



# School News

## Important Dates Coming Soon

### Young Athletes at Home

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) and Special Olympics Maryland are preparing for the second session of the Young Athletes at Home program.

Geared toward children 2 to 7, the program promotes gross motor skill development — hopping, throwing, balancing — and is open to young children of all abilities. Families that participated in the first session do not need to register to be included in Session 2. New families can register by March 22 to receive a free equipment kit. To register, head to the [Young Athletes at Home form](#). For more information about the program, visit [the program's website](#).

### Early Learning Launch

CCPS is hosting its Early Learning Launch virtual event on March 27. The event features two virtual workshops about school readiness skills.

The workshops are ideal for parents of children who will start prekindergarten or kindergarten in August. For more information and links, [click here](#).

Registration for CCPS kindergarten begins Monday, March 29. Maryland law requires students entering kindergarten to be five years old by Sept. 1 in the school year in which the child is registered.

To register a child for kindergarten for the 2021-2022 school year, a child must be five years old on or before Sept. 1, 2021. All registrations must be completed through the CCPS online registration system. More information and links can be [found here](#).

The application window for prekindergarten opens March 29. Students must be four years old on or before Sept. 1, 2021, to be eligible for prekindergarten. Admission is based on criteria and guidelines set by MSDE, and is not guaranteed. For more information and links, [click here](#).



## The story behind the story time

Jenny Herrera, a bilingual family and community outreach liaison for Charles County Public Schools (CCPS), films a bilingual story time. Herrera reads a story in English and Spanish for young learners to watch on the CCPS YouTube channel. Stories include "The Three Little Pigs," "The Ugly Duckling," "Sleeping Beauty" and others. New story times will debut on Tuesdays. To watch the story times, go to YouTube and search Charles County Public Schools or [click here](#).

## Phase 2 begins March 22, Phase 4 set to start April 19

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) begins Phase 2 on Monday, March 22. Under Phase 2, more than 3,000 CCPS students return to their school for in-person learning four days a week — Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

To accommodate for in-person student arrival, transition to classrooms and a review of safety protocols, online learning schedules may be adjusted on Monday, March 22. A student's first online class for March 22 may begin up to two hours later than normal. School principals and teachers will communicate any schedule changes to students and parents.

Transportation information, including bus stop times and locations, for Phase 2 students who need bus service should be

updated in ParentVue early next week. The information will be posted under the Student Information tab on the desktop program. On the mobile app, transportation information is posted under the Student Info menu, under additional information located in the bottom right-hand corner.

Families can also review their child's instructional choice indicated on the CCPS return to school parent survey in ParentVue under the Student Information/Student Info menus.

CCPS begins Phase 4 on Monday, April 19, and expects more than 5,000 additional students to return to schools for in-person instruction. Students returning under Phase 4 attend school in person two days a week — either Monday and Tuesday or Thursday

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## On the cover

The Board of Education of Charles County honored outstanding employees at its March meeting including Bethany Berkowitz, career and technology education (CTE) business and computer teacher, Maurice J. McDonough High School, left; Jennifer Malone, reading resource teacher, Mary H. Matula Elementary School; and Janet Ryan, reading interventionist, Arthur Middleton Elementary School.

## April resolutions recognized

The Board of Education at its March 9 meeting recognized two annual CCPS resolutions.

The resolutions highlight Month of the Young Child and National Student Leadership Week. The Board votes annually to accept resolutions. CCPS celebrates Month of the Young Child annually in April.

The national theme is Celebrating Our Youngest Learners. Month of the Young Child theme emphasizes that all children, regardless of their background, should be prepared and ready to learn when they start school. Board of Education Member Elizabeth Brown read the resolution on behalf of the Board.

CCPS recognizes National Student Leadership Week in 2021 as April 18-24. National Student Leadership Week honors students who demonstrate leadership skills through their participation in academic and community activities. These activities include student government, academic and fine arts clubs, athletics, vocational clubs and other organized events. Board of Education Student Member Ian Herd read the resolution on behalf of the Board.

