

School News



Notebook

Hungerford named CCPS Teacher of the Year

Morghan Hungerford, a second-grade teacher at Arthur Middleton Elementary School, was named the Charles County Public Schools Teacher of the Year for 2022. Hungerford graduated with a Bachelor of Science from Salisbury University in 2016 where she majored in elementary education. She has two master's degree from American College of Education in Indianapolis, and she is currently enrolled in the Certificate in School Management and Leadership program at Harvard University. At Middleton, Hungerford is the second-grade team leader and the president of the Parent Teacher Organization. Outside of the classroom, she stays busy at the school and has held several leadership positions, including being the team leader for Middleton's Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) program.



Morghan Hungerford

The four other finalists for CCPS Teacher of the Year include **Ryan Amore**, instructional resource teacher, J.C. Parks Elementary School; **Barbara Anderson**, kindergarten teacher, Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School; **Annemarie Simpson, Ph.D.**, mathematics teacher, Maurice J. McDonough High School; and **Brittany Thorne**, fifth-grade teacher, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School. Hungerford is one of 24 state finalists eligible for the Maryland Teacher of the Year Award. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will select and announce the Maryland Teacher of the Year award recipient later this year.



Come fly away

Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School recently held a Read Across Charles County event, "Celebrating a Nation of Diverse Readers." The school embraced an airport theme to have students "travel" through reading. Above, kindergarten student Malachi Mihanda, right, points out Maryland on a map for his teacher, Kate Kolbe. Left, Higdon Principal Shannon Finnegan, left, greets guest reader and Piccowaxen Middle School Principal Wua-landa Thenstead. Read more on Page 3.

Board votes to make mask use optional

The Board of Education of Charles County voted Feb. 28 in a seven-to-one vote to eliminate the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) mask mandate.

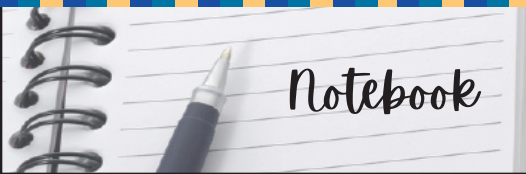
CCPS no longer require masks in any school system building. Mask use is now optional for students, staff and visitors to CCPS schools and buildings.

Following guidelines released last week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Board also voted in favor

of eliminating the required use of masks on school buses.

Students, staff and visitors may continue to wear masks in schools, CCPS buildings and on school buses. CCPS teachers and staff will no longer monitor or enforce mask use among students or on school buses. "I encourage parents to have conversations with their children about respecting the decisions of others," Superintendent Maria Navarro said. "I also encourage all community mem-

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Harris to represent county at Maryland Day event

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) students were given the opportunity to participate in the 388th St. Mary's City annual Maryland Day Celebration set for Saturday, March 26.

A fourth-grade student is selected annually through an essay contest to represent the school system and Charles County at the celebration. Students submitted essay responses to the prompt, "Why is Charles County a great place to live?" The finalist is selected by a panel of judges from the CCPS Department of Instruction who review and score all submissions for content, support and mechanics.

Fourth grader Shylah Harris at Billingsley Elementary School entered the essay contest and was selected to represent Charles County in the 388th Maryland Day Celebration. She was happy and surprised when she found out she was selected. "I did not think I was going to win," she said.

In her essay, she said that she enjoyed the many parks in Charles County such as Gilbert Run Park for fishing and birthday parties, and Laurel Springs Park for the fun playground and walking trail. When she is not fishing with her grandpa or hanging out with her friends, Harris enjoys researching about hamsters, playing with dolls and



Shylah Harris, a fourth grader at Billingsley Elementary School, wrote the essay that was selected to represent Charles County in the annual Maryland Day Celebration in St. Mary's County.

learning about money. She said that she hopes to have a hamster of her own one day.

Harris' fourth-grade teacher, Susan Heywood, said she was not surprised that she won the contest. "This is my second year in Charles County and having a student of mine win the contest was icing on the cake," Heywood said.

As the Charles County representative, Harris will present a flag before a podium of dignitaries during the flag ceremony at the Maryland Day Celebration. She said that she is excited to represent Charles County at the celebration.

On the cover

The Board of Education of Charles County at its Feb. 8 meeting honored outstanding employees including Adano Murray, left, special education instructional assistant, Westlake High School; Carlisa Jordan, instructional assistant, Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School; and Chelsea Pogar, infant & toddler teacher, F.B. Gwynn Educational Center. To read more about staff honored at the February Board meeting, [click here](#).

