

TIME TO ACT  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

LEGAL TIPS  
OPTING OUT

BUILD • INSPIRE  
CONVENTION

# ACTIONLINE

The Magazine of the Maryland State Education Association Volume 16 Issue 1 October 2015



MSEA's Less Testing More Learning Campaign—  
Educators Take a Stand

**SPECIAL FEATURE ►**  
**THE PROMISE  
OF COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS**

Community schools—schools that transform the schoolhouse to a community hub of child and adult education, after-school care, enrichment and sports programs, tutoring centers, health and mental health services, and more—are no experiment. They're a proven success.



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**4 UP FRONT**

MSEA members became the face of our statewide campaign to stop over-testing students and win meaningful reductions in standardized testing.

**6 SHORT TAKES**

It's all about relationships as Montgomery and Howard county members make connections with colleagues, parents, and their communities to build successful schools and strong local associations. Celebrate peace all year long with great resources. Save the date for MSEA's 2015 Convention and Representative Assembly!

**9 A WORD FROM LEGAL**

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## OUR SUCCESS DEPENDS

on our relationships. It's as simple as that, and it extends to everything we do as educators and as association activists. We all know how important relationships are with our students, their parents, and our colleagues.



But education is a broader concern and those strong relationships need to extend beyond the schoolhouse and into the neighborhoods, businesses, service agencies, and churches and faith groups that are the foundation of our communities and schools.

These relationships—both professional and personal—are at the core of articles in this issue about how communication, trust, and commitment to the common good lift up everyone. You'll read about how member and community relations are central to two local efforts to build consensus and power for strong schools and associations; how common goals and student and educator success are at the heart of the teacher-administrator partnerships found in quality SLOs; and the successful community school model that is all about, well ... community.

This thread weaves throughout our 2015 MSEA Convention program, too, whether it's our special workshop on the relationships needed to integrate restorative practices into discipline programs and end the school to prison pipeline, in the many networking opportunities for members at workshops, events and programs, or the allies we're proud to have join us like U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez and Maryland PTA President Elizabeth Leight.

Relationships are also key for us as activists and organizers. The response to our Less Testing, More Learning campaign, highlighted on the next page, has been great—we've heard from parents, grandparents, and education advocates at the state and local levels. We'll build on those relationships as we work towards our goal of meaningfully reducing standardized testing.

Our relationship with you, our members, matters most. Let me know what's on your mind at [bweller@mseanea.org](mailto:bweller@mseanea.org), and take the opportunity to share and raise your voice through your association.

*Betty H. Weller*  
MSEA PRESIDENT

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

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Use these guidelines and you won't miss a beat when you file your candidacy for NEA director, MSEA director (minority seat), or delegate to NEA's 2016 Representative Assembly.

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Meet Amanda Barnes, a Somerset County paraprofessional on her way to a teaching certificate!



**WATCH THESE MEMBERS TAKE A STAND ON TESTING AT [LESSTESTINGMORELEARNING.COM](http://LESSTESTINGMORELEARNING.COM)**

**ROW 1:** Casey Day-Kells, Frederick  
 Ronnie Beard, Frederick  
 Rachel McCusker, Carroll  
 Jeff Rivenburg, Charles

**ROW 2:** Jacob Bauer Zebley, Cecil  
 Diana Johnson, St. Mary's  
 Keith Anderson, Montgomery  
 Jaime Rivenburg, Charles

**ROW 3:** Heather Hunter, Montgomery  
 Robert Barnes, Montgomery



# EDUCATORS TAKE A STAND ON TESTING

THEIR STORIES WERE HEARD 1.3 MILLION TIMES

When MSEA took the pulse of Marylanders last spring, the numbers were stark—standardized testing is the #1 concern facing K-12 education in Maryland. And it wasn't only educators who said so—nearly 70% of Democrats, Republicans, and Independent voters agree that the status quo of over-testing is stealing too much time from the classroom.

Now MSEA's Less Testing More Learning campaign and the Time to Learn committees established in virtually every local association are raising the volume and working towards meaningful reductions in standardized testing.

Communities across the state heard educators carry their very

clear message in MSEA's TV and radio ads and online videos—not only does standardized testing take far too much time away from learning, it comes at the price of a well-rounded education and heightened student stress levels. It's time for less testing and more learning in our schools.

**Members carry the message on over testing**

MSEA's ads made a big impact—thanks to the powerful stories from members from across the state who were featured in the ads. The public campaign can help because most parents don't grasp testing's toll on time and instruction or its impact on students, says

Montgomery County teacher Robert Barnes, one of 10 members featured in the campaign. “I don’t think the public understands how much time is actually taken from instruction for standardized testing. If they did, I think there would be a national outcry from parents.

“I definitely think many of our kids have been left behind as a result of standardized testing. I just don’t feel it should be the only measure by which kids can show that they’re making progress.”

#### Press coverage across the state

The launch of the campaign brought a flurry of press and attention to the issue. Dozens of news stories on TV, radio, and newspapers highlighted the campaign, and editorials called for public support of MSEA’s position.

