the right balance between local control, accountability, and innovative instruction. However, in recent years, profiteers in the charter school movement nationally have sought legislative solutions that would undermine the local control of communities and organizing rights of educators in creating and running these schools. We must make sure that such efforts do not gain traction in Maryland.

#### PROTECTING RETIREMENT SECURITY

MSEA will continue to advocate for full funding of actuarially determined contributions to the state pension system so that the retirement security of all educators is protected.

“On the heels of a very successful year legislatively and politically, MSEA leaders and members will continue advocating our positive agenda in support of our schools, our students, and our jobs,” said Sean Johnson, MSEA director of legislative and political affairs. “Our members, leaders, and legislative committee have worked to craft an agenda that focuses on legislative solutions that improve learning and strengthen our profession.”

Stay informed now and throughout the General Assembly—sign up for *Up the Street*, an insider’s look at the legislative and political issues that matter most to Maryland educators. Visit [marylandeducators.org/upthestreet](http://marylandeducators.org/upthestreet).



**UP the STREET** *Weekly legislative updates*  
MARYLAND STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



Visit [marylandeducators.org/legupdates](http://marylandeducators.org/legupdates) learn more about MSEA’s plans for the 2013 General Assembly.



# Meet Renee Cross



After six long years of work, undergrad and grad, my family and I celebrated my master's degree.

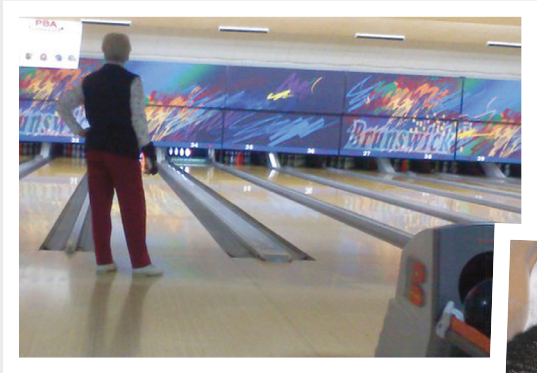
**Renee Cross**  
Library Media Specialist  
Taneytown Elementary • Carroll County

The library media center at Taneytown Elementary is a place where everyone comes to meet and learn. It's the heart of our building, which is the reason I put my heart into it.

In the three years since joining the staff at TES, so much of my life has been dedicated to my profession; I breathe access to information and thrive off of the technology that provides it. Beyond my career, I explore the world so that I can bring my life experiences back to my school. These are the things that allow me to be a great library media specialist, teacher, and support for classroom teachers.

I have a large, wonderful, supportive family and I spend quite a bit of time entertaining them in my home in historic Uniontown, Maryland. Maintaining a home that is 100 years old has its challenges, but when the day is done it is simply amazing to know that I am working to preserve a beautiful piece of American history.

Life as a library media specialist is creative, challenging, educational, and fun both inside and outside of school. It is hard work, but I gladly surrender my heart and soul to it because every school needs a place where everyone can come to learn together. Every school needs a heart.



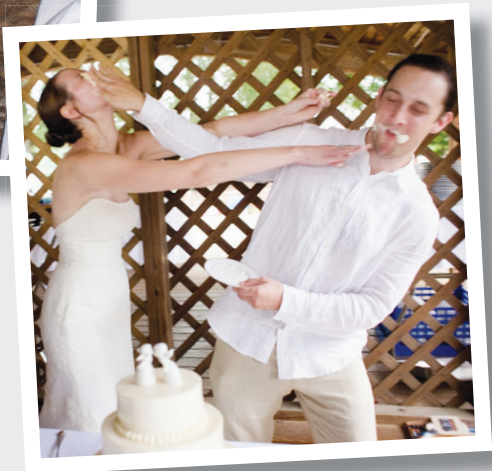
One of my favorite family members, my 92-year-old grandmother, is my inspiration. Here she is bowling on her 90th birthday. She is a pillar of strength in my life.



Our two cats, Cupcake and Thursday, enjoy keeping each other warm in our drafty old house. We're certain that they love the historic charm of the house as much as we do so they don't mind the chilly winter nights.



My friends and I love kayaking.



I've enjoyed the company of my husband Gaelen for almost nine years now. He's always finding ways to keep me on my feet. Here we are on our wedding day four years ago.



Visit [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital) to watch Renee's video!

When you need help or have a suggestion, contact your Association Representative at school or:



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**Primary Contact Staff**  
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ESP: Louis R. Petronella 301/268-2863

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**Wicomico** TCH & ESP: Marinus van Kullenburg 443/859-7073

**Worcester** TCH & ESP: J.C. Parker 410/546-9313

**MSEA Mid-Shore Regional Office**  
Keith Wright 410/793-6923

**Program Staff**  
140 Main Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
800/448-6782 • 410/263-6600  
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**EDITOR**  
Casey Newton

**DESIGN**  
Eastport Design

**COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT**  
Hallie Andrew

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