Election season

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will hold an election for its teacher member from March 7-13 (if there is a tie, the run-off election will be March 21-27). The election results will be announced May 1. All teachers who hold an active Maryland Educator Certificate with at least one teaching area as of Jan. 1, 2022, will be eligible to cast one vote in the election. Eligible certificate holders will receive a code that allows them to cast one vote. This code will be delivered to the email address on file with the MSDE office of certification. For more information, [click here](#).

Board meets March 8

The Board of Education of Charles County will meet 1 p.m. March 8 at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building. Public forum begins at 6 p.m. and is offered in an in-person or virtual option. Only registered speakers will be permitted to participate in public forum. Registration closes at noon, March 7. To register, [click here](#).

Virtual Academy info

Registration is open for the CCPS High School Virtual Academy program for the 2022-2023 school year. The program is virtual and managed by staff at the Robert D. Stethem Educational Center. CCPS students currently in Grades 8-11 can apply. [The application is linked here](#). Interested students must complete the application by 11:59 p.m., Friday, March 11, 2022, to be considered for next school year. Late applications will not be accepted. To read more, [click here](#).

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bers to make whatever masking decisions best suit themselves and their families."

The CDC, as well as the state and local health departments, still recommends regular mask use for those who are medically compromised or unvaccinated for COVID-19.

Navarro urged CCPS staff and parents to talk with their doctor about available vaccine options.

Since the start of the pandemic, CCPS has worked closely with the Maryland Department of Health and the Charles County Department of Health to monitor COVID-19 data and follow recommendations in place from the CDC. Recent COVID-19 data across the state and local levels has continued to trend downward in recent

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weeks. Additionally, CCPS COVID-19 data reports from staff and students have also decreased over the past two months.

The [data dashboard](#) posted on the ccboe.com website shows this downward trend in CCPS schools and buildings. Charles County also falls in the low rating of the new CDC COVID-19 community guidelines.

In a letter to CCPS staff, students and parents, Navarro said now that CCPS is operating with masks as an option rather than a requirement, the focus on returning to standard operations for CCPS continues.

To view additional information about what staff, families and students can expect now that masks are optional in schools and on buses, [click here](#).

International Higdon Airport — young readers travel with the help of books

Staff and students at Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School were ready for takeoff Feb. 24 for a Read Across Charles County event. Keeping with the theme “Celebrating a Nation of Diverse Readers” the school was transformed into Higdon International Airport. Travel posters were displayed through the halls, terminal signs hung overhead to direct “travelers,” a room served as the Newsstand where students could pick out a book to read on their “flight.”

Principal Shannon Finnegan, Ed.D., and Vice Principal Brad Buzby dressed as pilots, pretzels and bottled water were handed out and a Mickey Mouse backpack mingled with luggage stacked at baggage claim near the front of the school.

“The theme was ‘Celebrating a Nation of Diverse Readers,’” Stephanie Campbell, learning resource teacher, said. “I took it literally. We wanted to give students an authentic experience.” Campbell reached out to airlines to see if they wanted to participate. Anything they could donate to help bring the theme to life, she’d would take.

American Airlines came through with the posters, flight crew pins, blank boarding passes and other items familiar to air travelers. The school’s PTO donated new books for the Newsstand and snacks for goodie bags.

Teachers, staff members and guest readers took care of the travel plans. Books focused on different areas of the country and world were selected, students were told about where the authors grew up and how the areas inspired their writing and lives.

Students in Molly Reip’s first-grade class joined Superintendent Maria Navarro for a jaunt around the world as she read “Children Just Like Me,” by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley. The book gives a view of international cultures, while exploring the lives of children from Argentina to New Zealand to China to Israel. Literary snapshots showed how children live and play around the world with the Higdon students finding similarities with their peers around the globe.

Picowaxen Middle School Principal Wualanda Thenstead visited Higdon to read “Sprouting Wings: The True Story of James Herman Banning, the First African American Pilot to Fly Across the United States.” The book by Louisa Jaggar and Shari Becker with illustrations by Floyd Cooper, tells the story of Oklahoma native Banning using his own



Stephanie Campbell, left, learning resource teacher at Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School, is pictured with Anna Swann’s kindergarten students Shelby Gardiner, second from left, Reese Caywood, Lydia Everitt and Maggie Clark. Campbell was instrumental in bringing the theme “Celebrating a Nation of Diverse Readers” to life at Higdon. The school was transformed into an airport with help from staff, the PTO and American Airlines.

words and with the help of his nephew who was interviewed for the book.