“Parents and even students say they are equally frustrated by the amount of time involved in simply preparing students to take the tests. ... We do agree with the teachers, the students and the parents on this: Our schools should try teaching more and testing less,” wrote the *Cumberland Times-News*.

Maryland PTA President Elizabeth Leight joined with President Weller in a *Baltimore Sun* op-ed to call for a “focus on what really matters for our kids by making less testing and more learning in our schools a reality.” In the first three weeks of the campaign, more than 7,000 Marylanders signed a petition in support of reducing standardized testing on MSEA’s [lesstestingmorelearning.com](http://lesstestingmorelearning.com) campaign site.

#### Local Time to Learn committees

The first step in addressing a



Left to right: Mathew Vaughn-Smith, Cheryl Colbert, host Marc Steiner, and Erica Strauss Chavarria at Roland Park Elementary/Middle School on September 2.

At MSEA’s first town hall on over-testing on September 2, 100 educators, parents, community members, and delegates Eric Ebersole and Shelly Hettleman gathered at Baltimore City’s Roland Park Elementary/Middle School to hear Howard County teachers Erika Strauss Chavarria and Matthew Vaughn-Smith, Baltimore City teacher Cheryl Colbert, and radio host and moderator Marc Steiner examine the real impact on students of over-testing. “We need to end the testing frenzy. We want more than test takers, we want problem solvers and critical thinkers,” said Vaughn-Smith.

Del. Ebersole discussed the state’s new standardized testing commission as an important vehicle to reduce standardized testing. “We need to get away from the idea that the only way to know how we’re doing,” Ebersole said, “is to give a kid a test.”

Watch for a town hall in your area. The next is scheduled for November 4 at the Montgomery County Education Association in Rockville.

problem is fully understanding it. That’s why nearly every local association has formed a Time to Learn committee. Committees are surveying and speaking with members, forming a complete picture of the time, resources, and personnel taken up by mandated tests.

Next, committees will develop recommendations for which assessments are useful—

and which tests or testing policies do not help to inform and improve instruction and should be done away with. Those recommendations will support local advocacy campaigns as well as MSEA’s work on the new statewide commission on standardized testing.

“Our advocacy on the commission has to reflect what our members experience in

the classroom and want to see changed,” said Cheryl Bost, MSEA’s Vice President and recommended appointment to the commission. “For too long, standardized testing has taken an increasing number of hours away from the classroom. That needs to stop—and rest assured that we will be leaders in that change.”

# TWO LOCALS BUILD MOMENTUM ONE RELATIONSHIP AT A TIME

In Montgomery County, home to one of the country's most progressive school systems and strongest educator unions in the country, only 22% of members voted in the Montgomery County Education Association's (MCEA) recent election. That sent a red flag up for MCEA member Laura Brown. How, she asked, could the union do its best work if so few members were engaged?

Enter U.S. Representative Elijah Cummings (MD-7), a powerful speaker and veteran politician, and President Obama, a solid organizer in the Chicago mold. Brown found inspiration in Cummings' insistence that success in building relationships comes through mentoring; in Obama, she found the My Brother's Keeper initiative, a program that gains its strength from partnerships with organizations aligned with its goals of supporting young men of color.

Looking toward building member engagement in the 46

## MY MEMBER'S KEEPER TIMELINE

**October** Mentors are trained and create their own support groups among their assigned MMK schools; MMK is introduced at all DCC schools.

**November–December** Mentors identify mentees and meet informally; both groups complete a survey on impressions of MCEA, MSEA, and NEA; following a brief meeting of mentors/mentees to review survey results, MCEA hosts an all-member family bowling night.

**December–Early April** Mentor/mentee teams attend an MCEA event together.

**April–Early May** MMK reception at MCEA headquarters includes program feedback, testimonials, reflection, Q&A.

schools that, like hers, are part of the county's Downcounty Consortium (DCC), Brown found help and funding through MSEA's Innovative Engagement and Organizing Grant (IEO) program. Brown has another partner, Discovery Education, which is providing training support and resources.

Her effort, called My Member's Keeper (MMK), is now in its early phases. MMK plans to build solid grassroots relationships by first developing a strong community of trained volunteer member-mentors. "Before reaching out to non-active members," Brown said, "our core group of volunteer mentors must be completely confident and supported by their colleagues and the program. We're not skipping any steps."

"Our goal is to deepen the average MCEA member's understanding of the influence and importance of the union to our profession and careers," Brown

said. "To get there, we have to understand what the barriers are. Our program thoughtfully and intentionally builds the relationship we need to get the answers."

In Howard County a different type of relationship building is taking root. There, the Howard County Education Association (HCEA) is working with People Acting Together in Howard (PATH) because of their common interests in well-functioning public schools, affordable housing for county educators, and building power and influence for their organizations. PATH is a broad-based community action organization affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, the nation's largest and longest-standing network of local faith and community-based organizations.

The partners are embarking on a nine-month House Meeting Organizing Project with help from MSEA's IEO grant program. They're organizing

## CALENDAR

### Nominations are open for MSEA's Minority Recognition Awards

It's time to nominate your most inspiring leaders, those who show leadership and have made outstanding contributions in five areas: public education, politics, leadership, community involvement, and student organizing in support of their local association, MSEA, and NEA.

