



# School News

## Important Dates Coming Soon

### *Schools, offices closed*

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) schools and offices are closed Monday, Feb. 17 for Presidents Day.

### *Let the good times roll*

Westlake High School will host Jazz at the Lake, “a Mardi Gras Celebration,” 6 p.m. Feb. 15 at Westlake. The Glenn Dewey Quintet will perform, along with ensembles from Westlake, La Plata, North Point, St. Charles and Thomas Stone high schools, and General Smallwood and Benjamin Stoddert middle schools. Westlake is at 3000 Middletown Road in Waldorf. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$7 for students and \$30 for a family of four.

### *Support student singers*

CCPS high school singers will perform 7 p.m. Feb. 22 at St. Charles High School.

A cappella groups from metro-area high schools will compete in the Mid-Atlantic quarterfinals including groups from Maurice J. McDonough, North Point, St. Charles and Thomas Stone high schools. St. Charles is at 5305 Piney Church Road in Waldorf. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/wvfbu3s> for tickets and <https://tinyurl.com/uqvrtrc> for more information.

### *Bunkyo students visit*

Bunkyo University students will visit CCPS for two weeks later this month. The university students, who are studying to become teachers, will arrive in the States from Japan, on Monday, Feb. 17. They will be welcomed at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building on Tuesday, Feb. 18 and attend presentations about education in America, reading, math and special education. Students will visit the Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Center during their visit, tour schools and centers, before spending their second week teaching lessons on Japanese culture to CCPS students.

## Dr. Brown sign language club strengthens friendships

Once a week, students at Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School close their mouths and talk.

They chat about animals, colors and say the Pledge of Allegiance without making a peep. The sign language club at Dr. Brown has been meeting for three years under the direction of Darcy Piazza, an educational sign language interpreter with Charles County Public Schools (CCPS).

Many students joined the club to better communicate with their friends who are deaf or hard of hearing. “I knew there were deaf people in my school, and I knew I wanted to talk to them,” said Olivia Bellamy, a fifth grader who has been in the club for three years. She also wanted to be able to help others communicate by acting as an interpreter.

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing are paired with educational sign language interpreter during the school day including at lunch and recess.

Lilyana Evangelista, a third grader who is deaf, is a member of the sign language club and helped give each member their sign name — a sign that uniquely identifies a person rather than fingerspelling out their name. Bellamy’s is “science” because she loves the



**Lilyana Evangelista, a Dr. Brown third grader, left, goes over signs with Darcy Piazza, an educational sign language interpreter with Charles County Public Schools.**

subject; Sophia Orellana Chavez’s sign name is “cat” after her favorite animal; Evangelista’s is “silly.”

In the U.S., American Sign Language (ASL) is the primary language of deaf and

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## Inaugural Early Learning Launch set for March 21

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) is hosting its first Early Learning Launch event 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on March 21 at La Plata High School. The event will provide resources for families with children ages 5 years and younger. Resources include school readiness activities for parents and children. Community partners also will be on site to share additional resources for children ages birth to 5 years old.

Some of the partners include Charles County Parks and Recreation, Pure Play Every Day, Charles County Mobile Library, Infants and Toddlers Program, Child Find, Raising a Reader, Charles County Early

Childhood Advisory Council, the Charles County Department of Health, We Make Kids Smile and the Neighborhood Creative Arts Center. Special appearances by the Chick-fil-A cow, Pinch from the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs and Chase of Paw Patrol with the Charles County Sheriff’s Office Explorers Program.

During the Early Learning Launch, parents with children who will be four years old by Sept. 1 can complete an application for prekindergarten. Parents with children who will be five years old by Sept. 1 can also reg-

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hard of hearing people and is expressed through hand and facial movements.

Learning to better communicate with their friends is the pull, but students are also engaging in new skills. Piazza said young children are particularly receptive to learning a new language. “They’re little sponges when it comes to language, and they think it’s cool.”

Piazza was introduced to sign language in high school when she learned her computer teacher was deaf. The teacher taught Piazza how to sign, leading her to study in an immersion program at the Rochester Institute of Technology’s National Technical Institute for the Deaf to become an interpreter. “The best way to learn a language is to be submerged in it,” Piazza said.

After completing her practicum at corporations, Piazza said she felt a calling to work in public schools and fell in love with it. “I knew I wanted to work in public schools and give kids a voice,” she said.

She and her family moved to Charles County from upstate New York with Piazza working in Prince George’s County Public Schools for five years and for three years in CCPS before taking time off when she had her daughter, Hannah, now a senior at La Plata High School. Piazza returned to CCPS about 12 years ago. Before Dr. Brown, she worked at the F.B. Gwynn Educational Center, Thomas Stone High School and Mattawoman Middle School. The students in Dr. Brown’s sign language club have performed a song at the school’s winter concert and will say the Pledge of Allegiance at an upcoming awards assembly. “I think more people should try to learn sign language,” Isaac Watson, a third grader, said.

