



# School News

## Notebook



### On air with *It's Academic*

North Point High School's *It's Academic* team of Jeremiah Seger, left, Zena Brantuo and Addyson Jordan will compete Oct. 1 on air, against teams from Independence High School in Ashburn, Va., and Osbourn Park High School in Manassas, Va. North Point's contest is set to air on WETA on Nov. 11.

The team is coached by Spanish teacher Moriah Rochlinski-Evans and English teacher A'leese Dickerson. North Point came in second place in the 2022 Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) countywide competition behind Maurice J. McDonough High School's team.

McDonough participated in *It's Academic* competitions earlier this year.

### Fun Fest is Oct. 7

A Healthy Kids Fun Fest is set for 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 7. Held at North Point High School, the event will feature samples of fresh fruit, demonstrations and physical activities led by CCPS physical education staff and information about raising children to make healthy dietary decisions. North Point is at 2500 Davis Road in Waldorf.



## Service mettle

No two days are the same in a school, a sentiment that building service staff know well. Left, Stephen Butler, assistant building service manager at Maurice J. McDonough High School, makes a clean sweep in the school's new addition. Left, Chris Howard, McDonough's building service manager, logs in to place a work order. "You can't plan a day. You have an idea of what you want to do but anything can come up," Howard said. "From a kid getting sick right off the bus early in the morning, or a teacher needing help with a ceiling tile in a classroom, or there's a coffee spill .... There's constantly something to do."

CCPS celebrates Building Service Worker Day on Monday, Oct. 2. To read more about how building service teams keep schools and facilities in top shape, go to the [Latest News section](#) of [www.ccboe.com](http://www.ccboe.com).

## State of the schools event set for Oct. 12

Superintendent of Schools Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., is hosting a State of the Schools event for parents and community members 6 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 12, at St. Charles High School.

The event will open with Navarro sharing a short presentation on the state of the school system and how it relates to the three focus areas of the [Charles County Public Schools \(CCPS\) Strategic Plan](#). The strategic plan includes three priority areas: student learning and achievement; access and opportunities; and culture and climate. Each priority area includes goals and strategies with measurement metrics identified to evaluate progress.

Following the presentation, guests will have the opportunity to visit breakout rooms where staff of each CCPS school will talk about school improvement plans and how they tie into the CCPS strategic plan. Guests will be able to ask questions and provide feedback to staff of their child's school.

St. Charles is at 5305 Piney Church Road in Waldorf.



## Notebook

### College Fair is Oct. 3

The CCPS College Fair is set for 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 3 at North Point High School. CCPS high school juniors and seniors visit the fair during the day for the opportunity to meet with more than 75 representatives of colleges and universities. Parents and students not enrolled in CCPS cannot attend the fair during the day, however they can attend from 6 to 8 p.m. to learn financial aid procedures and gather information from college and university representatives. Christian Zimmermann, director of financial assistance at the College of Southern Maryland, will hold financial aid workshops at 6:15 and 7:15 p.m. Students and their families can get more tips, advice and assistance from their [school's college and career advisor](#).

### Host families needed

Bunkyo University students will visit CCPS from Feb. 19 to March 1 to work with school-based instructional staff observing and conducting lessons. They will also provide Japanese cultural experiences to enhance classroom activities. Host families are needed to house the 29 students who are studying to become teachers. Those interested in becoming a host family can fill out an interest form by Friday, Oct. 20 at <https://forms.office.com/r/2MZsH2J5fX>. A virtual Q&A session will be held 4-4:30 p.m., Oct. 23.

### Wreaths Across America

The U.S. Army JROTC Cadet Battalion at Maurice J. McDonough High School participates in the Wreaths Across America program each year. The group participates in laying wreaths at Cheltenham Veterans Cemetery to honor veterans. McDonough's JROTC program will receive \$5 from each wreath purchased through its site at [wreath-sacrossamerica.org](http://wreath-sacrossamerica.org). The funds are used for class trips, training aids, entrance fees for drills and other necessities. To purchase a wreath to support the JROTC program at McDonough, [click here](#).

## MABE honors former Board member McGraw

Virginia McGraw, a former member of the Board of Education of Charles County, was recently named the recipient of the Distinguished School Board Service Award from the Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE).

The award is given out every two years to a school board member who has made outstanding contributions to public education through service on a Maryland school board.

"I am truly grateful to the members of the Board of Education of Charles County who nominated me and am incredibly humbled by this honor," McGraw said.

