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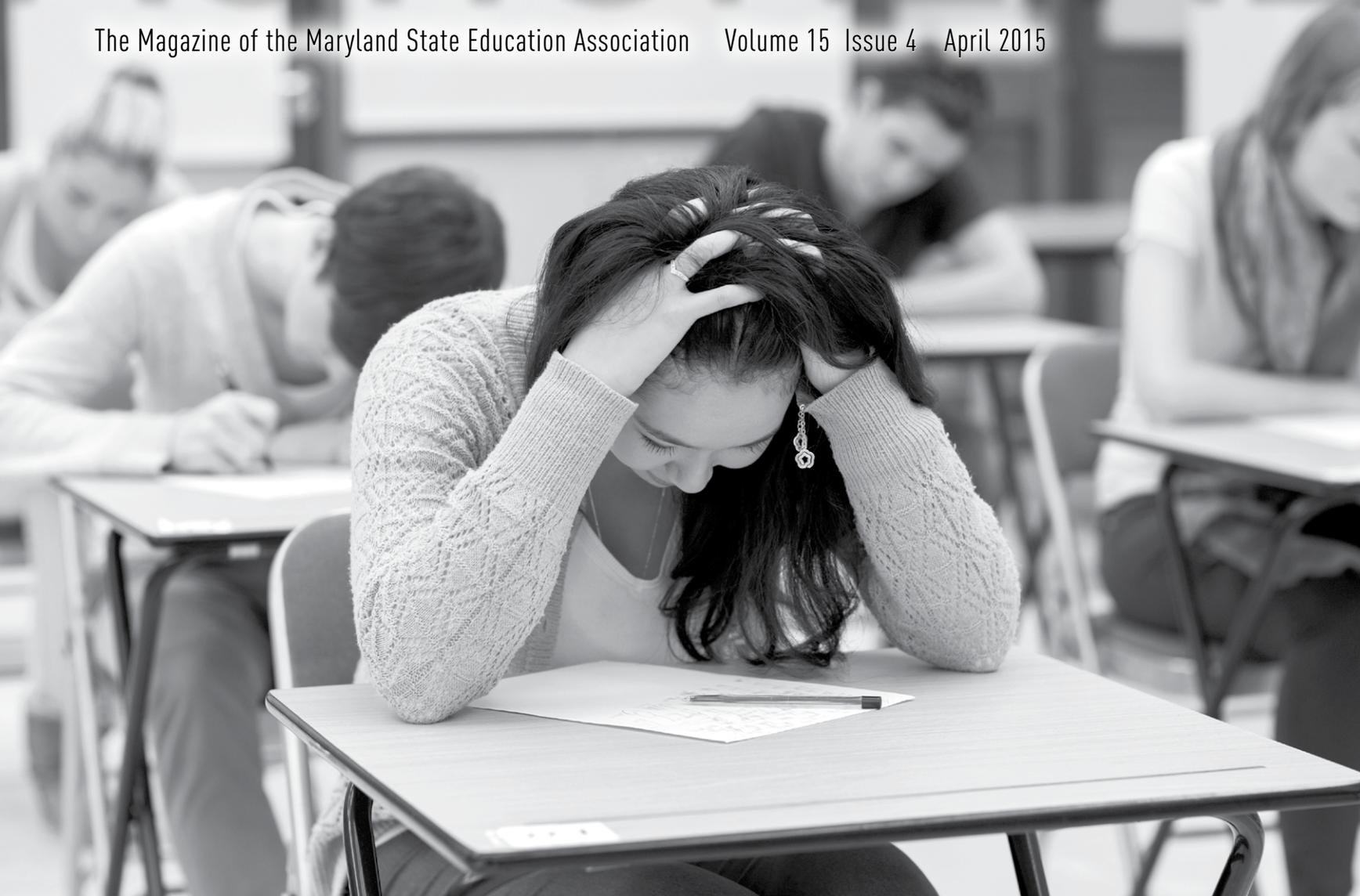
MSEA ELECTION  
**RESULTS**

SCHOOL FUNDING  
**VOUCHERS**

ESP FOCUS  
500 WORDS

# ACTIONLINE

The Magazine of the Maryland State Education Association    Volume 15 Issue 4    April 2015



## **TESTING OUR RESOLVE**

Locals, MSEA, and NEA take on testing mania

## SPECIAL FEATURE TESTING OUR RESOLVE

Educators, students, and parents are losing their patience over crushing federal, state, and local testing schedules. MSEA members are fighting back to end over-testing and to bring back the joy, curiosity, and fun of teaching and learning.

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Gov. Hogan's education budget had disastrous cuts that could balloon to \$600 million in four years. It's obvious the governor's agenda is out of step with what Marylanders and educators need.

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Mark your calendar for **Honesty Day**, the IPD Conference, and MSEA Night at Camden Yards! **Frederick County teachers mobilize** for member-to-member outreach. Your pension is worth fighting for. **MSEA has stood up to legislators** for decades to protect it. **Teacher Appreciation Day** is May 2!

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Meet Harford County paraeducator Benjamin Long II. There are no bad kids, says Long, just bad choices.

### WHEN GOVERNOR HOGAN

announced his plan to slash \$144 million from the education budget in January, it signaled to MSEA that vital resources for Maryland students were in danger. I'm happy to say that because of the advocacy of educators from across the state and the hard work of education-friendly legislators, the restoration of more than 90% of those cuts is now making its way through the General Assembly. That's a big accomplishment for MSEA and our state.



Through thousands of emails, phone calls, and visits to legislators, members and parents explained exactly what this budget would mean in real terms: overcrowded classrooms, inadequate technology, and slashed programs. Advocates talked about how drastic budget cuts would threaten our workforce and widen the achievement gap. Educators across the state made it clear why Maryland needed a better budget.

Indeed, for our students with special needs who won't lose the support of paraeducators to position [READ MORE](#)



Teacher and delegate Eric Ebersole updates Betty on testing legislation.