## ... 10 years later

North Point High School's 2011 boys basketball team is reflecting on their state championship win 10 years ago in a CCPS video.

"People still come up to us and talk about that team. Talk about the way those guys played," James Ball, North Point's varsity basketball coach and art teacher, said in the piece. "Every guy came in and did what they needed to do at practice and in the classroom. It's great to know that even after 10 years, those guys are still that way."

[Click here](#) to view the video and others produced by CCPS.



Billingsley Elementary School's media specialist, Bethany Thornton, has been with CCPS since 1998.

## Thornton introduces students to new cultures, commodities

The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc. (MAEF) recently honored Billingsley Elementary School librarian Bethany Thornton with the Velma Clark Excellence in Teaching About Agriculture Award. The award recognizes educators who demonstrate a commitment to teaching students about the importance of agriculture.

Thornton was surprised at the news she was chosen for recognition. "I was surprised and excited at the same time. It was completely unexpected," she said.

Thornton has served as the librarian/media specialist at Billingsley since the school opened in 2019. But Thornton did not start her career in education in a school library.

She first joined Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) at Milton M. Somers Middle School in 1998 but relocated two years later due to a change in her husband's job.

In 2012, Thornton moved back to Charles County and secured a position teaching English at Westlake High School. During her time at Westlake, Thornton completed a post-graduate program in school library.

"I wanted to help my students become lifelong learners and discover their passions," she said.

In 2014, Thornton took a position in the library at Indian Head Elementary School. She attended her first Ag in the Classroom Conference, sponsored by MAEF, in 2015. Her passion to teach children about agriculture grew from there.

"Helping kids understand where their food comes from is really what drives my

passion for agricultural education," Thornton said.

In her lessons, Thornton consistently uses learning resources from MAEF and the National Ag in the Classroom program to teach children how agriculture plays a role in daily life. One of her main goals is for students to understand through hands-on activities and experiences why agriculture is important to them on a personal level.

One of her favorite activities with students is reading "How to Make Apple Pie and See the World" by Marjorie Priceman. "It's a great way to introduce students to new cultures and commodities from around the globe. Agriculture is just so diverse. You can teach anything with it," Thornton said.

As the award recipient, Thornton receives a \$500 classroom stipend and an all-expenses paid trip to the National Ag in the Classroom Conference set for this June in Des Moines, Iowa.

Thornton is looking forward to the conference to learn more about infusing agriculture education into her teaching. "I am thrilled to be honored and look forward to my trip for the National Ag in the Classroom conference to learn even more," Thornton said.

MAEF is a nonprofit organization that promotes agricultural literacy and agricultural education. Signature MAEF programs include "Infusing Ag in the Classroom" professional development courses for teachers, mobile science labs and mobile agricultural showcases. Visit [www.maefonline.com](http://www.maefonline.com) for more information.

## MAEF honors Billingsley librarian for teaching Ag in the Classroom



# The write stuff – gifted & talented students meet with author

As a kid growing up in Los Angeles, author Lisa Yee would go to the library and check out as many books as she could carry. Many Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) gifted and talented students agree that they can relate.

“Have you ever been reading a book and you’re so into it, you don’t know time has passed,” Yee asked during recent Zoom meetings with CCPS gifted and talented middle school students. “Someone has to write these books.”

Students recently read one of Yee’s works, *Millicent Min: Girl Genius*, a story about a gifted 11-year-old who is already in high school and spending her summer taking a college course for fun. Reading a book about a girl who is known for her smarts is something the students can latch onto, Christina Trest, a learning resource teacher at General Smallwood Middle School, said. “This story shows Millicent’s personal growth,” Trest said. “It shows that just because someone is smart in school, this does not mean that the rest of their life is fabulous.”

“I think that *Millicent Min: Girl Genius* is one of my favorite books because of the story line,” Killian Rupard, a sixth grader at Picco-waxen Middle School, said. “I feel like most books kids enjoy are about people their age or around their age, and Millicent Min was different because Millicent is in college, so it gives you a different experience, but is still enjoyable because it is still about a kid around my age.”