School Resource Officer Eugene Caballero read “Cougar Crossing: How Hollywood’s Celebrity Cougar Helped Build a Bridge for City Wildlife” by Meeg Pincus with illustrations by Alexander Vidal to Kelly Suter’s first-grade class. The book is set in Los Angeles and follows P-22, a puma born in a national park near the city who crossed 16 lanes of notorious LA traffic to settle near the Hollywood sign. In a city that is home to many celebrities, P-22 has become famous, prompting residents and scientists to build a bridge for use by wildlife needing to cross Highway 101 to expand their territories.

Down the hall from Suter’s classroom, the kindergartners in Kate Kolbe’s class prepared to leave Maryland for Alabama. Before the students could embark, they needed to know where they were going. Dressed as a flight attendant, Kolbe brought up a map of the United States on the room’s Smartboard. The students quickly found Alabama by sounding out the word and finding the letters that corresponded on the map. Finding Maryland proved a little tricky. They easily sounded out the word but finding it on the map caused them to move in a bit closer. “It’s a little smaller,”

Kolbe said, right before Malachi Mihanda pointed out the state on behalf of the class. The students, like others in the school, colored in the states on the map where their book took them.

Now that they knew where they were and where they were going, Kolbe gave each student a ticket which they turned in for a boarding pass. It was time to go. The hall served as the terminal, a table out in the hall was where they turned in their boarding passes. The students — some with their arms outstretched to their sides like wings — then made their way back to their classroom which was now Alabama. School counselor Kayleigh Fretwell was waiting in a safety vest like those worn by flight crews on tarmacs. She read “Jump at the Sun: The True Life Tale of the Unstoppable Storycatcher Zora Neale Huston,” by Alicia D. Williams and illustrated by Jacqueline Alcántara. The book tells the story of the author who grew up in Alabama but jumped around from Florida to Howard University to Harlem.

“Reading is a way to travel the world without leaving home,” Finnegan said. “It opens doors and opportunities for children. Instead of keeping them ‘grounded,’ we want them to take flight.”

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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).



Students are a'buzz at Spelling Bee

John Hanson Middle School sixth grader Ayden Jones, above left, was named the county winner of the 44th annual Spelling Bee. The Bee was held Thursday, March 3, at Matthew Henson Middle School and showcased the skills on the Top 22 middle school spellers in Charles County. Above right, Mat-tawoman Middle School won the Top Team Award. Pictured are coach Jody Bell, left, seventh grader Andrew Nguyen; Michaela Stewart, an eighth grader who came in second place overall; sixth grader Devin Rochester; and Principal Sonia Blue. Below right, John Tompkins, content specialist for middle school language arts, talks with the four finalists ahead of the final rounds including Jones, left, Stewart, Benjamin Stoddert Middle School seventh grader Aaron Nguyen and Karis Pilkerton, a sixth-grade student at Milton M. Somers Middle School. To read more, [click here](#).

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

Technology Facilitator — Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School, 10-month position. A high school diploma, along with an associate of arts degree or passing grade on the ParaPro Assessment. Apply by March 8.

Administrative Intern — John Hanson Middle School, 11-month position. Bachelor's degree and Standard Professional Certificate issued by MSDE, and three years of successful teaching experience. Apply by March 15.

Administrative Intern — Mattawoman Middle School, 11-month position. Bachelor's degree and Standard Professional Certificate issued by MSDE, and three years of successful teaching experience. Apply by March 15.

Administrative Intern — North Point High

School, 11-month position. Bachelor's degree and Standard Professional Certificate issued by MSDE, and three years of successful teaching experience. Apply by March 15.

Administrative Intern — Thomas Stone High School, 11-month position. Bachelor's degree and Standard Professional Certificate issued by MSDE, and three years of successful teaching experience. Apply by March 15.

Administrative Intern — Westlake High School, 11-month position. Bachelor's degree and Standard Professional Certificate issued by MSDE, and three years of successful teaching experience. Apply by March 15.

Temporary Instructional Assistant — All schools. High school diploma required. Apply by June 30.

Family and Consumer Science Teacher — All high schools, 10-month position. Apply by Dec. 22.

Art Teacher — All schools, 10-month posi-

tion. Apply by Dec. 31.

Business Education Teacher — All high schools, 10-month position. Apply by Dec. 31.

Computer Science Teacher — All schools, 10-month position. Apply by Dec. 31.

Early Childhood Teacher — All elementary schools, 10-month position. Apply by Dec. 31.

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

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

Librarian Media Specialist — All schools, 10-month position. Apply by Dec. 31.

Instrumental Music Teacher — All schools, 10-month position. Apply by Dec. 31.

Staff Accountant — Restricted Funds/Budget, 12-month position. A bachelor's degree in accounting, finance or related field required. Master's degree and/or CPA preferred. Position open until filled.