*Betty H. Waller*

MSEA PRESIDENT



# LEGISLATORS HEARD US: NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO STEP AWAY FROM K-12 FUNDING!



PHOTO: STEPHEN CHERRY PHOTOGRAPHY © 2015

Howard County activists Stephanie Masters and Matthew Vaughn-Smith with their colleague, Delegate Eric Ebersole (D-Baltimore, Howard), at the Better Budget Rally in March.

On the campaign trail, Governor Hogan was mostly silent on education policy—that was red flag #1. Since being sworn in on January 21, it's become painfully clear that his education agenda is out of step with what Marylanders believe students and educators need. MSEA members are forcefully responding and leading the way on pushing back, advocating for a better budget, upholding Maryland's strong charter school law, and reducing student testing.

## The education budget

Unfortunately, Gov. Hogan's budget would cut \$144 million in school funding by:

- Eliminating any adjustment for inflation this year and capping inflation at 1% for the following three years (inflation this year should be 1.4% and between 1.5–2% the next three years). State law mandates that education funding keep up with inflation; Gov. Hogan has attempted to rewrite state law and force schools to do more with less.

This change would result in more than \$63 million in cuts for this year's budget due to the cap, and would contribute towards education cuts totalings roughly \$600 million over the next four years.

- Cutting in half the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI), which covers the additional costs of education in 13 jurisdictions where delivering education is more expensive. Gov. Hogan's cut amounted to more than \$68 million statewide.

## 48,984 emails—16,362 petition signatures

Starting with a radio advertising campaign and online petition drive in January, and continuing with the launch of [DontShortchangeMaryland.com](http://DontShortchangeMaryland.com) in early February, MSEA members have been leading the charge for a better budget. At press time, MSEA members and pro-public education community advocates had sent 48,984 emails through MSEA's website, gathered 16,362 petition signatures in

# WHAT VOTERS WANT

## Voters want more K-12 funding

**68%** of voters prefer funding over tax decreases

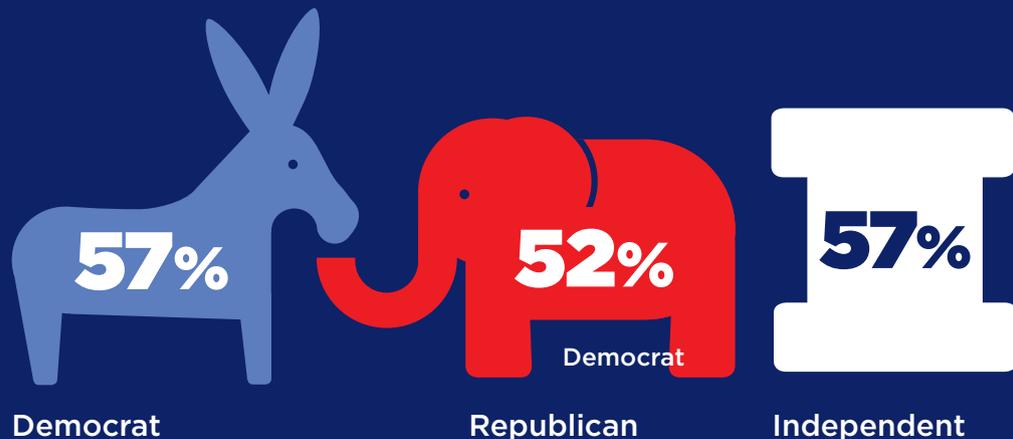
**62%** of voters want to see an increase in K-12 funding

## Voters want more oversight of charter schools, not less

**55%** of voters think that charters need more oversight to ensure educational quality

**29%** of voters want to make it easier to open charter schools to give parents more choice

## Voters who prefer more charter school oversight cross party lines



Source: Hart Research Associates—March 2015 Voters View of Gov Hogan's Education Policy

support of funding education, made 1,022 calls through MSEA's legislative hotline, and came to Annapolis from across the state to lobby legislators in person.

### **Legislators heard us—92% of budget restored**

Our voices made a huge impact. On March 13, the [House Appropriations Committee modified Gov. Hogan's budget to restore 92% of his school funding cuts](#)—\$132 million out of \$144 million. The next week, the full House passed this version of the budget. This budget still needs to make its way through the Senate and be acted on by the governor. While momentum is moving in the right direction, MSEA will not stop pushing for the restoration of Gov. Hogan's cuts until the budget crosses the finish line. Get an update on education funding [here](#).

The House plan also allows Maryland to exit the flawed approach of corridor pension funding. MSEA, as well as bond rating agencies, have consistently urged the state to exit this broken system and return to the method that represents the appropriate, full

annual pension contribution. The House plan does just that and will protect retirement security and sustainability for retirees as well as future beneficiaries. [Your pension benefits will not be affected by this plan.](#)

### **Time to teach, time to learn**

As PARCC launched, educators are feeling the time crunch even more, as the time to teach and time to learn is squeezed out by test-prep and test-taking. MSEA is trying to put some common sense back into how we use assessments. They should effectively inform instruction, have a reasonable price tag, not sap away ridiculous amounts of instructional time, and be aligned with standards. We've strongly supported two bills as part of our Time to Teach, Time to Learn agenda. Read more about testing [here](#).

### **Charter schools**

Gov. Hogan's education-unfriendly agenda also focused on policies that would mostly benefit large, out of state charter school operators and private school students, and lower our high standards for accountability, fiscal

responsibility, non-discrimination, and equity.

We support Maryland's charter schools and are open to further strengthening the already-strong law that MSEA helped pass. Unfortunately, many of Gov. Hogan's proposed changes are extreme, counterproductive ideas that include hiring uncertified teachers, disproportionately funding charter schools over non-charter schools, and limiting the ability of charter employees to effectively unionize.

