



School News

Important Dates Coming Soon

Teacher Appreciation Week

Teacher Appreciation Week is May 3 to 7. The week focuses on essential skills teachers have that support the smooth operation of a classroom, such as encouraging family learning and parental involvement, serving as a positive role model for children and demonstrating a commitment to student success. Teachers — especially during the COVID-19 pandemic — have shown resiliency in support of students both educationally and socially.

Graduation 2021 plans

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) will celebrate the Class of 2021 during in-person graduation ceremonies at Regency Furniture Stadium from May 28 to June 3. COVID-19 safety guidelines, mask wearing and social distancing measures will be in place for the ceremonies, and tickets for families are limited to three per graduate. All CCPS high school graduation ceremonies will stream live to the school system's YouTube channel and at ccboe.com. The graduation schedule is:

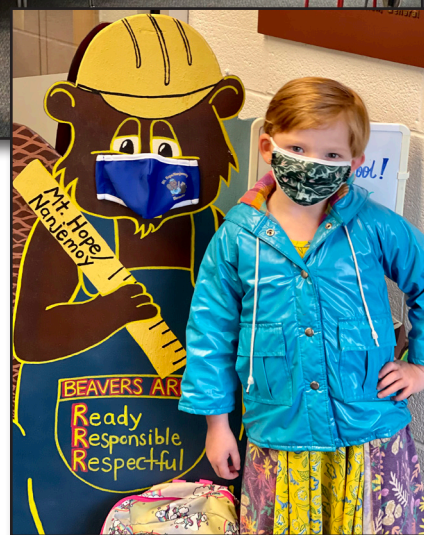
- Friday, May 28 — **St. Charles High School**, 9 a.m.
- Tuesday, June 1 — **Westlake High School**, 9 a.m.
- Tuesday, June 1 — **Henry E. Lackey High School**, 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, June 2 — **Thomas Stone High School**, 9 a.m.
- Wednesday, June 2 — **La Plata High School**, 1 p.m.
- Thursday, June 3 — **Maurice J. McDonough High School**, 9 a.m.
- Thursday, June 3 — **North Point High School**, 1 p.m.

CCPS has the approval of Charles County Health Officer Dr. Dianna Abney to host in-person graduation ceremonies at the stadium. However, Abney has the authority to revoke her approval for CCPS to hold large gatherings based on COVID-19 positivity rates.



Opening the door to Phase 4

Phase 4 of the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) reopening plan started April 19. Above, Berry Elementary School first graders Kyndall Gardner, left, and Azlan Alvi are pictured with their teacher Brooke Proctor. Right, Paisley Trevett, a prekindergarten student at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School, takes a quick pic with the school's mascot before heading to her classroom.



Johnson named Elementary School Counselor of the Year

Constance Johnson, a school counselor at William B. Wade Elementary School, was recently named the Elementary School Counselor of the Year by the Maryland School Counselor Association.

When Johnson started with Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) in 2014, she split her time between Wade and C. Paul Barnhart Elementary School before beginning at Wade full time at the start of the 2015-16 school year. At Wade she is the counselor for kindergarten, third, fourth and fifth grades.

Despite her love of the job, it wasn't one Johnson was planning on when she was in school — she earned her bachelor's from American University and master's from Johns Hopkins University.

She wanted to work in communications with a focus on political advocacy. She was

with a communications firm for a couple of years that worked with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which collects, analyzes and publishes statistics related to education.

"I was always fascinated with the data and information, and the story behind the kids who were taking these tests," Johnson said. She thought about the lives of the students beyond the data and started thinking back on her own experiences in school with counselors.

Finally, she went to her boss to resign and ask for a letter of recommendation — John-



Constance Johnson

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On the cover

The Board of Education of Charles County honored outstanding employees at its April meeting including Katie Cooper, fifth-grade teacher, Dr. James Craik Elementary School; Shannon Chisholm, compliance facilitator, St. Charles High School; and Shiquita Walker, instructional specialist, J.C. Parks Elementary School.

School Lunch Hero Day

School Lunch Hero Day is Friday, May 7. The day honors food and nutrition service staff and provides a chance to showcase the difference school nutrition professionals make for every child who comes through the cafeteria or meal site.



Summer camps planned

Summer is around the corner which means summer camp will start soon.

This year, **enrichment camps** will be held in-person and virtually. The kindergarten camp will be held at William A. Diggs Elementary School with Theodore G. Davis Middle School hosting camps for students in first-eighth grades. As of April 28, most of the camps for elementary school students have been filled.

