



School News

Important Dates Coming Soon

COVID screening, test kit info

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) offers free weekly COVID-19 preventative screenings for students and staff. To participate, parents and staff must complete a one-time registration with the state health department contractor, 20/20 GeneSystems.

[Click here to access the registration portal.](#)

The test used is an anterior nasal swab PCR test. Results are provided to parents and staff in the portal within 48 hours. Users can sign up for email notifications. Only positive results are shared confidentially with the CCPS Office of School Safety and Security for follow up to ensure sick students or staff are not coming to schools. [Click here to read more about the free screening.](#) CCPS will begin distributing COVID-19 PCR test kits early next week to staff and students who are registered to receive screenings from 20/20 GeneSystems. Completed kits should be returned within the week for processing. Schools are fine tuning the distribution and collection details. Results should be available within 72 hours once the vendor picks up kits for processing. Students and staff who are already participating in the weekly screening program are receiving results within 36 hours.



Board meets Jan. 11

The Board of Education is scheduled to meet 1 p.m., Jan. 11, at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building in La Plata. The meeting will stream live at www.ccboe.com.



From left are J.C. Parks Elementary School third-grade students Aniah Moore, Londyn Warner, Kayla Pineda Garrido, Arielle Jackson and LeAsia Moore-Freeland. The students hold bags designed by Parks students for the #bagitcc campaign to encourage community members to stop using single-use plastic bags.

J.C. Parks Elementary earns state sustainability award

J.C. Parks Elementary School has a reputation for its commitment to the environment. Deanna Wheeler, the school's science teacher, thinks it probably started around 2009 when she was invited on an ice breaking expedition in the Arctic.

Before that, of course she and her students would do little things here and there for the environment. But after that time in the Arctic, the scope widened for Wheeler.

"We could do more," she said. "Our actions impact more than Parks and what's around us. Our impact can be felt all the way up to the Arctic." When she returned to Maryland, she and her students started to look around them and see beyond.

With the help of grants, volunteers and a lot of elbow grease, the school grounds now feature wetlands, two meadows, an upland forest, two rain gardens and an arboretum. The projects have attracted local, state, national and international attention. While he was governor, Martin O'Malley visited the wetland and planted a tree for Green Apple Day. Over the years, the school has received numerous accolades. It has been named a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Admin-

istration (NOAA) Ocean Guardian School, a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School, a Top 10 Eco-School in 2015 through the National Wildlife Foundation and a few years back, some students spoke at the American Geophysical Union (AGU) Convention. From the appearance at the AGU Conference, which brings together Earth and space science enthusiasts from around the world, the students wound up on the Live Science website talking about the Ghost Fleet at Malloes Bay. They also made an appearance on "Good Morning America" and fielded calls from journalists around the globe.

The latest feather in the school's sustainable cap comes from the [Maryland Department of Planning](#). With a nomination from Sen. Arthur Ellis, J.C. Parks won a 2021 Sustainable Growth Award in the Preservation Conservation category. The school participated in a virtual ceremony earlier this month. The award celebrates the projects at Parks that have transformed the grounds from a monoculture to a self-sustaining wetland.

"Ms. Wheeler is always thinking of ways to promote education in science with our children," Parks' Principal Gregory Miller

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"Our decisions have greater impacts. Kids understand that we can do good things."

Deanna Wheeler,
Science teacher, J.C. Parks Elementary School

said. "And that's where it needs to start. Our youngest students must have this as a 'way of life.' Thinking about their world as a sustainable place and trying to eliminate practices that are unsustainable."

Before COVID-19 turned everything on its ear, the J.C. Parks Green Team — a group of 35 students in third, fourth and fifth grades — sought to embark on a new challenge. They have already pushed a successful Skip a Straw campaign to raise awareness about the wastefulness of single-use straws. In early 2020, students decided that plastic bags had no place being a part of the landscape. Students reported seeing plastic bags snared in tree branches and crumpled on the side of the road. About two weeks before March 16, 2020, — when Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) first closed to slow the spread of COVID-19 — Parks students submitted drawings to be featured on reusable bags that would be given away to family, friends and community members. The project, which was funded by community and federal partners, was paused due to the pandemic. Eventually, the 10,000 bags made their way to Wheeler's classroom

complete with student artwork, a hashtag — #bagitcc — and a pledge.

J.C. Parks Green Team Reusable Bag Pledge

*On my honor,
I will start using
reusable bags.
By reducing the number
of one-time plastic bags
That pollute the ocean
and our environment,
I will make the earth a better place.
I will recycle.*

*Pick up trash and do other good deeds
My goal is to make a better world for all.*

While the Green Team hasn't officially met in a while due to COVID-19 protocols and other time-related factors — "Everybody is part of the Green Team right now," Wheeler said — the school is not slowing down on its commitment to the environment. The reusable bags will hopefully show up in Mom & Pop grocery shops and other places like local food pantries to encourage Charles County to "bag it."

Wheeler will work with students on building a bird and butterfly garden in front of the school near the outdoor murals that show how the J.C. Parks community connects to the Arctic.

"Our decisions have greater impacts," Wheeler tells her students. "Kids understand that we can do good things."