Yee didn’t start out writing books. “A writer can write anything,” she said. “Anywhere



**Lisa Yee was a writer for Disney and Red Lobster before realizing her dream of writing novels.**

there is words.” She worked for the Walt Disney World Co., writing scripts for the theme park’s parades. She wrote menus for Red Lobster. “Golden fried shrimp. I would write stuff like that,” she said. She came up with the “Pass the Old El Paso” slogan for the brand. But the lure of writing a book, like the ones she devoured as a child, still pulled at her.

“I was a hypocrite,” she said. “I told my kids they could be anything they wanted, but I wasn’t doing what I wanted.”

She reached out to Arthur Levine, the U.S. publisher and editor of the *Harry Potter* and the *His Dark Materials* series. Turning in her first manuscript wasn’t an overnight process. Yee said it took her six years to write *Millicent Min*. It started as a novel about a child psychologist aimed for adult readers. Edits and suggestions eventually evolved into a story about a gifted student and the people around her. Additional books in the Min universe include *Stanford Wong Flunks Big Time*, *So Totally Emily Ebers* and *Warp Speed*. Yee has written additional books in the Young

## Read more

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland State Advisory Council on Gifted and Talented Education on Feb. 25 honored 34 Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) students for gifted education accomplishments. [Click here](#) to read more about the students.

Adult and middle grade genres, including those in the DC Superhero Girls collection.

She was invited to meet with students and teachers by Ann Taylor, CCPS content specialist for gifted and differentiated services. Taylor saw Yee at a conference last year and sent her an email asking if she was interested in participating in virtual meetings with students. Before COVID-19, Yee would visit schools to speak with auditoriums filled with students. Right now, those events are held virtually. She said it took some getting used to, but chatting with students over Zoom has been fun. “Zoom used to creep me out, but I’m enjoying it now,” Yee said. “It’s much more informal, but interesting.”

Trest said it is beneficial for students to see that authors are just “normal” people. “She was very fun and really engaging with the students,” Trest said, adding that it was eye-opening for students to learn adults have some of the same concerns they have. “They see that published, award winning authors sometimes struggle,” she said. “She helped them to see that writers are people too and this career can be attainable for them.”

## Phase 2

and Friday – depending on the first letter of their last name. Phase 4 transportation information should be available for parents the week of April 12. To accommodate for the additional in-person arrival of students returning in Phase 4, online learning schedules may be adjusted on Monday, April 19, and Thursday, April 22. A student’s first online class for April 19 and April 22 may begin up to two hours later than normal. School principals and teachers will communicate any schedule changes to students and parents.

Any student eligible for Phase 3 now falls

under the Phase 4 schedule if they are returning to school. In Phase 4, students with a last name beginning with A-K attend school in person on Monday and Tuesday and complete virtual learning on Thursday and Friday. In Phase 4, students with a last name beginning with L-Z attend school in person on Thursday and Friday and complete virtual learning on Monday and Tuesday.

Once Phase 4 begins, any student attending school in person under Phase 2 still attends four days per week. Wednesdays remain asynchronous learning days for the remainder of

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the 2020-21 school year.

Additionally, CCPS will still close for students and teachers for spring break. Spring break is April 2-9. No instruction, whether in person or virtual, will take place during spring break. CCPS administrative offices are closed April 2 for Good Friday, and April 5 for Easter Monday. Schools reopen from spring break on April 12.

CCPS posts the most up-to-date information about the reopening of schools on its website at <https://www.ccboc.com/index.php/road-to-reopening>.

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301-932-6610  
301-934-7220  
Fax: 301-932-6651

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Sara K. Taylor

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CCPS provides nondiscriminatory equal access to school facilities in accordance with its Use of Facilities rules to designated youth groups (including, but not limited to, the Boy Scouts).

## The shows go on — schools set spring play productions

Student actors at some of Charles County's high schools are performing this spring in virtual/outdoor theatre productions.

La Plata High School is offering several productions.