Nanjemoy Creek Educational Center will hold a camp for middle school students in August.

The **Lackey Summer Youth Camp** at Henry E. Lackey High School will be open June 21 to July 16 (closed July 5) for kids entering the second grade in the 2020-21 school year through age 13. [Click here](#) to get the latest information on CCPS summer camps.

Employee Assistance Program

CCPS has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, Deer Oaks EAP Services.

The EAP benefit covers six confidential short-term counseling visits for contracted employees who work more than 20 hours per week and their immediate families. Deer Oaks coordinates with CCPS's health plan for cases that require treatment under the medical benefit.

For information, call 888-993-7650 or go to www.deeroakseap.com. The member login and password are ccboe.

CCPS, Board take actions to promote equity

The Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools Kimberly Hill have launched efforts to address educational equity in Charles County Public Schools (CCPS). Efforts include the adoption of a Board policy on educational equity, the launch of an Equity Task Force and a Superintendent Task Force on African American Employee Experiences, targeted bias training for all staff and the recent creation of a National Response Committee.

Board Policy 1820: Educational Equity

The [Board adopted Policy 1820: Educational Equity](#) in October. The policy focuses on the principles of inclusion and fairness for student access to essential academic, social, emotional and economic resources and supports.

Equity Task Force

In March 2019, Dr. Hill and the Board launched the Equity Task Force. A priority for the Equity Task Force was to create an equity policy. Kimberly Hairston, CCPS director of equity and diversity, leads the task force of 35 members that includes CCPS staff, Board members, educators and parents. The Task Force meets monthly and created the equity policy presented to the Board in 2020.

The Equity Task Force is also responsible for developing training specifically to address educational equity.

Superintendent Task Force on African American Employee Experiences

In October 2020, Dr. Hill created a task force for CCPS leaders to learn about the

experiences of school system employees, specifically African American staff. The task force meets regularly and discusses topics such as employee morale, equity and support in the workplace, and focal areas where CCPS as an employer can improve when it comes to equity.

Creation of Diversity and Inclusion Specialist Position

CCPS has created a position within its human resources department to target diversity and inclusion, and minority recruitment and retention. The position was created at the recommendation of the Task Force on African American Employee Experiences.

The Diversity and Inclusion Specialist position will soon be available for interested applicants on the careers page on the CCPS website at <https://www.ccboe.com/index.php/current-openings>.

National Response Committee

In March 2021, CCPS launched a National Response Committee. The committee includes a group of diverse staff charged with developing solutions on how to help CCPS teachers, staff, students and parents handle sensitive matters such as racial and social injustices. The committee is actively working on a process for CCPS to address local, state and national events that affect the Charles County community.

To read the full release, [click here](#).

Last day of school set for students, staff

The last day of school for Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) students for the 2020-21 school year is Wednesday, June 16.

The last day of school for teachers is Thursday, June 17.

The following is the end-of-year schedule for students.

- **Friday, June 11:** two-hour early dismissal for all students (in-person and virtual/report card preparation time for teachers).

- **Monday, June 14:** two-hour early dismissal for all students (in-person and virtual/report card preparation time for teachers).

- * This is the last day of in-person school for students who attend school on Mondays and Tuesdays (A-Day students/last names A-K).

- * These students attend school virtually on June 15.