Only MSEA and NEA members may submit the award nomination package, which must include a 100-word essay and supporting materials like clippings, certifications, and citations.

Honorees will be celebrated at MSEA's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration, January 16, 2016. For more information, including eligi-

bility guidelines, nomination forms, and submission requirements, visit [marylandeducators.org/2016MinorityRecognition](http://marylandeducators.org/2016MinorityRecognition).

*The deadline for nominations is 5:00 p.m. November 10, 2015.*

*Cesár Chavez, Latino labor leader*



200 house meetings to connect educators with their communities, find common ground, and use it to inform HCEA and PATH organizing goals. The hope is that 10 guests—association members, friends, families, neighbors, members of PATH’s congregations of churches, synagogues, and mosques—will attend each meeting.

Building the strong community relationships needed to make 200 house meetings—and even more unscripted one-on-one conversations—can’t happen overnight. But it can begin with conversations like the one between HCEA President Paul Lemle and parent Barb Krupiarz on special education issues.

“I found a trust with Paul that that I don’t always feel with the school system. I’ve written to the board and never gotten an answer; when I write to Paul, I hear back immediately. I trust he will tell the truth and I trust he will do what he says,” Krupiarz said. “We don’t always agree, and we don’t overreact when we don’t. Because we have trust, we always find a way to work on our common goals.”

Krupiarz is now a trained house meeting facilitator and a partner of HCEA members like special education instructional assistant Curtis Ramsey. “This process is opening more doors between parents and educators,” Ramsey said. “There are models in the school system that don’t work—parents know it and we know it. After my first meeting with Barb at the facilitator training, I felt I could comfortably speak up. It’s refreshing and reassuring to know that a lot of the questions and concerns that we have are the same questions and concerns that parents have. We’re forging a common path.”

At the house meetings, HCEA and PATH will use specific questions to solicit answers from the guests. “We’ll identify new leaders and issues that may be important to our next board of education elections,” Ramsey said, “and we’ll build stronger community relationships and awareness about HCEA’s purpose and goals.”

At every house meeting, emcees like Krupiarz and Ramsey who are trained in facilitated conversation tech-

niques are looking for answers to three questions:

1. What are the challenges your children/students face at school?
2. What are the challenges you or your child’s educator face?
3. What do schools that students and educators deserve look like?

By March, HCEA will turn to translating the information gathered from meetings into data and concrete ideas for future use in bargaining or school funding conversations.

HCEA expects to learn several things:

- Can HCEA build a consensus among union and community members about the future of their schools? Can HCEA organize future contract and school funding campaigns to support both?
- Using this model, can HCEA identify and nurture new leaders?
- Can HCEA build lasting fruitful relationships with community organizations, parents, and faith institutions?

Look for more organizing projects of IEO grant recipients in the next issue of *ActionLine*.

## IN A GRASSROOTS MOBILIZING EFFORT, HOWARD COUNTY EDUCATORS ARE ASKING THEIR COMMUNITY:

1

What are the challenges your children/students face at school?

2

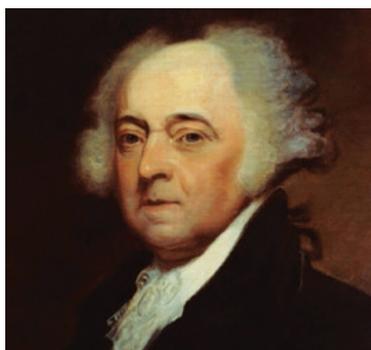
What are the challenges you or your child’s educator face?

3

What do schools that students and educators deserve look like?

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

**October 30** **Brush up your John Adams**—it’s the birthday of the brilliant second president of the United States. Adams reflected on the country’s future shortly before his death. He said the country was “destined in future history to form the brightest or the blackest page, according to the use or the abuse of those political institutions by which they shall, in time to come, be shaped by the human mind.”



**December 4-5** **Mark your calendar** for two popular MSEA programs being presented by the Minority Leadership and Women’s Leadership training programs.

These workshops are timed just right for educators becoming vital touchstones in the evolving classroom.

Learn more at [maryland-educators.org](http://maryland-educators.org).



## Celebrate Peace All Year Long in Schools and Classrooms

### IT'S A TIME OF UNSETTLING VIOLENCE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

Violence and unrest across the world cause many families and their students to think and live differently than many of us can imagine. Fear, hunger, joblessness, and lack of resources are roadblocks to a decent life and, as we've seen in our own largest city, these conditions almost inevitably become explosive. Communities long for peace and answers to their ongoing struggles.

Last year, the MSEA Representative Assembly stood tall for peace here and around the world when it formally recognized the United Nations International Day of Peace celebrated annually on September

21. If you missed the opportunity, it's not too late. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged a new global consciousness for peace—a consciousness devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples. That takes 365 days a year.