Charter school teacher Stephanie Straw, a member in Frederick County, testified before the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee against Gov. Hogan's proposal. "Charter school employees like me would no longer be public school employees. That means that we would no longer have tenure, we would no longer have the same benefits, we would no longer have tuition reimbursement, and many other privileges," Straw said. "But most importantly, we would no longer have a collective bargaining unit.

"The difference in pay and working conditions in states

where teachers don't have the right to bargain is striking." Read the latest on charter schools legislation [here](#).

### **Vouchers**

The perennially unsuccessful BOAST tuition tax credit is a voucher scheme that would shift public, taxpayer dollars into private schools. It has been introduced in various forms since 2006, but has been rejected by the General Assembly every time in the face of broad opposition, including MSEA, the NAACP, League of Women Voters, Maryland PTA, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, and others.

But Gov. Hogan is trying again. His proposal would give tax credits to corporations for contributions made to private schools. The credits would amount to 60% of the contribution and up to \$200,000 a year. The end result—the state's general fund revenues would be reduced, and millions of taxpayer dollars that could go to public schools would subsidize the cost of education for a few private school students. [Read MSEA's position on vouchers.](#)

MSEA has been a lead



MSEA President Betty Weller at the podium at the Better Budget Rally in March.

voice in diverse coalitions pushing back on Gov. Hogan's dangerous charter and voucher bills. At press time, both bills remain in their assigned committees, with legislators, the press,

and the public increasingly recognizing the bills' negative consequences for students and public education.

# FREDERICK COUNTY MOBILIZES FOR MEMBER-TO-MEMBER OUTREACH

Using MSEA's Innovative Engagement and Organizing (IEO) Grant as a catalyst, Frederick County teachers have jumpstarted a member-to-member outreach program that pairs experienced activists with newly ignited members for school-based organizing and mobilizing.

"Now," says grant writer Jonathan Araujo, chair of the Frederick County Teachers Association's (FCTA) school representative committee, "we can show less-active members the power of a one-on-one meeting with members and non-members. And it builds on our base of members for

future visits. By connecting one-on-one with a wider range of members from varying backgrounds and grade levels, we are building a stronger base for all of our campaigns and initiatives."

The organizing group does some great advance work to set the stage for the outreach, using a Google Docs questionnaire to ask teachers about their interests and concerns, their teaching experience, and their connection with FCTA. With one-on-one meetings as the goal, the questionnaire provides individual members' data so that FCTA visitors can connect

with teachers in a meaningful, genuine way during their meeting. The questionnaire also offers an option to set up a specific meeting time during the school visit. "Scheduled visits," Araujo said, "add even more purpose to our visits by allowing us to zero in on a member's specific interests and issues."

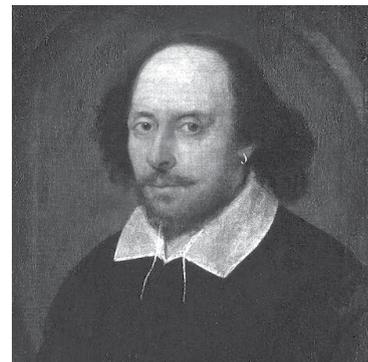
There are more plans on the horizon, including Contract 101, a quarterly training where school representatives would be trained—for the first time, or as a review—in FCTA's negotiated agreement. "We are finding that many members are bypassing our school

## CALENDAR

**April 13 | National Scrabble Day!** By far the best way to flaunt your Scrabble skills is to lay down oxypenbutazone on the board. You'd score 1,778 points, but it's about as likely to happen as winning the lottery. Click [here](#) for a list of top 10 Scrabble tips.

**April 23 | Retired Members Workshop** The day is filled with information and tips to protect your health and maximize your resources. Sponsored by the Retired Advisory Council at the Doubletree Annapolis, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Learn more and register [here](#).

**April 30 | National Honesty Day** "No legacy is so rich as honesty." Four hundred years later and we can still ponder the state of our character with a quote from William Shakespeare. Learn more about honesty, gratitude, and other nice things at [Greater Good, The Science of a Meaningful Life](#).



reps and going directly to our president or UniServ directors for minor issues that are explained in our contract,” Araujo said. “While we regularly have a general school rep training at the beginning of each year, this program would be more comprehensive. We want members to be more knowledgeable, and thus empowered, when faced with questions about their contract.”

Outreach to the full FCTA membership includes a series of short videos on a password protected YouTube channel that answers frequently asked questions about school rep duties and the contract, and provides tips on how reps can respond to some frequently

occurring situations. IEO Grant funding purchased the camera that members will use to shoot the videos and for other social media.

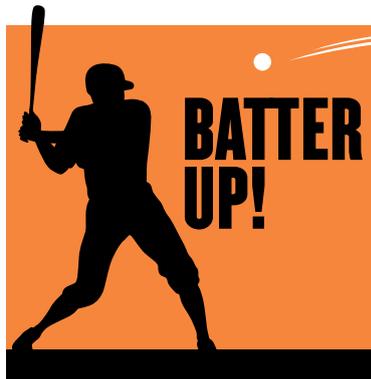
FCTA’s goal is ambitious and doable, says Justin Heid, chair of FCTA’s membership committee. “We hope for a 10-15% increase at our targeted schools for at least one after-school volunteer activity—it could be phone banking, canvassing, or attendance and/ or participation in 10-minute meetings. Our plans are to incorporate these practices into the organization and reach all members and all schools within the next three years.”

“By connecting one-on-one with a wider range of members from varying backgrounds and grade levels, we are building a stronger base for all of our campaigns and initiatives.”

—Jonathan Araujo  
Frederick County

**April 25 | IPD Conference**  
[Instructional and professional development](#) is on tap at MSEA’s annual conference. Help your practice grow with great tips on bullying, using social media, classroom management, and building your local’s targeted professional development. Bowie Comfort Inn Conference Center, 8:30-3:30.