CCPS inclement weather procedures

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) inclement weather procedures are posted online at <https://www.ccboe.com/index.php/inclement-weather-delays#>.

CCPS generally follows four inclement weather codes.

Information about employee codes is posted at: <https://www.ccboe.com/myccps/index.php/inclement-weather-codes-procedures>.

Code 1 — one-hour delay.

Code 2 — two-hour delay.

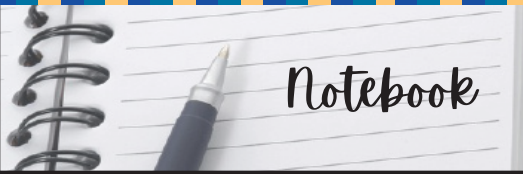
Code Red — schools and offices are closed for students and staff. Only essential

CCPS staff report to work.

Code Blue — system is closed. No employees report to work.

Inclement weather announcements are generally posted by 5 a.m. at www.ccboe.com, on CCPS social media, sent to staff and parents by email, and recorded on the 24-hour information line at 301-934-7410/301-932-6656.

Please check your email, the CCPS website at www.ccboe.com, the 24-hour information line at 301-934-7410/301-932-6656 or CCPS social media in the morning for any inclement weather announcements.



On the cover

The Board of Education of Charles County at its Dec. 14 meeting honored outstanding employees including Mildred Alexander-Moses, pupil personnel worker, Matthew Henson Middle School; Joseph Evans, science teacher, Mattawoman Middle School; and Beverly Gaskins, special education teacher, Mary B. Neal Elementary School. To read more about the employees, [click here](#).

Mental health workshop

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) department of student services is hosting a virtual workshop for parents and caregivers of middle- and high-school students. Monica Cherry, pupil personnel worker at North Point High School, and Vone Della McKithen, school counselor at North Point, will talk about healthy communication and how parents can improve communication with their child. The meeting ID is 875 6629 0390, the passcode is 440581. To look at a schedule of upcoming workshops, visit <https://www.ccboe.com/ss/parentcaregiver-workshops/>.

MLK Day is Jan. 17

Schools and offices will be closed Monday, Jan. 17, in observance of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

Semester Break Jan. 21

Semester break for students is Friday, Jan. 21. Schools will be closed for students only.

Deer Oaks EAP Services

CCPS contracts with Deer Oaks EAP Services to provide staff with free programs that support their health and well-being. The EAP benefit is no cost to employees and their dependents, and services are confidential. To learn more, [click here](#).

MSDE honors seven CCPS teachers for creating Rooms of Distinction

Seven Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) teachers were recently honored by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for using the formative assessment process to improve teaching and learning in their schools.

Teachers who earned the MSDE's Assessment for Learning Classroom of Distinction designation will open their classrooms to be observed by other educators from around the state and participate in conferences with them, while informally serving as mentors.

Twenty teachers in Maryland applied for the distinction. Of 15 teachers around the state who were moved to Round 2 for consideration, 14 were CCPS teachers. All seven honored with the Rooms of Distinction designation this year work for CCPS. They are Erin Amore, third-grade teacher at Dr. James Craik Elementary School; Nina Beard, fourth-grade teacher at T.C. Martin Elementary School; Nina Capuano, third-grade teacher at Martin; Kelly Lundeen, third-grade teacher at Craik; Molly Reip, first-grade teacher at Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School; Taryn Walker, second-grade teacher at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School; and Melinda Wright, second-grade teacher at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy.

Earlier this school year, Heather Sauers, coordinator of professional learning and Title II A, and Jennifer Wojcik, instructional assessment specialist, both with MSDE, visited classrooms around the state to observe how teachers interact with students and build on their skills.

The teachers selected for the honor asked students meaningful and thought-provoking questions, allowed them to self-assess their progress and prompted students to rethink an incorrect answer without giving them the correct one.

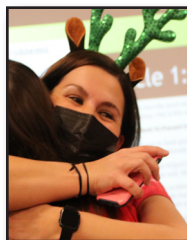
Sauers and Wojcik also pointed out that the teachers are all building classroom cultures where all students are actively involved in and take ownership of their learning. "This demonstrates to students that we all must explain our thinking, not just students who are confused," Wojcik said.

The seven teachers' classrooms have previously served as models for formative assessment, welcoming teachers and administrators for informal visits.

They also have all earned continuing professional development credits in various courses on the formative assessment process. The goal of formative assessment is to monitor student learning while providing ongoing feedback that can be used by educators to improve teaching and used by students to improve their learning.

Erin Amore

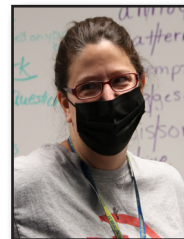
Amore started her career with CCPS in 2006. She took MSDE-sponsored training to be a peer mentor for colleagues and serves as a teacher mentor and as a mentor to teachers who are becoming mentors. Amore was a finalist in the 2019 Charles County Teacher of the Year award program and has served on several committees at Craik, including the Girls on the Run Club. One of the factors Sauers and Wojcik thought stood out in Amore's classroom was the curiosity she stoked in her students. Amore asks students to explain the steps they took that led them to a



certain answer. "This is an effective way to probe student thinking and build a classroom culture of inquiry," Wojcik said during the presentation.