Student actors will present a virtual one-act show, "The Radio Play Disaster," starting March 26. The production will be available on demand for 24 hours through the Broadway on Demand platform. Interested viewers can contact Jennifer Joyner, La Plata theatre director, at [jjoyner@ccboe.com](mailto:jjoyner@ccboe.com) or more information.

Next month, La Plata will host an outdoor play, "Fahrenheit 451," at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, April 30 at the school. Due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, seating will be limited. Tickets will be on sale in early April at BookTix.com.

La Plata will also host an outdoor musical, "Something Rotten," at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 3 at the school. Seating may be limited due to COVID-19 restrictions. Tickets will be available for purchase on BookTix.com in early May.

Contact Joyner at [jjoyner@ccboe.com](mailto:jjoyner@ccboe.com) for details about La Plata's planned spring productions.

Henry E. Lackey High School is hosting a virtual play in May. Student actors will present the Music Theatre International's "Disney's High School Musical Jr." at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, May 21.

Interested viewers can access tickets online at <https://www.showtix4u.com/event-details/47491>. Tickets are free but viewers will be prompted to pay a \$3 streaming fee. Ticket holders will receive a link to watch the show after purchase. Each ticket is good for one streaming device. CCPS staff members can email Austin Gore, Lackey theatre arts director, at [rgore@ccboe.com](mailto:rgore@ccboe.com) for a ticket without the streaming fee. Any additional monies paid at the time of ticket purchase will be donated to the Lackey theatre department. Donations can also be sent by check to Henry E. Lackey High School, 3000 Chicamuxen Road, Indian Head, MD 20640.

Westlake High School is hosting a virtual play next month. Student actors will present "Fame the Musical Jr." on April 30 and May 1. Performance time for both dates is 7 p.m. Interested viewers can purchase tickets for \$3 at [www.westlaketheatre.org](http://www.westlaketheatre.org). The virtual stream begins at 7 p.m. both nights. CCPS staff can receive one free ticket by emailing Jackson Long, Westlake theatre arts teacher, at [jlong@ccboe.com](mailto:jlong@ccboe.com).

Additional virtual play information will be posted to the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) website at [ccboe.com](http://ccboe.com) and on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Find us on Facebook at [Charles County Public Schools](https://www.facebook.com/CharlesCountyPublicSchools) and [@ccps](https://twitter.com/ccps) on Twitter.

## 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

**Attendance Secretary** — Milton M. Somers Middle School, 10.5-month position. Good computer literacy skills including Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint required. Apply by March 22.

**Food Service Driver** — Three hours a day, 12-month position. A high school diploma is required, as well as basic skills in reading, record keeping and math. Apply by March 23.

**Human Resources Specialist** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. Master's degree (or juris doctor) in human resources, business management or related field, and three-to-five years of supervisory experience in hiring, staffing, recruit-

ing, human resources or related experience are required. Or applicants must have a bachelor's degree in human resources, business management or related field, and five-to-eight years of supervisory experience in hiring, staffing, recruiting, human resources or related experience, and a current Human Resources PHR or SHRM-CP certification. Apply by March 26.

**English Teacher** — St. Charles High School, 10-month position. Apply by Aug. 20.

**Math Teacher** — Theodore G. Davis Middle School, 10-month position. Apply by Aug. 23.

**Computer Teacher** — General Smallwood Middle School, 10-month position. Apply by Aug. 23.

**Science Teacher** — Mattawoman Middle School, 10-month position. Apply by Aug. 23.

**Special Education Teacher** — St. Charles

High School, 10-month position. Apply by Aug. 23.

**Staff Accountant—Internal Controls/Audit** — Jesse E. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with specialization in accounting and audit required. A master's degree or Certified Public Accountant preferred. Position open until filled.

**Special Education Instructional Assistant** — Location to be determined, 10-month position. A high school diploma is required. Position open until filled.

**Title I Kindergarten Instructional Assistant** — Location to be determined, 10-month position. A high school diploma and associate's degree required. In lieu of associate's degree, applicants must have a passing score on Para pro test. Position open until filled.