**May is Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month**  
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have contributed to politics, military, medicine, aviation, entertainment, and sports in the United States. Celebrate their heritage and contributions with [lessons and activities](#) for K-12 from NEA.



**May 30 | MSEA’s Orioles Night**  
It’s back on the calendar with special \$10 and \$20 tickets. Bring the family to Camden Yards to cheer the birds on to a win against the Tampa Bay Rays. Get an extra bang for your buck—it’s Orioles tee-shirt giveaway day, too. [Order your tickets today!](#)

**EMPOWERMENT**

1865 **150** 2015  
MARYLAND STATE  
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
YEARS

*Empowerment—Our Legacy and Our Future*

Through advocacy and action,  
MSEA has proven its ongoing commitment  
to civil rights by empowering  
students and educators of every race, gender,  
income, and sexual preference.  
**I'm proud to say, I'm a member.**  
—IVORY SMITH

MEMBER, WORCESTER COUNTY | PRESIDENT, WORCESTER COUNTY NAACP

**MSEA's first poster celebrating 150 years** From integrating the schoolhouse to protecting LGBTQ students, MSEA has played an important role in Maryland as a voice for reason, fairness, and equity for students, educators, and families.

## A HISTORY OF A FOR PUBLIC ED AND PUBLIC E

“In all my years, I never saw such hardball lobbying ... on both sides,” said a veteran Annapolis lobbyist.

It was 1984, after a vote on House Bill 991 had just passed in the House of Delegates—a bill that made a series of complicated cuts to teachers and state employees’ retirement. The bill, now infamous to MSEA veteran activists, was successful only after final-hour strong-arm sessions. Senate President Melvin Steinberg, a perennial naysayer to pension benefits, threatened holdouts with cuts to aid to education totaling \$60.2 million, more than one-third of which was earmarked for Baltimore City. In the end, two Baltimore City delegates capitulated to Steinberg’s threat and backed the bill. It passed 71-68.

It was, said MSTA President Janice A. Piccinini, “the rawest display of power and

# ADVOCATING EDUCATORS EDUCATION

arrogance this state has ever seen.” It was that power and arrogance, she said, and the threat of \$60 million of education aid, that passed the bill.

But MSTA was emboldened by a show of solidarity at a rally of 8,000-marchers strong who were undaunted by the bill’s passage. Before the session was over, MSTA hired special counsel to file a class action lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of HB 91. The state, MSTA said, was in violation of a contract made in 1979 not to reduce benefits for teachers and state employees who were in the retirement system at the time.

That was just the first of the pension fights MSTA, now MSEA, has taken on in the last 30 years to protect educators and public education.

Since then we’ve had strong and important victories. In 1998, after doggedly working in the details of a pension

reform bill, MSTA won a pension benefit improvement. Then in 2006, members won a hard-fought battle that improved both pension benefits and our national standing by making improvements retro-active to 1998. Protecting members’ retirement is a fight that benefits all members, and helps to ensure that there are quality professionals in front of students and throughout the schoolhouse.

MSEA continues its tradition as a vocal and vigilant overseer of the pension system with expert lobbyists, representation on the board of trustees of the Retirement and Pension System, and by continued advocacy for strong benefits and a sustainable system for Maryland educators.

*Advocating for members about the issues that affect them on the job is always on the docket for MSEA members, leaders, and staff. Don’t miss the next MSEA 150th celebration poster, *Advocacy—Our Legacy and Our Future*.*

# MSEA *Celebrates* TEACHER *Appreciation* DAY!

**MAY 2, 2015**

You’ll find exclusive members-only discounts and specials at Annapolis shops and businesses on Main, Market, and West streets, and on charming Maryland Avenue.

[Find out more!](#)



# One Teacher's Toolkit

①



②



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③



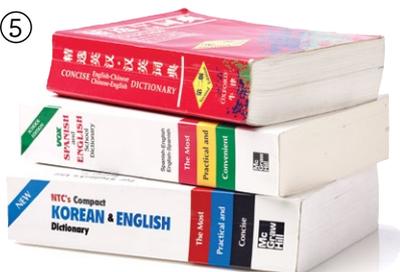
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⑤



# INSIDE MSEA WITH DAVID HELFMAN

## Van McKenna

ESOL Teacher  
Rockburn Elementary School  
Howard County

### 1 MY FAMILY

My husband and son mean the world to me. They are my cornerstones. They support me in happy and sad times.

### 2 MY PASSPORT

I travel to learn. Experiencing other cultures and dining on different ethnic cuisines have enriched my life and helped me to be more open-minded and empathetic. I also scout for ideas and resources to bring back to the classroom.

### 3 MY CULTURE

East meets West. I was born in Vietnam and was raised in America for the majority of my youth. My faith and beliefs are the result of a combination of these two teachings. I think this dynamic helps me to create a rapport with my students.

### 4 MACBOOK

I am a geek at heart and love humor. I customized the Apple logo to be apple pi(e)! This reminds me of my love for teaching math.

### 5 MULTI-LANGUAGE DICTIONARIES

These books are not only a tool for my students and me, they also represent my love of languages. I love learning to communicate in different languages and studying their linguistic history and structure. This helps me work with students to better their English.

### 6 MY NAME IN DRAGON

As a resource teacher, this sign helps the students to know my name and my background. An [Asian dragon](#), unlike its western counterpart, represents gentleness, friendliness, and intelligence—all things I hope to impart to my students.



As educators, we strive to instill a love of learning in our students. If they succeed in class, but graduate without the skills and desire to be lifelong learners, their success in life will likely be very limited. MSEA's Board of Directors realizes that the same is true for organizations. As a learning organization, we've spent valuable time developing a "why statement" and strategic priorities.

A why statement answers the simple question: why do we exist? After hours of lively discussion across multiple meetings, the board developed the following: MSEA empowers members to make a positive difference in their professional lives in order to elevate the quality of public education for all students.

How do we do this? By focusing on three organizational priorities identified by the board: developing strong locals, creating a culture of organizing, and leading the professions.