### HERE ARE THREE RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP YOU BRING A CONSCIOUSNESS FOR PEACE TO YOUR CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL:

Share the 17 global goals that 193 world leaders committed to on September 25 to achieve three all-encompassing goals in the next 15 years—end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and fix climate change. Find lesson plans and

more at [globalgoals.org](http://globalgoals.org) and [facebook.com/globalgoals.org](https://www.facebook.com/globalgoals.org).

The Global Peacebuilding Center believes that “young people have tremendous capacity, as individuals and as a community, to learn about and contribute to international conflict management.” Find student- and educator-specific sites offering webinars, plans, resources, and more at [buildingpeace.org](http://buildingpeace.org)

The Southern Poverty Law Center is dedicated to fighting hate and bigotry and to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of our society. Visit [splcenter.org](http://splcenter.org) to learn how the center uses litigation, education, and other forms of advocacy to fight for justice, equity, and tolerance.



### MSEA CONVENTION 2015

OCTOBER 16-17 | OCEAN CITY, MD

#### Download the 2015 Convention app!

Search for “MSEA” in the App Store or on Google Play.

### Head to Ocean City October 16–17 for MSEA’s 148th Annual Convention

and you’ll find thousands of educators like you making connections in workshops, at special events, checking out education exhibits, listening to special guests like U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez, and taking care of association business at the MSEA Representative Assembly.

It’s an event for Maryland educators by Maryland educators so you’ll find events planned especially for you that address the high profile issues that affect your job and your students.

Don’t forget to make a hotel reservation at a discounted rate! Get the 2015 Convention details, a weekend schedule of events, and more at [marylandeducators.org/2015Convention](http://marylandeducators.org/2015Convention).

### YOUR WEEKEND SCHEDULE COULD LOOK LIKE THIS!

- ✓ **Friday Morning** Attend “The Teacher-Counselor Alliance” and “Personalized Professional Development.”
- ✓ **Lunch at Dumsers!**
- ✓ **Friday Afternoon** Attend “Ending the School to Prison Pipeline” and check out the exhibits and health fair.
- ✓ **Friday late afternoon and evening** Visit the Rehoboth Outlets! Have dinner with friends! Go dancing at MSEA’s party at Seacrets!
- ✓ **Saturday Morning** Attend “Rejuvenating Practices for Educators,” and “Saving Our Sons in the 21st Century”
- ✓ **Saturday Afternoon** Stop in at the Representative Assembly to hear the new 2015–2016 Teacher of the Year before heading home.

## 3 EDUCATOR DON'TS IN THE OPT-OUT DEBATE

The administration of a standardized test is part of the educational program, and therefore part of your job duties. This puts you in the middle of the debate, but beware—the Supreme Court has been clear that a teacher does not enjoy First Amendment protections for any on-duty speech.

**DON'T** solicit, encourage, or facilitate opt-outs contrary to school policy while on the job.

**DON'T** encourage, solicit, or facilitate a desire to opt-out among students or parents. This would be considered disruptive to the educational program.

**DON'T** refuse to administer the standardized test.

**POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCE?**  
Disciplinary action from the employer, up to and including termination.

## A WORD FROM MSEA'S LEGAL TEAM

### Educators and the Testing Opt-Out Movement

Education headlines last spring focused on the opting out of standardized testing movement and the actions of students and parents. You may have heard about, or even witnessed, instances of parents who claimed a constitutional right to opt their child out of testing.

### The current lay of the land

Thus far in Maryland, no court has ruled, nor are there any state laws or policies, that provide parents with a legal right to opt their children out of standardized testing. In fact, doing so may constitute an act of civil disobedience, and one that could have adverse academic consequences for the child, their teacher, and their school.

While MSDE contends that there is no provision in state law allowing a student to opt-out, and that standardized testing is part of the educational program, it also says that individual school systems may decide how to handle students who refuse to participate.

Consider this case in Frederick County: The local board of education was sued by a parent who demanded that their child remain in class during the testing window, but not be administered the test. The board of education settled with the parent and met the demands, clearly a precedent that seems to acknowledge that parents have a right to opt their child out of taking the test.

### Your First Amendment rights

While your on-the-job First Amendment rights are fairly clear (see sidebar

for guidelines), your off-duty speech on issues of public concern, which includes excessive testing and opting out, enjoys only qualified protection under the First Amendment. Be careful when you speak to local newspapers (including opinions and editorials) and the media, or public bodies, like boards of education or parent-teacher organizations.

The line between protected and unprotected speech for educators is fuzzy at best, and off-duty speech can result in discipline. We urge that educators' off-duty speech with parents or the media on the opt-out movement be fact-based, objective (not personal), and focused on what, if any, legitimate educational purpose the test serves.

Opting-out may ultimately have consequences for a student's academic success depending if the assessment is used for course grades, promotions, placement in advanced programs, or graduation. If there are a significant number of students opting out, there may also be consequences for the local school system and certain teachers whose evaluation may hinge on the student growth component. Beginning in 2017, that component might include the state standardized test for some teachers.

At MSEA's Representative Assembly, October 16–17, delegates will vote on a new business item that, if passed, will call on MSDE to clarify parents' rights to opt out of state standardized testing and if the county or school has a policy regarding opt out, that educators should not face disciplinary action for sharing this information.