Nina Beard

Beard began working for CCPS in 2004 and was Martin's nominee for The Washington Post's Teacher of the Year and Charles County Teacher of the Year award programs in 2020. During a recent observation, Beard led guided reading groups, asking clarifying questions, even of students who answered correctly. "Ms. Beard's ability to ask follow-up questions to students — whether they gave correct or incorrect responses allowed her to get at the core of her students' understanding and misconceptions," Wojcik said. During the assignment, Beard and her students determined their progress. As each guided reading group wrapped up, Beard used a success criteria checklist to document each student's goal. This helped Beard know which students were ready to move forward, and who needed additional support.



Nina Capuano

Capuano has been a teacher with CCPS since 2006. She has been the lead teacher for two years for the Teach to Lead Grant, which awarded Martin \$10,000 in funding to expand professional learning focused on the formative assessment process. She also has co-authored and co-facilitated formative assessment professional learning sessions and coursework for MSDE. Capuano was Martin's nominee for The Washington Post's Teacher of the Year and Charles County Teacher of the Year award programs in 2019. Capuano fosters an environment where students are encouraged to share feedback with their peers and are allowed time to revise answers based on the new understanding. "This helps to build student agency, so that they rely less on the teacher and more on themselves and their peers to reach their learning goals," Wojcik said.



Kelly Lundeen

Lundeen has been teaching with CCPS since 2011 and was the CCPS finalist for The Washington Post's Teacher of the Year in 2017. She has been the lead teacher for three years for the Teach to Lead Grant, which awarded Craik \$15,000 to expand its teacher mentor program. Lundeen was the keynote speaker for MSDE's 2021 Teach to Lead Conference and



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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).

DISTINCTION

trained with MSDE to be a peer coach for colleagues. In the classroom, she asks students questions to see their progress. "This was particularly evident during her reading groups where she asked pre-planned, differentiated questions to uncover students' thinking," Wojcik said.

Molly Reip

Reip began working for CCPS in 2009 and last month received grant funding from MSDE to attend a conference where she was trained on facilitating future coursework on formative assessment at Higdon. Reip used her class's success criteria to help students self-assess their progress. She also involved her students in the creation of the success criteria by asking them how they could be respectful to their classmates. During the reading of "Stellaluna," Reip asked questions to see evidence of student learning. "She asked clarifying questions to pull out details regarding the setting and characters," Wojcik said.



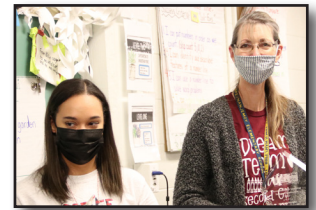
Taryn Walker and Melinda Wright

Walker is newer to CCPS, having started with the school system in 2020. She co-teaches with Wright at Mt. Hope. The combined class allows Wright and Walker to not only teach together, but to plan together. They keep logs of student understanding to ensure students continue to advance in their learning. Wright is a CCPS veteran, having

taught with the system since 1992. She has been the lead teacher for two years for the Teach to Lead Grant, which awarded Mt. Hope \$10,000 in funding to expand professional learning around the formative assessment process. Wright was the CCPS Teacher of the Year for 2019.

Any Maryland certified teacher can apply to the Assessment for the Learning Rooms of Distinction program. Candidates are selected following a two-round application process. The first round included a written lesson plan highlighting the use of the formative assessment and a reflection on how the process improves student learning, a list relevant professional learning experiences, a letter of recommendation and an analysis of a video of a teacher implementing the formative assessment process. Applicants who demonstrated excellence in the written portion of the application were selected for Round 2. Which included a classroom observation and post-observation interview by representatives from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The benefits of the Rooms of Distinction include keeping the status for three years, networking with other teacher leaders, invitations to professional development opportunities and welcoming other educators to observe lessons during the 2021-22 school years.



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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

Lab Assistant — James E. Richmond Science Center, hourly position. This position is for high school students who are 16 and older. Prior work experience at the science center or similar venue is preferred. Apply by Jan. 28.
Building Service Worker Floater — Location to be determined, hourly position. A high school diploma or a GED is required. Apply by Feb. 25.

Computer Science Teacher — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Apply by Jan. 31.

English Teacher — All high schools, 10-month position. Apply by Jan. 31.

ESOL Teacher — All schools, 10-month position. Apply by Jan. 31.

Language Arts Teacher — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Apply by Jan. 31.

Library Media Specialist — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Apply by Jan. 31.

Instrumental Music Teacher — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Apply by

Jan. 31.

Marine Corps JROTC Senior Marine Instructor — St. Charles High School, 11-month position. Position open until filled.

Compliance Facilitator-Special Education — St. Charles High School, 10-month position. Position open until filled.

Central Mealtime Therapist — All elementary schools, 10-month position. Master's degree preferred, along with a certificate of clinical competency and/or Maryland licensure for speech language pathologist. Position open until filled.