McGraw, a retired elementary school principal with Charles County Public Schools (CCPS), was first elected to the Board in 2014, and retired from it in December 2022. During her time on the Board, McGraw served as a member, vice chairperson and chairperson.

"Ginny McGraw has committed her life to public education," Michael K. Lukas, chairperson of the Board of Education, said. "Admired and recognized for her selfless devotion to helping students and staff, she is unmatched in her dedication."

McGraw began her career in education as a teacher with the District of Columbia Public Schools before coming to CCPS in 1990 as a special education teacher at Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School. After serving as a teacher for six years, McGraw moved into administration as an assistant principal — first at Mt. Hope before transferring to William B. Wade Elementary School.

From there, she was named principal of Gale-Bailey Elementary School. She served as principal at J.P. Ryon Elementary School for nine years before returning to Wade where she retired as principal.

McGraw was preparing to retire when she was approached about running for the Board of Education. "At the time, I was not ready to totally remove myself from being involved in education. I felt that I still had something to offer so I made the decision to run for a seat on the Board of Education," McGraw said. "Once elected, I quickly realized that, although I had a background in education, there was a lot to learn about being a Board of Education member."

She said she is proud of the trust voters put in her and of the relationships she built with her fellow Board members. "We learned to collaborate and compromise for the good of the system," she said. Among the accomplishments McGraw was a part of while a Board member was helping to create an equity policy, revising the eligibility policy and establishing town halls for students, staff and community members.

McGraw is no stranger to accolades for her work in education. She was named a 2008-2009 Distinguished Educational Leadership Award winner by *The Washington Post* and the 2009 CCPS Principal of the Year.

In 2021, McGraw was named president of MABE, and before retiring as a Board member, she was named the recipient of the James E. Richmond Leadership in Excellence Award.

Unique to CCPS, the award is given to a staff member who exhibits high standards of excellence and leadership. Along with the Richmond award, the MABE Distinguished School Board Service Award is one McGraw appreciates "beyond measure," she said. "The privilege of being a Charles County Board of Education member is one of the most rewarding experiences of my life," McGraw said.

She stays involved in education as secretary to the McConchie One Room School Committee which is in the process of restoring the one-room school at the Charles County Fairgrounds. She is the secretary of the Charles County Scholarship Committee and treasurer of the Charles County Retired School Personnel Association.

"Ginny epitomizes the word 'educator' and her work leaves a lasting impression on students, staff and public education," Lukas said.

McGraw is expected to accept the Distinguished School Board Service Award in October during MABE's annual conference.



Virginia McGraw

# Art as a passport — student work featured in art show

Inspiration can strike at any time. For Yaritza Morris's Spanish II students at North Point High School, it often does when they are studying Black history of Cartagena, a Colonial city in Columbia.

It started during the pandemic when Morris was tasked with teaching virtually. "Because things were so different that year, I thought 'OK, we're going to do something in addition to what we typically do,'" Morris said, adding that Spanish II focuses on introducing students to the people, customs and cultures of whose language they are studying. "I wanted to do something a little bit more artistic to give the kids an outlet," she said. Students could sing, play an instrument, perform a regional dance, write a poem, complete a research project or draw or paint something that stood out to them about Cartagena.

"I was amazed at some of the stuff that came back," Morris said.

Among the artwork were drawings and paintings of historical landmarks, of street entertainers who perform traditional and contemporary dances, and of las palenqueras — women wearing colorful traditional dresses who sell fruit, often balancing oversized bowls of watermelon, bananas and pineapple on top of their heads.

Morris was so impressed with the art; she shared some on the [Fotos Antiguas de Cartagena](#) — Old Photos of Cartagena — Facebook page.

The page houses photos of Cartagena where visitors can post and view images related to the city and its residents, past and present.

Morris posted during the pandemic because "everybody was home, everybody could have used a smile," Morris said. "I posted pictures of the artwork with a message, 'Sending love from Maryland. My students made these wonderful projects, and I loved them so much, I figured you guys would love it too.'" Then came the 800 likes and more than 100 comments.

Among them — "It makes us very happy that many people know our beautiful culture," Zurelly Romero posted. Ariel Martinez Arteta added, "What beautiful drawings, very representative of Cartagena and its culture."

Some posters asked if the work was done by students studying art in college. Morris let visitors know that the work was done by



**Top, North Point juniors Heidi Yauch, left, Davion Gross, Claire Ellinger, Hope Betts, Kennedy Griggs and Rosa Carino-Vasquez are pictured with Yaritza Morris, a Spanish teacher at North Point. From left, Gross drew the Hotel Santa Clara which is housed in a building with extensive history; Hope Betts created a work centered on a palenquera, one of the women in Cartagena who sell fruit and candy to visitors, and Griggs captured an evening street scene.**

young high school students — freshmen and sophomores. The projects were part of a Spanish class assignment, completed by students who haven't traveled to Cartagena or knew much about it before.