# Unpacking an SLO

BY MISSY DIRKS

Welcome to Breakthroughs in Pedagogy, ActionLine's new series written by members to improve and deepen educators' understanding of practice-related issues.

Student learning objectives (SLOs) are now required of educators in every county as part of the teacher-principal evaluation process. MSEA's commitment to supporting educators' success with SLOs includes membership in a national consortium of NEA state affiliates working to develop, refine, and share best practices to make the SLO process more meaningful than simply compliance. Guest writer Missy Dirks is a member of the team representing Maryland.



### First Steps: Assessing Data and Student Needs

I start with the class curriculum I'll be using for my SLO. I look for "power standards," a standard that encourages continued learning in my subject or one that other standards build onto later. I also look for trend data, if it exists. I value collaborating with my colleagues to discover if the data reveals areas of weakness that we should highlight as a concern. Then I look at baseline data to build my target group. This data can be a common assessment or a performance-based assignment that lets me know where my students are currently in understanding the standard.

### Considering Strategies and Resources

I review how I've taught the concept in the past and research what's available from my district and school. Fellow teachers are often my best resources and talking with them about their own strategies and resources is collaboration at its best. I study the level at which my students are currently achieving, knowing that I may need to go back to resources for earlier grades to help me fill in the gaps of their baseline understanding. When I'm working with a group of high achievers, I may need to research other or additional resources to accelerate their program.

### Mid-Process: Adjustments and Modifications

I include multiple points where I can assess how the learning process is unfolding. Depending on the standard it may be a performance assessment, a classroom assignment, a discussion process, or more standardized pen and paper formatives. If students are progressing more quickly than anticipated, or all students are

hitting my target before the midway point, I adjust my targets higher as I may have underestimated their growth. If students aren't making progress that will get them to my original targets, I reevaluate my plan for the remainder of the SLO interval. I look to see if I can isolate a specific part of the standard that the students are having trouble with so I can be strategic about adjustments. If I need help, I look to other teacher specialists or content experts.

### Working with an Administrator

When an SLO really focuses on teaching and learning, adjustments frequently need to be made. That's why our district has a mid-SLO conference between teacher and administrator built in to our schedules.

Research has shown that when an SLO is static it is not nearly as effective as one that is studied throughout the interval. Students are all different individuals, so even the best researched plan will need adjustment. When I go to my administrator for the mid-SLO conference, I bring artifacts

that show where my students are and a plan or ideas for what I believe needs to be adjusted. Together we look at the new plan and, if proposed, new targets. If the mid-SLO conference has passed and something needs to be adjusted, I request an additional conference with my administrator.

### SLO Process on Instruction and Practice

Sometimes district or state data is simply too global to pinpoint where students are having problems and if you're looking at a standard in a year-long or semester-long course it's hard to see how a specific strategy or resource is helping or hindering student progress. The SLO process provides focused and specific feedback on student understanding. Since an SLO is a narrowly focused snapshot of student learning, it is easier to use the SLO data to drive instruction.

*Missy Dirks is a member of MSEA's SLO Cadre and newly-elected president of the Frederick County Teachers Association.*

*There are two MSEA SLO Cadre representatives in every county who are available to share their expertise with colleagues, administrators, and parents. Contact your local association for more information.*

SLOs are Common Core-based

SLOs Measure Growth



## Sarah M. Fitzsimmons

Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor/  
National Certified Counselor, Baltimore County  
Carroll Manor Elementary School  
Recognized ASCA\* Model Program

### 1 CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

I'm a BIG fan of children's literature. I use literature on a daily basis, in classroom guidance to facilitate discussions about important topics like bullying, anxiety, or changes at home, in small groups, and in individual counselling sessions.

### 2 WALKIE TALKIE

My walkie is a toolkit must! The administration and school secretaries can communicate with me about a classroom I need to assist in, a parent who needs me urgently, or an important phone call.

### 3 PARENT COMMUNICATION STICKERS

It's important to share with parents the great things that are going on as part of the school counseling program! I use these stickers to help facilitate conversation between the parent and the child.

### 4 ASCA REFERENCE GUIDES

All school counselors are familiar with the standards and expectations of the American School Counselor Association. The guides are great resources for sharing with stakeholders about the amazing impact of school counseling.



### 5 BUDDY BENCH POSTER

The Buddy Bench is a specially designated place for students if they are feeling left out at recess or want to switch activities. The children are great about monitoring the bench themselves and adding new friends to their group.

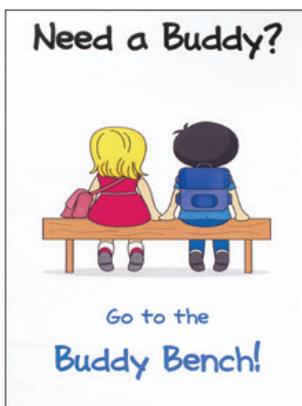


### 6 PLANNER

My planner is an integral part of my program. It keeps me on track with classroom guidance lessons, parent phone calls, teacher collaboration meetings, and individual and small group counseling sessions.