In mid-March, a diverse group of 40 members and staff from across Maryland came together in Annapolis for a special weekend meeting. On Friday evening, they had small group discussions with members of the board to better understand the reasons these three priorities were selected. On Saturday, the group worked on its own to begin developing ideas and programs that would improve our effectiveness in each of the three areas.

Over the next year we'll learn from their pilot projects; these learnings will inform our 2016-18 budget. Perhaps most importantly, these groups will set into motion a deliberate, focused process of pushing our boundaries and raising our expectations for what empowered MSEA members can accomplish.

# A WORD FROM MSEA'S LEGAL TEAM

## When You're Asked—Work to Rule

NEA and MSEA were created to mobilize workplace employees—to increase individual power by many acting as one. Change requires collective action through a recognized body. Collective actions like [working to rule](#), appearing at board of education budget meetings, contacting county and state lawmakers, and networking with community organizations are proven to make a difference.

It's illegal for educators to strike in Maryland. That's why we must use collective action. [Working to rule can help raise awareness with parents, the media, and public officials](#) about the frequency with which dedicated educators take on additional duties that benefit both students and schools. Successful work to rule campaigns require commitment, courage, and clear communication with members and the public. If your union calls for a work to rule action, you'll be contacted with instructions. In the meantime, here's a basic guide:

- Adhere to your contract. Attend all required meetings, but nothing more.
- If you have not already committed to a voluntary activity, decline requests to do so by the administration.
- If you have already committed to an activity verbally or by signing a contract, ask to be released from the duty. If you are not released, report to the activity.
- If you perform a certain voluntary activity year after year, without a specific agreement, immediately inform the administration before the activity begins that you will not perform the activity for that year.
- If an administrator directs you to perform an otherwise voluntary activity, perform the activity and immediately contact your union.

As educators our time is valuable. Sometimes it is necessary to pull back and remind administrators and supervisors how valuable we really are. Collective action, like working to rule, can be a powerful tool for your negotiations team at the bargaining table. It's amazing to see the change of attitude of board negotiators when confronted with an active, aware, involved group of educators willing to take action to protect their careers, students, and schools.

## Whole Child • V



When education support professionals gathered last month in New Orleans, we were met with a [powerful new vision](#) of their role in public education—embracing and honoring the **multi-functional and multi-layered aspects of ESP jobs** in every school. A new focus on those roles as a critical component of every school community is helping to mobilize ESP members across the country around the services they provide for the whole child, whole school, and whole community. NEA has identified **five important areas where ESPs make critical difference** in vital areas that can be organized around to increase membership and influence, strengthen relationships with parents and communities, and heighten awareness of ESP contributions. **A strong organiza**

# Whole School • Whole Community

is respected, and respect translates to a stronger position at the bargaining table.

**1** Schools are a major social institution in the U.S. and thus on the frontlines for children's [health issues](#). With a majority of public school students now coming from low-income homes, and 44 percent of all children in the United States living in low income families, our students are at an **ever-increasing risk for poor health** and it is often the schoolhouse where health trends are first documented. **ESPs are making contributions** to student health everyday through their on-the-job duties and as compassionate members of the school community.

**2** **School safety** and a positive school climate do not start and end in the classroom. They continue on the bus, the playground, the halls, and the cafeteria. **ESPs are present throughout the whole school**, keeping students safe. Far too many of our children live in communities where safety is not the norm. And while the **school can be a haven**, it is still ultimately a direct reflection of the community. Children who are exposed to serious safety risks, including environmental pollution, crime, violence, and abuse, cannot learn.

**3** When students are **engaged**, they are more likely to achieve at their

highest levels. **Students may struggle to learn when they cannot connect** what they learn in school to the real world, and when they feel indifferent, stuck, and disconnected from their peers.

**4** **A strong bond with one supportive, responsible adult** is all that is required for students to develop **resiliency skills**, and for many students that adult is a support professional. Support staff hold a special place in the school setting. They are **trusted, respected**, and for many students, are an adult whom students can connect to more directly, since they are often outside the classroom setting. When the needs of our students are increasing, and their barriers to learning are becoming more and more complex, [the whole school community must collaborate on behalf of the student](#).

**5** ESPs keep students **challenged** by maintaining high expectations for their success. **Students must understand the connection between education and lifelong success**, and feel challenged and motivated for personal growth. Over and over again, **ESPs make those true connections with students**, increase their self-esteem, and provide them the confidence to dream.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT NEA'S ESP CONFERENCE](#)



Fourth-year Anne Arundel County kindergarten teacher Rebecca Anderson testified in support of [House Bill 452](#). She wants the General Assembly to appoint a commission to study testing in Maryland schools.

# TESTING OUR RESOLVE

Locals, NEA, and MSEA Take on Testing Mania

**IT** could not have been more transparent—in fact, it was down so fast it was almost like it didn't happen at all. MSDE's Facebook post/blunder showcasing notes from fourth graders pacifying their anxious parents about PARCC was quickly slammed on social media as self-serving PR. "The test is important to me," one student wrote, "and I think that you might be worried, but don't stress out because I will be perfectly fine." Many were appalled that students were being used in such a way and the post came down .... post haste.

## IN ALL FAIRNESS, MSDE'S EFFORT

to tame the growing anti-standardized testing movement was just one among many questionable efforts by states to mollify students and parents about the endless testing in today's schools. There was the "incentive program" that offered a lottery for American Express gift cards for students in the grade with the highest percentage of test-takers, the offer to students to skip final exams simply for taking the test, and the drawings for iPads and special prizes. Then there was a shameless guilt trip dumped on parents who pulled their children from test taking—the school's traditional perk of an hour-long recess during testing season was revoked because, the newsletter said, "a few students opted out."