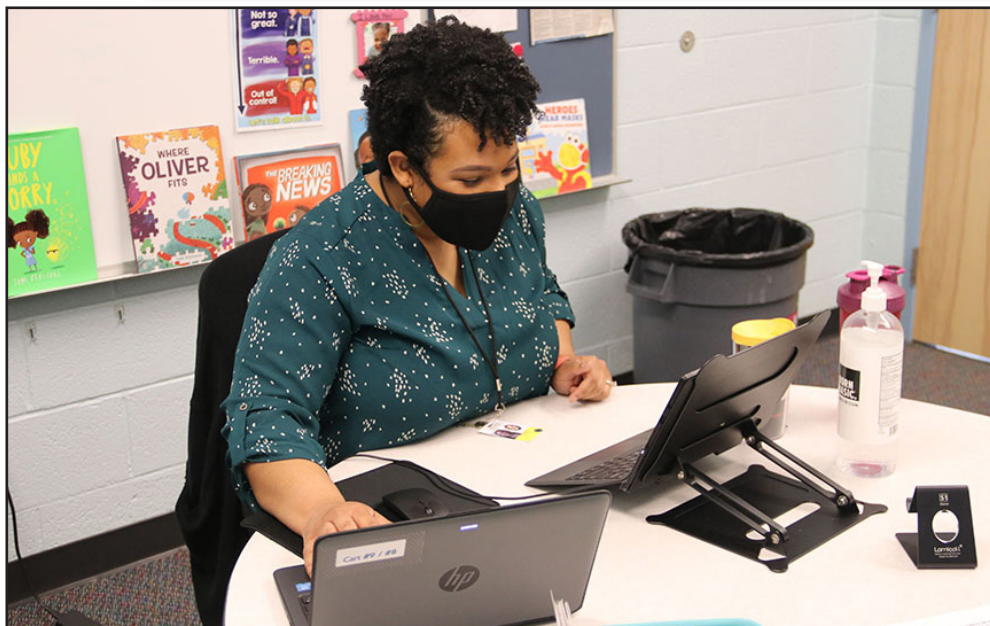
- **Tuesday, June 15:** two-hour early dismissal for all students (in-person and virtual/teacher planning).

- * This is the last day of in-person school for students who attend school on

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JOHNSON

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Constance Johnson, school counselor for kindergarten, third, fourth and fifth grade students at William B. Wade Elementary School, has stayed connected with students via Zoom using office hours, Counselor Chats and classroom lessons.

son was enrolling in an intense, 15-month counseling program.

"My experiences with my own school counselors really shaped me into wanting to do this," she said. Johnson recalled a meeting with her parents, teachers and counselor during her junior year where things weren't looking great academically. It was her 10th grade English teacher who would go on to become a school counselor that advocated for Johnson, pushed for her to take advanced classes.

"She showed me what school counselors should be doing and could be doing," Johnson said. Another school counselor sought out Johnson to talk about things beyond grades and class schedules. That relationship also planted a seed that would bloom into a career as a school counselor.

After completing her training and education, Johnson planned to work with high school students. And she did, for a while.

"I was a high school person," she said. "I was about college readiness and college awareness. That is what I was passionate about." However, advisors thought she would flourish in an elementary school setting working with younger students.

Johnson heeded the advice and took a job as an elementary school counselor in Virginia. "It took me two years to accept that this is my

home," Johnson said of working with elementary school students. "I was built for elementary age. I like to have fun with them. I like to do silly things they like to do ... the singing, the dancing and the games."

"A great counselor must be able to listen and hear the concerns of her students. A great counselor needs to be able to assess the needs of their students and place them with the best resources. A great counselor needs to be a good communicator, able to advocate and communicate on behalf of their students," Alicia Jones, supervising school counselor for CCPS, said. Johnson is a great counselor. "Ms. Johnson is enthusiastic and friendly. She is a person that listens to her students and ready to help guide them in making the best choices," Jones said.

School counselors are woven into the fabric of a school. At the elementary-school level, they are more proactive. "A lot of what we're doing is trying to teach skills to children. Teach them how to manage their emotions, how to get along with each other," Johnson said.

"Ms. Johnson connects with students in our building with ease," Sara Seifert, a third-grade teacher at Wade, said. "Students know when they need to speak with Mrs. Johnson, that she is ready and willing to listen, judge-

ment free. They know she will keep them safe and offer advice that is useful in real world situations."

Counselors teach lessons, and look at data to see students through a lens of equity. "Are there achievement gaps we should be looking at? Do we need to look at data by race, by income or special needs? That's been turned on its head this year," Johnson said.

As the events of 9/11 shaped her generation of millennials, Johnson believes the pandemic will be the defining cultural event of her students. "There's not a playbook," she said. "We can talk about the effects of trauma, the effects of stress and how that might impact our kids, but we won't know the magnitude of what they experienced until they are in front of us."

Many teachers, staff and school counselors have put in a herculean effort to stay connected with students, Johnson said. On the counseling front, Wednesdays at Wade are reserved for Counselor Chats when students can visit virtually with their counselor.

Office hours are set aside for students by grade to connect one-on-one with the counselor. "Everyone's pandemic experience has been different," Johnson said. "We're all dealing with this, but not all are affected to the same degree."

The pandemic isn't the only thing students and others are grappling with. "It's not just COVID, but the racial injustices ... our students have been experiencing it and thinking about it," Johnson said.