*\*American School Counselor Association*

PHOTO: BRIAN MCCARTHY PHOTOGRAPHY © 2015





educators on the job know that it really does take a holistic structure of supports and resources to provide children with what they need to be ready, willing, and able learners. This is especially true for children who live in poverty. In the schools they attend, a day rarely goes by when a public school administrator, teacher, guidance counselor, pupil personnel worker, school nurse, instructional assistant, para-educator, school secretary, or even cafeteria worker does not juggle, manipulate, network, and yes, work the system to find the right mix of services and supports that they or their students or families may need. The hoops and hurdles are stifling for educators; how those roadblocks affect families who need assistance is even worse.

Enter the community school model—one that transforms the schoolhouse to a community hub of child and adult education, after-school care, enrichment and sports programs, tutoring centers, health and mental health services, and more. The Coalition for

Community Schools calls community schools “both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources.”

Educators cringe when they see what happens to students and families who don’t get the services they need. Community schools streamline, reduce, or eliminate the rules, paperwork, and red tape that often overwhelm teachers and school staff and social workers with massive caseloads. In a community school, the fragmentation of services that so often stands in the way of access is gone.

Jonathon Rondeau, president of the Family League of Baltimore, which is behind the success of Baltimore City’s community schools, said in a recent editorial in the *Baltimore Sun*, “Flexibility, deep listening, and partnership are the hallmarks of community schools. While the tendency is to have preconceived notions about a community’s needs, we don’t get a true picture unless we talk and visit with students, families and neighbors. By directly working with families and communities, we can match actual needs with resources and

really move the needle for Baltimore’s students.”

According to research by the Coalition for Community Schools, 20 initiatives nationwide have a positive impact on what stakeholders value most in a school: student learning and attendance improves; behavior and youth.

There are several community school models. Most, like the 52 currently active in Baltimore City, have a community school coordinator. The coordinator identifies and mobilizes community resources, integrates them into the life of the school, and supports an on-site team who works with the principal, educators, and the community partners towards a common set of results. Communication, assessments and data results, and accountability are key in every successful model.

In Baltimore City, three community schools were among five that won the Coalition for Community Schools 2015 national Award for Excellence this year.

These community schools aren’t an unproven experiment—their success is well-documented. In 2011, Benjamin

*Continued on page 15*

# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

IT REALLY DOES TAKE A VILLAGE TO TRANSFORM PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## WHAT ARE THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES DRIVING THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS?

### FOSTER STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Partners share their resources and expertise and work together to design community schools and make them work.

### SHARE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS

Clear, mutually agreed-upon results drive the work of community schools. Data helps partners measure progress toward results. Agreements enable them to hold each other accountable and move beyond “turf battles.”

### SET HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL

Community schools are organized to support learning. Children, youth, and adults are expected to achieve at high

standards and be contributing members of their community.

### BUILD ON THE COMMUNITY’S STRENGTHS

Community schools marshal the assets of the entire community — including the people who live and work there, local organizations, and the school.

### EMBRACE DIVERSITY

Community schools know their communities. They work to develop respect and a strong, positive identity for people of diverse backgrounds and are committed to the welfare of the whole community.

The Institute for Educational Leadership,  
Coalition for Community Schools

## MARYLAND'S GROWING POVERTY PROBLEM

Community schools are designed to close opportunity gaps by making the school a hub for essential services that students in disadvantaged communities are missing.

The Maryland Equity Project—a research group in the University of Maryland College of Education—last year released a study showing that the number of public school students in poverty nearly doubled over the last two decades.

In the 1990-1991 school year, 36% of Maryland public schools had more than a quarter of their students qualify for free and reduced meals (FARMS). A decade later, 71% of schools claimed more than a quarter of students qualified for FARMS.

There are now nine school districts with more than half of their students in poverty: Washington (50.1%), Kent (52.2%), Allegany (56.3%), Caroline (57.3%), Wicomico (59.6%), Prince George's (64.6%), Dorchester (66.2%), Baltimore City (84.2%), and Somerset (89.1%).



Franklin High School was one of Baltimore City's lowest performing high schools; in 2015 it was one of the top choice high schools with 71% of 12th graders scoring proficient in algebra. It includes an early childhood education program for parenting teens, workforce development for community members, and a network of over 75 partners that customize responses to needs presented by students and families.

Last year at Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School, school readiness increased from 58.2% to 79.4%, school staff and partners made more than 100 home visits, and the school trained 200 teachers in important trauma-informed behavior management skills.

In nine years, Wolfe Street Academy moved from the 77th to the 2nd highest performing elementary school in Baltimore. Highlights in their success story include: a decrease in student mobility from 46.6% to 8.85%; an increase in 5th grade reading proficiency from 50% to 95%; an average daily attendance of 96%; zero suspensions in the past four years; and an after school care participation rate of 84%.

Statistics document the success of these schools, but the real story is in the how. Connections, partnerships, compassion, understanding, communication, accountability, trust—all of these are aspects of good relationship-building and when the relationships are among community leaders, concerned citizens, service providers, and the families themselves, breakthroughs occur.