For better or for worse, at the same time [PARCC testing is underway](#) in states across the country, Congress and the Maryland General Assembly are considering legislation that's forcing lawmakers to take a close look at every aspect of the testing landscape—instructional time lost, the cost of infrastructure and staffing, the huge corporate revenue from testing, the untenable stress on students, and the tests' long- and short-term educational value.

In Washington, there's more hope than in recent years that Congress will pass a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA's most recent reauthorization was the punishing No Child Left Behind Act, enacted in 2002, which mandated plenty of testing and funded only a bit of the infrastructure, training, and staffing to support its goals. [Students, parents, educators, and policymakers on both sides of the political aisle agree that NCLB simply has not worked](#)—the current system delivers unequal opportunities and uneven quality to America's children based, too often, on the zip code where they live.

### **NEA—Focusing on ESEA/NCLB Reauthorization**

For years, education advocates have been saying that NCLB needs to be fixed—the testing-centric mandate systematically punished low performing schools and created the now ubiq-

uitous teach to the test mentality that has taken over classrooms and devalued educators from California to Maine.

[More and more Americans are taking note and agreeing.](#) Recently, 77% of Americans polled\* said they believed that increased testing has either hurt or made no difference in improving schools. Instead, schools across the country have seen narrowed curricula, and eliminated or de-emphasized arts, physical education, and other subjects and programs without obvious connections to the tested areas. And in an environment where the results of a test mean everything to a school's future, it should be no surprise that students, educators, and parents are hyper-focused on the fallout of a less than stellar performance. There's no question that change is long overdue.

NEA has not only railed against the NCLB testing machine in Washington, it's offered real fixes. [The NEA agenda is focused on student and educator success.](#) It includes an "[opportunity dashboard](#)" that zeroes in on indicators of school quality that support learning rather than the simple outputs of test scores; a time to teach, time to learn agenda that includes grade-span testing (once in elementary, once in middle, and once in high school) and a well-rounded curriculum; and supports qualified educators who are respected, empowered, diverse, and supported with well-planned induction, professional growth opportunities, and teacher leadership tracks.

### **Testing overkill mobilizes members locally, statewide, and in Washington, D.C.**

Local efforts across the country, like the Time to Learn Committee in Frederick County led by FCTA member and teacher Casey Day-Kells, are making waves—and news. The [Time to Learn, Frederick! Facebook page](#) and [website](#) are posting educators' stories, plus news and information, to educate members, parents, and communities about current testing schedules.

"In a recent member survey, our members said that assessments were at the top of their concerns," Day-Kells said. "They are concerned about the difficulty of covering the curriculum because of the volume of tests—both county required and

state and federally mandated. In response to the survey, our board of directors formed a committee to study and make recommendations to our system about the testing issue.

"We'll be taking our recommendations, along with the stories that we collect online, to our board to try to alleviate some of the local workload around excessive testing."

Day-Kells is taking action on the federal front, too. She and Frederick County colleague, Antoinette Border, joined Peggy Bass and Suzanne Taylor (Allegany County), Mary Dee Oxen and Rachel McClusker (Carroll County), and Lynne Elmlinger (Garrett County) for a trip to Washington to lobby Sen. Barbara Mikulski on ESEA reauthorization last month.

### **MSEA rallies members and legislators on testing legislation**

Here in Maryland, MSEA is spearheading a reduction of testing as more and more educators, students, and parents view the schedule with more and more skepticism.

According to ["Testing Overload in America's Schools,"](#) an October 2014 report by the Center for American Progress, "a culture has arisen in some states and districts that places a premium on testing over learning. ... some districts and states may be administering tests that are duplicative or unnecessary; they may also be requiring or encouraging significant amounts of test preparation, such as taking practice tests." We know that's true in Maryland.

During the first week of PARCC testing, a bipartisan group of legislators stood at a press conference with MSEA President Betty Weller, Dawn Pipkin, a National Board Certified Teacher, instructional resource teacher, and school testing coordinator in St. Mary's County, and P.J. Friend, a kindergarten teacher in Montgomery County.

One of the bills the group highlighted was [House Bill 452/Senate Bill 497](#), which creates a blue-ribbon commission on testing. The panel—which will include four members of the Maryland General Assembly, as well as educators, parents, administrators, and policy experts—will survey and assess the current testing landscape across Maryland and make recommendations for how we can best use assessments without wasting crucial instructional time and resources. The legislation was sponsored by delegate and teacher [Eric Ebersole \(D-Baltimore, Howard\)](#).

At the press conference, Ebersole said that after the landmark "A Nation at Risk" report was released—the scathing document on the state of America's schools issued in 1983—the theory was that implementing high stakes tests would improve student achievement. "When 'A Nation at Risk'

was delivered," Ebersole said, "the U.S. ranked in the 20s with students internationally; we're still there 30 years later. It hasn't worked." [Watch Del. Ebersole's update](#) on the testing bills in a video with President Betty Weller.

"These tests are exhausting students, educa-

**"FOR EIGHT MORNINGS  
DURING PARCC, ALL FOUR OF  
OUR INSTRUCTIONAL  
ASSISTANTS WILL BE PULLED  
AS PROCTORS. THERE  
HAVE BEEN EIGHT KINDER-  
GARTEN SUSPENSIONS  
THIS YEAR. WITH NUMBERS  
LIKE THIS, WE NEED OUR  
INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANTS  
IN OUR CLASSROOMS  
AND WE NEED CONSISTENCY  
IN OUR SCHEDULE."**

—Rebecca Anderson  
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

## Casey Day-Kells in Washington D.C.

She was among seven Western Maryland members who lobbied Sen. Barbara Mikulski on student testing in Washington, D.C.