“It’s not very hard to learn,” Orellana Chavez said. “You just have to memorize the signs, and nobody is left out.”

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ister their child for kindergarten.

The Launch provides parents with an opportunity to apply for prekindergarten or register for kindergarten a week earlier than advertised. The registration window for all early childhood education programs opens Monday, March 30. Staff will be on site to assist parents with the application and registration processes. Admission to prekindergarten is based on guidelines set by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Visit the CCPS website at [cboc.com](https://www.cboc.com) for information on prekindergarten category eligibility guidelines.

Parents must complete the application process for prekindergarten and register for kindergarten online through ParentVue, an online student information system used by CCPS. The system is available at <https://www.cboc.com/index.php/online-registration>. To apply for prekindergarten or to register a child for kindergarten, parents must provide required documents.

Required documents include the proof of a physical examination by a physician

or a certified practitioner. Physicals must be completed between nine months prior to and six months after entering school. The proof of required immunizations against communicable diseases. The child’s birth certificate or other acceptable proof of birth (e.g. passport/visa; physician’s certificate; baptismal or church certification; hospital certificate; or birth registration), and two proofs of domicile/residency.

Parents applying for category 1 prekindergarten also must provide income verification (either three recent, consecutive paycheck stubs for anyone earning income in the household, food supplement approval letter, foster care or homeless paperwork).

CCPS also has a three-year-old program that serves Title I elementary schools. Staff from the CCPS Title I office will be at the Early Learning Launch to talk with parents about the three-year-old program and the application process.

The application window for the three-year-old program opens March 30.



## Notebook

### On the cover

The Board of Education honored outstanding educators at its Feb. 11 meeting including Amber Smith, special education teacher, Mary H. Matula Elementary School, left; Erin Locke, special education teacher, Arthur Middleton Elementary School; and Brooke Lyon, physical education teacher, Milton M. Somers Middle School.

### Scholarship Fund open

Time is running out to apply for the Charles County Scholarship Fund. The deadline is March 1 and the fund has more than 50 scholarships for Charles County high school seniors. Go to <https://www.cboc.com/ss/charles-county-scholarship-fund-inc/>.

### Volunteers sought

Volunteers are needed to serve on the school system’s District Committee on Assessment. Maryland State Senate Bill 452 requires each local school system to create a district committee on assessment every two years to review and evaluate the district’s assessment plan, as well as make recommendations to the Board of Education. This will be the second time since 2018 a committee will be formed. Each meeting will be held from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building at 5980 Radio Station Road in La Plata. Meeting dates are March 24, April 23, May 26, June 16, Sept. 24 and Oct. 22. Interested volunteers are asked to email Christina Mulhollan Miller, coordinator of formative assessment, at [cmmiller@cboc.com](mailto:cmmiller@cboc.com) or call 301-934-7300 by Feb. 24.

### ESFCU educator award

The Support Education Foundation of Educational Systems Federal Credit Union (ESFCU) awards administrators, support staff and teachers funding to support professional development. The Maurice Erly Professional Development Award is a one-time \$1,000 award that can be used toward continuing education fees, workshop registrations, certification fees and tuition. Applicants must be ESFCU members. The application is available online at <https://supportededucation.org/helping-educators/>.

# Cleary, Matthew earn national certification through NBPTS

Two Charles County Public Schools educators achieved national certification last month from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). National Board Certified Teachers complete a rigorous assessment process to be eligible for the designation.

Casey Cleary of Benjamin Stoddert Middle School and Sonia Matthew of Milton M. Somers Middle School join 36 other CCPS educators who completed the process to become nationally certified. The assessment measures what accomplished educators should know. Candidates must demonstrate how their instruction enhances both student performance and achievement.

Cleary teaches seventh-grade math at Stoddert, where she has taught for the past seven years. She earned National Board Certification in the area of mathematics/early adolescence. Cleary currently teaches seventh-grade compacted math and Algebra 1. She said she chose to pursue national certification to challenge herself and improve as a teacher for her students. "I wanted to become a reflective practitioner and be the best teacher I could be for my students. This process was so rewarding," Cleary said.



Casey Cleary

Cleary has a master's degree in curriculum and instruction and a bachelor's degree in

elementary education, both from College of Saint Rose in Albany, N.Y.

She is pursuing her administration certification from McDaniel College. Cleary said she once had a student tell her how important she was in his life, and she keeps that memory with her daily.

"There was a student in my second year of teaching who was struggling to pass. We worked every day after school for weeks to build his knowledge. At the end of the year, he wrote in my yearbook 'Thank you for never giving up on me.' That has stayed with me every day since then," Cleary said.