After the city's unrest, the city council passed a resolution to increase community school funding and the mayor agreed—increasing the community schools budget (including out-of-school time funding) from \$6 million to \$10 million, funding that will add six more schools to the city's roster of community schools.

NEA has taken a strong position of support for community schools and so has MSEA. It makes sense: for two de-

acades, community schools across the country have been tested, and are an evidence-based approach to successful school improvement especially for students living in high poverty.

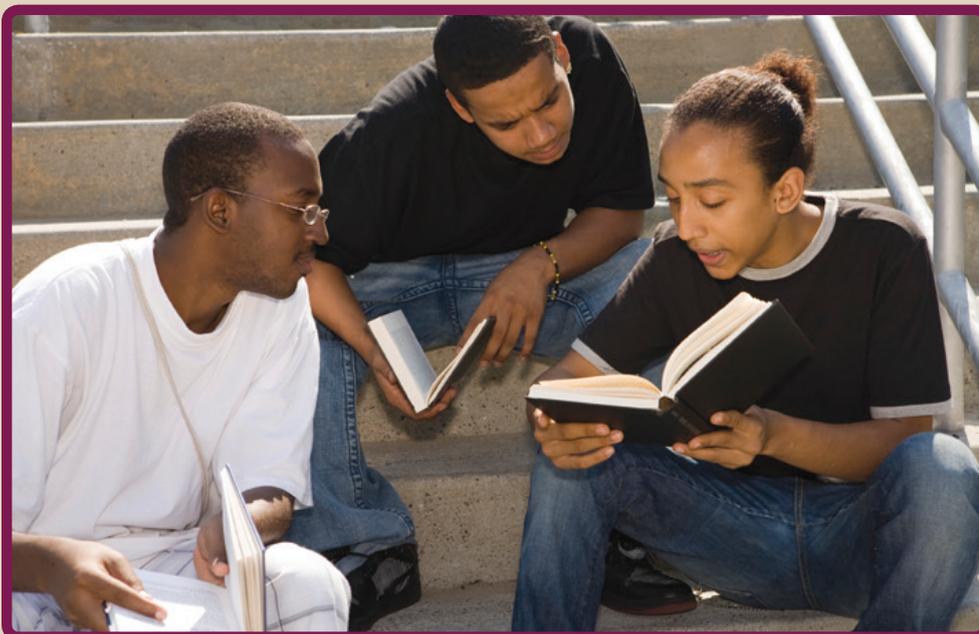
“Our educators, students, and families in low performing, disadvantaged schools need and deserve the best effort of their community and leaders,” says President Betty Weller. “Too often, politicians act like failed voucher programs or turning public schools into private charters are the only way to help kids. It's simply not true. Community schools are a proven commodity, are replicable, and truly prioritize the suc-

cess and well-being of students and their families.”

This year delegates to the MSEA Representative Assembly on October 16-17 will consider a new business item about MSEA's efforts to organize around expanding the community schools model. “Organizing to support community schools fits into every advocacy area MSEA supports. Community schools are pro-achieving students, pro-successful educators, pro-safe and secure families, pro-safe and stable communities—all requirements for successful schools and communities,” Weller continues. “This is a promising model that we can and should pursue as part of our pro-public education agenda.”

For more on community schools, read MSEA's white paper at [maryland-educators.org/CommunitySchools](http://maryland-educators.org/CommunitySchools), and visit [communityschools.org](http://communityschools.org).

**“COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ARE A PROVEN COMMODITY, ARE REPLICABLE, AND TRULY PRIORITIZE THE SUCCESS AND WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES.”  
—BETTY WELLER**





# MSEA ELECTION 2016

Inspire your colleagues, build association influence, and make a difference in the future of public education

If you're among the more than 300 delegates representing Maryland at the 2016 NEA Representative Assembly, you'll join MSEA President Betty Weller and Vice President Cheryl Bost in Washington D.C. July 2-7 to help shape NEA's advocacy for public education, educators, students, and schools. They'll work to influence education policy in Annapolis and Washington D.C.

In a special election at the MSEA Representative Assembly, delegates will elect a new MSEA director to fill a vacant minority seat (see box below). In January, members will elect two new MSEA/NEA directors who will serve on both the NEA and MSEA boards. Learn more, review rules and guidelines, and complete online forms at [marylandeducators.org/MSEA2016Election](http://marylandeducators.org/MSEA2016Election).

## GUIDELINES FOR CANDIDATES FOR NEA AND MSEA BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

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

## 2016 GENERAL ELECTION CALENDAR

### November 20, 2015

All forms dues at MSEA headquarters by 5:00 p.m.

### January 25, 2016

Voting begins at 9:00 a.m. at [marylandeducators.org](http://marylandeducators.org).

[educators.org](http://educators.org) 9:00 a.m.

### February 19, 2016

Voting closes at 5:00 p.m.

### February 29, 2016

Election results validated and released.

## 3 STEPS TO BECOMING A CANDIDATE

- 1 Complete and submit the official Nomination & Intent and Biography forms. Resumés are not accepted.
- 2 *Optional* Include a personal statement for each position sought. See form for rules on personal statement.
- 3 *Optional* Submit a 3-minute video (director candidates only) and/or an original or high resolution digital photo. One photo only. Photos not returned.