The Frederick County Teachers Association [Time to Learn Facebook page](#) took off running with 700 followers in two days. Casey Day-Kells and the Time to Learn Committee launched it and a [web-site to support common sense testing](#).



tors, and parents—I see it play out every single day,” Pipkin told reporters. “It’s time for us to re-examine the role of testing in our schools. If we do that, I’m confident we’ll get back to doing what we do best—inspiring students to love learning.” [Read Pipkin’s testimony urging senators to create a commission to study student testing.](#)

In February, Anne Arundel County kindergarten teacher [Rebecca Anderson testified](#) before members of the House Ways and Means Committee. “I don’t believe that the test results are reliable, there are just too many inconsistencies in the administration of it,” Anderson said. “And I don’t think you can get valid results by comparing the readiness of a student who has been in school for two weeks to the readiness of one who has received instruction for two months. ... I see the commission as an opportunity to re-evaluate assessments and find ways to make assessments a

more manageable and useful tool for instruction.”

The press conference also highlighted [Senate Bill 699/House Bill 1137](#), which proposes a testing moratorium for preK–2 students that would include the problematic and controversial Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). “There’s a lot of concern on this issue from parents and from legislators,” said [Senate Minority Leader and bill sponsor J.B. Jennings \(R–Baltimore, Harford\)](#). “It’s an innovative idea ... let’s get it right before we move forward.”

Maryland can be a national leader in turning back this culture of over-testing that is so frustrating to educators, parents, and students. No one knows better than educators the impact that this negative culture has on our students—and no one is working harder to kick over-testing to the curb and bring back joy, curiosity, and fun into teaching and learning.

# MSEA 2015 ELECTION

# RESULTS

**BETTY WELLER**

*Kent County*  
MSEA President



## Leadership Guides MSEA'S Organizing, Political, and Bargaining Agenda

MSEA's newly re-elected leadership team brings veteran members of the board of directors together to face the challenges of a new governor and administration over testing, funding, charter school standards, and more.

President Betty Weller and Vice President Cheryl Bost, and directors Richard Benfer, Joe Coughlin, Lori Hrinko, and Debbie Schaefer, will be joined in September by the winner of a run-off election for NEA director (NEA directors sit on both the NEA and MSEA boards) between Paul Lemle, Howard County, and Russell Leone, Anne Arundel County.

The board will also be joined by the winners of two special elections this spring—one to fill a vacant seat, and another that increases the board by one seat to ensure that ethnic minority representation on the board of directors is in proportion to MSEA membership.

### HERE ARE THE DETAILS FOR THE THREE OUTSTANDING 2015 ELECTIONS:

#### Run-off Election for NEA Director

- Study the candidates on page 16.
- [Vote beginning May 4.](#) You'll need your member ID number (on your membership card) and the last four digits of your Social Security number.
- The deadline for voting is May 15.

#### Filling the Ethnic Minority Seat on the Board of Directors

- Ethnic minority is defined as African-American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander.
- The term is August 1, 2015–July 31, 2018.
- The director will serve as a delegate to the NEA and MSEA representative assemblies.
- Download the nomination forms [here](#).
- The deadline for nominations is April 24 at 5 p.m.
- Voting begins May 4. Follow the directions for voting in the run-off election.
- The deadline for voting is May 15.

#### Filling the Vacant Seat on the Board of Directors

- The term is May 26, 2015–July 31, 2017, which constitutes a full term.
- The director will serve as delegate to the MSEA Representative Assembly (RA), but must be elected each year as a delegate to the NEA RA.
- Download the nomination forms [here](#).
- The deadline for nominations is April 24 at 5 p.m.
- Per MSEA's bylaws, eligible voters are limited to registered delegates to MSEA's October 2014 RA, who will receive a ballot through the mail beginning May 4. Voting begins upon receipt of ballot.
- The deadline for receipt of the ballot to MSEA is May 20.

Thank you for your continued support. I am so honored to be able to continue the important work we started as a team almost three years ago. The issues still loom large over testing, funding challenges, and the weakening of our charter school law to name a few, and I will continue to work hard to empower educators so our voices will be heard and our professional lives will be improved. I will continue to work hard so we can help our students be successful in the classroom and beyond.

Our students have only one chance to receive a great public school education and we need to make sure they do. Together we can and we will. Please continue to send me your ideas and concerns; we are in this together. You have the most important job in the world! Thank you for what you do every day for Maryland's students.

**CHERYL BOST**  
*Baltimore County*  
MSEA Vice President



Thank you, MSEA members, for the honor to continue to represent you as MSEA vice president. I am very passionate about mobilizing our members around the issues and challenges that affect our rights, our time to teach, and our students' time to learn. I will continue to visit local associations and members across the state to hear your stories and gather your ideas and to share them with the decision-makers who often make education policy *for us* instead of *with us*.

Advocating for public education in order to keep jobs from being privatized, maintaining our collective bargaining rights, and serving as true advocates for our students and their education will take all of us coming together as powerful, influential advocates. I'm counting on each of you to use your voice and your passion to make a difference for our students and schools.

**RICHARD BENFER**  
*Anne Arundel County*  
MSEA Director



I want to take this opportunity to thank colleagues across the state for their confidence in me to serve a second term on the MSEA BOD. Going forward, I will advocate on behalf of members during the legislative session by collaborating with legislators to build relationships to inform them about our issues and work to turn our attackers into our allies.

I will continue my work with the Human & Civil Rights Committee to bring further awareness to members about human trafficking and its impact on our students.

I will be available to members as a conduit to the MSEA officers and NEA directors. I will also seek ways to improve how the board of directors communicates activities that further enhance advocacy for members.

**JOE COUGHLIN**  
*Baltimore County*  
MSEA Director



Thanks to all of you for your support. Proposed budget cuts are creating many challenges to our members and the students we serve. I will continue to fight against funding cuts and increasing workloads. I'll fight to protect reasonable class size and educators' jobs, especially for support professionals who are the first to go. I support MSEA's continued work to create an evaluation system that's fair, transparent, and improves teaching quality and student success.

I want to establish standards for choosing an MSEA-sponsored ESP of the year, and I will work for a living wage, quality professional development, local maintenance of effort and the full funding of the Geographic Cost of Education Index, and I will fight against the dangerous trend of outsourcing educators' jobs.