### On familiar ground

Morris is familiar with Cartagena as her mother is a native. Morris grew up spending summers and holidays in the historic city. "I'm no stranger to Cartagena. When we started doing these projects on connecting Black history to Hispanic culture, I felt I could talk about Cartagena," Morris said.

At one point in its history, Cartagena was the largest port of enslaved people arriving in South America after they were forcibly taken from Africa, Morris said.

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, about 25 percent of the city's population was made up of enslaved persons from Africa. Columbia abol-

ished slavery in 1851. "Even now, Cartagena has a predominately Afro-descendant population, so I felt like I could talk about that and could answer questions that the kids had, because the kids always have really good questions," Morris said.

If she couldn't readily answer, Morris would research to find it even reaching out to the international relations office of the University of Cartagena and the city's Ministry of Culture for resources.

Following the success of the project, Morris continues to assign it leaving it up to her students to decide if they want to sing, dance, draw, paint or research a paper.

"After learning about the history and seeing how the city has grown and how beautiful it is — it just changes your whole view," Kennedy Griggs, a junior, said.

To read more about the project, visit the [Latest News section](#) of [www.cboe.com](#).

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# Calendar change

## Board approves changes to 2024-2025 calendar

During a Sept. 25 work session, the Board of Education voted to amend the 2024-2025 calendar it had previously approved in June.

An earlier approved 2024-2025 calendar included an Aug. 19, 2024, start date for students — a date that is printed in the current 2023-2024 Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) Parent Handbook/Calendar.

However, concerns expressed by parents and CCPS staff prompted the Board to take a closer look at the 2024-2025 calendar.

Some parents questioned the earlier-than-usual start date, saying it shortened summer break. Staff worried that the start date would limit the time CCPS employees have to prepare for the upcoming school year including hiring new staff, readying buildings and facilities, and the operation of summer programs for students.

The Board approved to move the first day of the next school year for students from Aug. 19 to Aug. 26, 2024, while teachers will return for the 2024-2025 school year on Aug. 19, 2024.

Veteran CCPS teachers come back the week prior to the students return to prepare their classrooms and attend trainings and events.



Teachers new to CCPS typically attend an orientation the week before. For the 2024-2025 school year, new teachers will start orientation events the week of Aug. 12, 2024.

Barring the use of inclement weather days — sometimes referred to as “snow days” — to make up for school closures, the last day for students in the 2024-2025 school year is June 10 with the last day for teachers set for June 11.

For a more detailed look at the 2024-2025 calendar, visit the [At-a-Glance calendar](http://www.ccboc.com) at [www.ccboc.com](http://www.ccboc.com).

## Personnel

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

**Job openings**

**Elementary Instructional Assistant (IA)** — Malcolm Elementary School, 10-month position. High school diploma required. Apply by Oct. 3.

**Secretary to the Principal** — C. Paul Barnhart Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED, minimum of two years of experience in bookkeeping or office management and experience with payroll and budgets required. Apply by Oct. 5.

**Compliance Facilitator** — General Smallwood Middle School, 10.5-month position. Bachelor's degree and Maryland Standard Professional Certificate with spe-

cial education endorsement are required. Apply by Oct. 6.

**Administrative Instructional Assistant** — J.P. Ryon Elementary School, 10-month position. High school diploma required and 48 college credits or a passing ParaPro Assessment result are required. Apply by Oct. 9.

**Assistant Food and Nutrition Managers** — All schools, 10-month position. High school diploma or equivalent required. Apply by Oct. 9.

**Building Service Worker** — Berry Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by Oct. 9.

**Building Service Worker** — Mary H. Matula Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by Oct. 9.

**Secretary** — J.P. Ryon Elementary School,

10-month position. High school diploma required. Apply by Oct. 9.

**Building Service Worker** — Thomas Stone High School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by Oct. 11.

**Dual Language Immersion Elementary Teacher** — Arthur Middleton Elementary School, 10-month position. A bachelor's degree required. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Theater Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree or higher. Position open until filled.

**Title I Nonpublic Tutor** — Temporary position. Bachelor's Degree and professional certificate in early childhood or elementary education required. Apply by Dec. 29.

**Substitute Teacher** — All schools. High school diploma or GED equivalent required. Position open until filled.