Candidate information will appear on the official 2016 MSEA Election website on January 25, 2016 in alphabetical order per position sought.

## HEAR CANDIDATES LIVE AT CONVENTION 2015

MSEA Director (Minority) | NEA Directors  
October 16 | October 17

Delegates and visitors can hear speeches from candidates for NEA director and MSEA director (minority) seats at MSEA's 2015 Representative Assembly.

To be eligible, NEA director candidates must submit their nomination forms by October 12; MSEA director (minority) candidates must submit nomination forms or announce candidacy per the guidelines in the box below.

## SPECIAL ELECTION: OPEN MSEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS SEAT (MINORITY) TO BE FILLED AT THE MSEA 2015 REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY, OCTOBER 16-17, OCEAN CITY

- \* Delegates will elect a member to serve October 17, 2015—July 31, 2016
- \* The director will serve as a delegate to the MSEA 2016 Spring Representative Assembly
- \* There are two ways to become a candidate: 1) complete forms, page 17 or at [marylandeducators.org/MSEA2016Election](http://marylandeducators.org/MSEA2016Election); 2) announce candidacy from the floor of the 2015 Representative Assembly
- \* Deadline for nominations: October 16, by the end of the call for nominations at the 2015 Representative Assembly
- \* Winner announced October 17 at the 2015 Representative Assembly

## NOMINATION & INTENT FORM

**Deadline, NEA Director, NEA Delegate:** November 20, 2015  
**Deadline, MSEA Director:** October 17, 2015

Active members may run for MSEA/NEA Director (*two seats*) or MSEA Director (*one minority seat*). Those elected will also serve as delegates to the MSEA and NEA Representative Assemblies. Candidates for NEA Director or MSEA Director (Minority) may also run for delegate to the 2016 NEA Representative Assembly as an at-large or regional candidate.

To be nominated to run for **MSEA/NEA Director** or **MSEA Director** (Minority) check the appropriate circle:

- NEA Director Term: 9/1/16 - 8/31/19  
 MSEA Director (Minority) Term: 10/17/2015-7/31/2016

To be nominated to run for **MSEA At-Large Delegate** to the 2016 NEA Representative Assembly, check one (active members only):

- Teacher  ESP  Student Member  
 Substitute  Administrator

To be nominated to run for **MSEA Regional Delegate** to the 2016 NEA Representative Assembly, check one (active members only):

- Teacher  ESP  Substitute

NAME As you wish it to appear on the election 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/NEA Director, MSEA Director, and/or for NEA State Delegate in the 2016 MSEA/NEA Election. I agree to abide by the MSEA/NEA policies and bylaws and to adhere to the Code of Ethics, as adopted by the Association.

SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE

DATE

## BIOGRAPHY FORM

**Deadline:** November 20, 2015

NAME As you wish it to appear on the election ballot

SCHOOL Name of school and county

POSITION Check one  Teacher  Substitute  
 ESP  Student Member  Administrator

MSEA MEMBER for \_\_\_\_ years; NEA MEMBER for \_\_\_\_ years

### YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Candidates may attach a personal statement.

Word limits as follows:

NEA Director, 150 words; MSEA Regional and At-Large Delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly, 25 words. Statements exceeding the word limit noted above will be deleted at the last complete sentence that is at or under the limit. If the first sentence exceeds the word limit, no personal statement will be published.

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

**Mail or deliver to:** Trish Bendler/Kristy Anderson  
Nominations and Credentials Committee  
MSEA  
140 Main St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
Email: [kanderson@mseanea.org](mailto:kanderson@mseanea.org)  
FAX: 410/263-5730

### Forms must be received by:

November 20, 2015, 5 p.m. To verify delivery, use registered or certified mail, return receipt requested.

**Retired members:** See the special 2016 MSEA Election inserted into this ActionLine.

# Amanda Barnes

*Paraprofessional*

J. M. Tawes Career and Technology Center  
Washington High School  
Somerset County

In Somerset County you have students from all walks of life. I was blessed to come from a loving home, but I quickly realized that not all homes were like mine. That's when my dream to become a teacher also became a dream to love and support every student. When a student feels significant and respected, you can connect with them in stronger and more powerful ways—not just in academics, but in developing positive character traits and values that last a lifetime.

I love walking in the doors knowing I have the privilege to make a difference. For the first few years, I wondered if I really was. It wasn't until recently that I knew the answer. A former student came back to tell me he had just graduated from college. I told him how proud I was of him for all he had overcome. He looked at me and said, "Be proud of yourself, Ms. Barnes. You're the reason I believed in myself." Wow!

I haven't accomplished my ultimate goal quite yet! But as I continue to pursue my teaching degree, I know that I'm making the difference I've always dreamed of.



**“When a student feels significant and respected, you can connect with them in stronger and more powerful ways.”**

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For more information, visit us at [neaacademy.org](http://neaacademy.org)  **neaacademy**



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## STAY CONNECTED TO MSEA



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