**LORI HRINKO**  
*Cecil County*  
MSEA Director



I'm honored to be elected to the MSEA Board of Directors for a second term. I'm eager and excited to continue serving educators across Maryland and to fight for you, our students, and our schools.

Having time to teach and learn, the resources available for instruction, and less high-stakes testing are critical now. We need to be vigilant, ensuring that we are creating and using fair and equitable evaluation systems that support the educator—not set them up for failure due to poor implementation and insufficient training of the evaluators.

We need to support and promote educators as respected professionals and valued partners in every community. I will work with you, and for you, to help make this happen.

**DEBBIE SCHAEFER**  
*Anne Arundel County*  
MSEA Director



Thank you, fellow educators, for your support. In the next three years, I would like to see MSEA become a stronger union—with more members, vibrant local associations, and better outreach to engage school reps.

We are missing the energy and strength of 45% of our ESP colleagues and 15% of our teacher colleagues—nearly 20,000 voices that we could be adding to our already powerful 71,000. Education Support Professionals and teacher members must work together in every building to reach out to non-members and share the vision and mission of our union.

If each and every one of us would ask just one non-member to join our ranks, our numbers would skyrocket and our influence at home and throughout the state would grow even stronger.

Elect one member  
to the NEA & MSEA  
Boards of Directors  
to serve a three-  
year term beginning  
8/1/2015.

## CANDIDATES FOR NEA DIRECTOR

Guide to 2015 Run-Off Candidates

[Vote online beginning May 4.](#)



### PAUL LEMLE

**Position:** Teacher

**School:** Local President

**Local:** HCEA (Howard)

**Member:** MSEA 11 years/NEA 13 years

**Association Positions Held:**

*Local:* President, Government Relations (chair).

*MSEA:* RA delegate.

*NEA:* RA delegate, State Political Action Committee (captain).

*Colleagues, I'm a cancer survivor, father of three adopted children from Ethiopia, and a secondary teacher of law/government. As president of Maryland's largest merged (teacher and ESP) association, I've led a dynamic, sustained effort to build power.*

- *In face to face meetings with over three thousand members, we've doubled participation in our PAC, now the 2nd largest in the state.*
- *Through hard political work and exciting new partnerships with congregations and fellow unions, we've elected members to our BOE and the General Assembly.*
- *We recruited 900 new participants in our sick leave banks.*
- *As measured in our job satisfaction survey, member confidence in HCEA is 89%—even non-member confidence is 75%!*
- *We have successfully negotiated step increases for the past three years, a 3% COLA for 2014-15, without health insurance increases.*

*If elected, I will bring the same energy to MSEA and NEA!*



### RUSSELL LEONE

**Position:** Teacher

**School:** Severna Park E.S.

**Local:** TAAAC

**Association Positions Held:**

*Local:* Vice President, Board of Directors, Nomination Committee (chair).

*MSEA:* Leadership Training Retreat (chair), Elections (co-chair).

*I believe in two basic truths about our educators. One is commitment. I believe that you work well beyond your work day to make sure your students are closing gaps. You work tirelessly for students, parents, and your community.*

*The second is professionalism. Whether working on the Summer Leadership Training committee to grow future leaders or serving as a PTA teacher representative to build relationships and strengthen our public perception, I strive to make sure we are viewed as the professionals we are. As a local board member, I listen to our members concerns about our profession and am not afraid to voice them.*

*I am dedicated to ensuring further recognition our members deserve on the national level. I believe Maryland is the greatest state in our nation and we have the ability to lead our profession. Let me be your voice to make sure others know this nationwide.*

# Special Elections for MSEA Board of Directors—Ethnic Minority Seat & Vacant Seat

Note: Per MSEA Bylaws, the board of directors is to be increased by one seat to ensure that ethnic minority representation is in proportion to MSEA membership. For the vacant director seat, eligible voters are limited to registered delegates to MSEA's October 2014 RA. See page 14 for more guidelines.

## Nomination & Intent Form

Deadline: April 24, 2015

To be nominated to run for MSEA Director **Ethnic Minority Seat**

**MSEA DIRECTOR** <sup>1 SEAT</sup> 8/1/15 – 7/31/18

To be nominated to run for MSEA Director **Vacant Position**

**MSEA DIRECTOR** <sup>1 SEAT</sup> 5/26/15 – 7/31/17

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 director 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: April 24, 2015

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

SCHOOL *Name of school and county*

POSITION *Check one*  Teacher  ESP

Administrator  Substitute

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 limit:** 150 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:

April 24, 2015, 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

## My Turn

# Benjamin Long II

*Alternative Education Paraprofessional*  
[Center for Educational Opportunity](#)  
Harford County

My belief is that there is no such thing as a “bad” kid. There are kids who make poor or inappropriate decisions, many of which are acted upon because of mental health illnesses or disorders that affect the child, the parents, or both. Many of these children don’t have adults in their lives who have modeled positive adult behavior—and thus nothing on which to base choices between right and wrong, good or bad, or the best interests of themselves or those around them. So often social and economic disadvantages weigh heavily and even promising students find it impossible to find a place for themselves. Painful pleas for attention manifest as drug use, fights, and more.

The parents of many of the students I work with at the Center for Education Opportunity are raising their children alone as a struggling single mother or father who may have been a teen themselves when they became a parent. Many grandparents are the students’ active guardians, doing the best they can with limited means and emotional and physical energy.

My goal is to give my students a stable, routine-based environment where they learn and thrive both academically and socially. I try to demonstrate good decision-making skills and help students recognize the consequences of their choices.

I want students to receive attention for their successes. I want to be the educator they remember as the hand that helped guide them through a difficult time when everything seemed upside down and backwards. I want to be the educator they tell their kids about.



**“Painful pleas  
for attention  
manifest as  
drug use, fights,  
and more.”**



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