Students know they can schedule time during office hours, and Johnson has reached out to specific students to get a read on how they are dealing with the traumatic events taking place in the world.

Some students know they can seek out their school counselor for support, others might not. "I think that where being proactive is so important for school counselors," Johnson said. "If they know that I'm a person that's here for you, that's my job."

Professional school counselors from around the state were nominated for their innovation and exemplary comprehensive school counseling programs.

The Maryland School Counselor Association honored Johnson and other school counselor of the year semifinalists during a virtual gala last month.

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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).

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Thursdays and Fridays (B-Day students/last names L-Z).

* These students attend school virtually on June 14.

• **Wednesday, June 16:** two-hour early dismissal for students/student last day (asynchronous day/teacher planning).

• Phase 2 students will continue to attend school four days per week until the end of the school year. The last day of in-person learning for Phase 2 students is Tuesday, June 15.

The last four days of school – June 11, 14, 15 and 16 — are two-hour early dismissals to allow for report card preparation and negotiated teacher planning time.

Report cards for all students will be posted online in ParentVue and StudentVue accounts on Monday, June 28.

Additionally, the following end-of-year dates apply to other CCPS staff.

- 12-month teachers' last day is June 29.
- 11-month certificated staff last day is June 25.
- 5-month certificated staff last day is June 24.
- 11-month support staff last day is June 29.
- 10.5-month support staff last day is June 29.
- 10-month support staff last day is June 17.

Upcoming spring plays set

La Plata High School will stage Ray Bradbury's 'Fahrenheit 451' outdoors 6:30 p.m. Friday, April 30 at the school. Tickets are \$5 to \$10 and can be purchased at <https://tinyurl.com/ermedhpe>. La Plata is at 6035 Radio Station Road in La Plata.

Westlake High School will stage 'FAME the musical Jr.,' a play loosely based on the 1980 film that follows the lives of students in a performing arts high school. The shows will stream 7 p.m. April 30 and May 1. Tickets are \$3 and can be reserved at <https://westlaketheatre.wordpress.com/>. For more information, email jlong@ccboe.com.

St. Charles High School is staging '26 Pebbles' April 30-May 2. The '26 Pebbles' refers to the lives of the 26 people who were killed in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Like pebbles thrown into a pond, the 26 deaths created ripples and vibrations that were felt far beyond the initial rings. The play is the story of those vibrations. The show contains mild adult themes. Starting at 7 p.m., Friday, April 27, '26 Pebbles' will be available to view on St. Charles High School's YouTube page — <https://tinyurl.com/5x8hazdn> — through 7 p.m. May 2.

Maurice J. McDonough High School will livestream "Ranked" 7 p.m. May 14 and 15, and 2 p.m. May 16. The show contains mild language. Go to <https://mhsdrama303.booktix.com/> for tickets and more information.

Personnel

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

Job Openings

Building Service Worker — North Point High School, 12-month position. A high school diploma or GED required. Capable of performing manual labor and a willingness to work overtime. Apply by May 3.

Automotive Mechanic Teacher — North Point High School, 10-month position. Minimum of three years of experience working in the automotive mechanic/repair industry required. Applicants must meet certification requirements or able to earn certification within two year as established by the Maryland State Department of Education. Apply by May 7.

School Psychologist — Location to be determined, 10.5-month position. Applicants must

possess or be able to obtain School Psychology Certification in Maryland. Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential is preferred. Apply by Aug. 1.

English Teacher — St. Charles High School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree and meets certification as established by the MSDE required. Apply by Aug. 20.

Mathematics Teacher — Theodore G. Davis Middle School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree and meets certification as established by the MSDE required. Apply by Aug. 23.

Science Teacher — Mattawoman Middle School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree and meets certification as established by the MSDE required. Apply by Aug. 23.

Special Education ACHIEVE Teacher — Theodore G. Davis Middle School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree and meets certifi-

cation as established by the MSDE required. Apply by Aug. 27.

Science Teacher — Mattawoman Middle School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree and meets certification as established by the MSDE required. Apply by Aug. 23.

Coordinator of Evaluation — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. Master's in the area of educational research and/or the equivalent experience in education evaluation and statistics. Position open until filled.

Compliance Facilitator — St. Charles High School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree and Maryland Standard Professional Certificate with special education endorsement required. Three years of satisfactory special education classroom teaching experience required. Position open until filled.