Matthew is the administrative assistant at Somers and started her career with CCPS in 2016. She earned National Board Certification in the area of literacy: reading-language arts/early and middle childhood.



Sonia Matthew

Prior to joining CCPS, Matthew taught with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) for several years. During her career with PGCPS, Matthew also served as a talented and gifted coordinator, reading specialist and Maryland State Department of Education master teacher. Additionally, Matthew taught for 10 years in Texas, from 1998 to 2008, in kindergarten through Grade 8 in the areas of special education, gifted and talented, and Title I programs.

For Matthew, the process to achieve national certification was about reflecting on her

career as a teacher.

"When I was in the classroom, I was always very reflective. I wanted to be the best for each and every student. The process allowed me to learn and reflect continually, while using research based methodologies to best reach all students," Matthew said.

Matthew has an educational doctorate degree and attended the University of Ottawa, Canada for her undergraduate studies. She said educators are fortunate to be in a profession where they can make a difference each day. "Every day is full of memorable moments and that is what I absolutely love about this work. We get to touch lives every moment of the day," Matthew said.

National Board Certified Teachers must complete a review of their skills and work that includes a portfolio, student work samples, videos, and a thorough analysis of their classroom teaching and student learning. Teachers also complete a series of written exercises designed to probe the depth of their subject-matter knowledge and understanding of how to teach that material to students.

Cleary and Matthew join more than 3,800 nationwide educators who completed the certification process in 2019.

Certification is valid for 10 years after which a teacher may complete the renewal process. Maryland has 3,328 nationally certified teachers and is one of the top 15 states with the highest participation in the certification process.

By achieving National Board Certification, CCPS teachers are eligible for a stipend as long as they maintain their certification status. Information about the application process is posted online at <https://www.nbpts.org/>.

## Showing off Skills at competition

Several North Point High School and Robert D. Stettem Educational Center students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs competed in the 2020 SkillsUSA Southern Maryland Regional Competition Feb. 8 held at North Point. Nearly 50 CCPS students placed in the competition, allowing them to advance to the state content in April. Howard White, right, a North Point senior, earned a silver medal in carpentry at the regional event. To read more about the competition and a list of winners, go to [www.ccboe.com/pr](http://www.ccboe.com/pr) and search for "SkillsUSA."



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## Happy 100 days

William B. Wade Elementary School's kindergarten team celebrates the 100th day of school on Feb. 11. Pictured are Sarah Millman, Coralie Potts, Deborah Rap-pole, Amanda Finch, Lynne Cup-pett, Tina Ratchford and Donna Robinson.

*Submitted by Wade's PR liaisons Heidi Furman and Bonnie Thomas Stern*

## Strategy meeting at Lackey

Henry E. Lackey High School's Strategic Plan Committee analyze data for the school. Principal Kathy Perriello provided lunch while the committee worked earlier this year in teams to develop a plan for English and math. The teams analyzed data, discussed trends, and developed a plan for the school year.

*Submitted by Lackey's PR liaison Heather Alvarez*



## Personnel

Apply for positions online at [www.ccboe.com/jobs/currentopenings.php](http://www.ccboe.com/jobs/currentopenings.php). All teaching positions require a bachelor's degree and MSDE certification requirements.

### Job Openings

**Guidance Secretary** — Westlake High School, 11-month position. A high school diploma is required. Positive human relation skills and good computer literacy skills are needed. Apply by Feb. 19.

**Special Education Instructional Assistant (IA)** — Henry E. Lackey High School, 10-month position. A high school diploma is required. Applicants must have experience working with children and excellent human relations skills. Apply by Feb. 19.

**Staff Accountant, Restricted Funds/Budget** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. A bachelor's degree in accounting, finance or a related field is required. Apply by Feb. 24.

**Special Education Teacher for EA Program** — St. Charles High School, 10-month position. Apply by Feb. 28.

**Language Arts Teacher** — All middle schools, 10-month position. Apply by March 27.

**Mathematics Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Apply by March 27.

**Physical Education Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Apply by March 27.

**Science Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Apply by March 27.

**Social Studies Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Apply by March 27.

**Technology Education Teacher** — North Point High School, 10-month position. Apply by March 30.

**High School Counselor (internal applicants only)** — All high schools, 12-month position. A master's degree in school counseling and eligibility for certification in school counseling as determined by the Maryland State Department of Education are required. Applicants must have a minimum of a 600-hour practicum or experience teaching or counseling in a school setting. Apply by April 30.

**Equipment Mechanic III** — Annex I, 12-month position. A high school diploma and working knowledge of battery/electric floor care machines and small engine repair are required. Position open until filled.

### Extra Pay Positions

**Assistant Tennis Coach** — Henry E. Lackey High School. Call 301-743-5431. Apply by Feb. 28.

**Assistant Varsity Tennis Coach** — La Plata High School. Call 301-934-1100. Apply by April 30.