

# School News



## Notebook

### Deadline approaching

Classroom teachers can apply for one of six mini grants offered by the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association (MRSPA). The mini grants — awarding up to \$300 per teacher — may be used on special projects or activities that are not funded through the school system, PTA or PTSO. Mini grant applications are due by Nov. 1 with winners notified in January. The funds will be sent directly to the teacher at their school for use during this school year. To learn more about the program, visit [www.mrspa.org](http://www.mrspa.org). To obtain an application, [click here](#). Completed applications can be emailed to [mrspa@mrspa.org](mailto:mrspa@mrspa.org) by Nov. 1. If you have any questions, please contact Maryland Retired School Personnel Association at 410-551-1517 or email at [mrspa@mrspa.org](mailto:mrspa@mrspa.org).

### Calendar notes

A two-hour early dismissal for students is Friday, Nov. 3. Schools will be closed for students only on Friday, Nov. 10.

### Information night

Maurice J. McDonough High School will hold an information night at 6:30 p.m., Monday, Nov. 6, for eighth graders and their families who are interested in learning more about the Curriculum for the Agricultural Science Education (CASE) CTE program or the dance pathway — both housed at the school. Call 301-753-1755 for more information. McDonough is at 7165 Marshall Corner Road in Pomfret. Learn more about CTE at [www.cbcoe.com](http://www.cbcoe.com).



## #ccpspinkout

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) staff and students showed their true colors (hint — it was pink) today for the Pink Out to support breast cancer awareness and kick off the Relay for Life fundraising season.



## Graduation dates set for CCPS Class of 2024

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) will celebrate the Class of 2024 during graduation ceremonies at Regency Furniture Stadium this spring. The ceremonies are set for May 28 through 31, and CCPS has partnered once again with Regency Furniture Stadium and the Charles County Government to provide graduating seniors with graduation ceremonies. High

school principals and CCPS will continue to provide graduation updates to parents and students through the school year.

Project Graduation, a substance-free celebration on the night of each school's graduation, will be held from 8 p.m. to midnight at the Charles County Fairgrounds in La Plata. Each

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### On the cover

The Board honored outstanding staff at its October meeting including Cornelia “Connie” Jerman-Webb, instructional assistant, Gale-Bailey Elementary School, left, and Joanna Hobbs, Ph.D., school librarian, Maurice J. McDonough High School. To read about their accomplishments, [click here](#).

### CTE application open

The application process is open for career and technical education programs. Current eighth graders and high school sophomores can apply for different programs housed at Maurice J. McDonough and North Point high schools, and the Robert D. Stethem Educational Center. The application closes at 3 p.m., Nov. 14. For more information, visit [www.ccboe.com](http://www.ccboe.com). The Stethem Center will hold a CTE Spotlight 6 to 7:30 p.m., Nov. 2. McDonough will hold an information night for the CASE program and dance pathway at 6:30 p.m., Nov. 6.

### Tech Talk set for Dec. 4

A Tech Talk for parents is 6 to 7 p.m., Dec. 4, at Milton M. Somers Middle School. The educational session is provided by CCPS and the Maryland State Police Computer Crimes Unit and is intended for mature audiences. The session is designed to help parents keep their children safe while online — it is not geared toward children. To register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/SomersTechTalk>. Somers is at 300 Willow Lane in La Plata.

### 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. McDonough’s JROTC program will receive \$5 from each wreath purchased through its site at [wreathscrossamerica.org](http://wreathscrossamerica.org).

## Board to hold Town Hall on Nov. 7 at North Point

The Board of Education of Charles County will hold a Town Hall starting at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 7, at North Point High School. Career and Technical Education (CTE) will be the focus of the Town Hall and Charles County Public School staff starting the event with an overview of CTE.

Attendees interested in speaking must register on site at the event. A sign-up sheet will be posted outside of the school cafeteria. Depending on how many registrations the Board receives on site, sign-ups may be discontinued after 7:30 p.m. to allow as many speakers as possible. Anyone who signs up to speak will receive an assigned number and be called to speak by that number.

The Board encourages community members to submit questions, comments and/or topics in advance. An electronic form is linked below. This will enable staff to research and provides answers during the event. The form will close for submissions at 5 p.m. Nov. 1 to allow staff time to collect and research submissions.

[Submit a question/comment/topic in advance using the form here](#).

North Point is at 2500 Davis Road in Waldorf.

## State of the Schools presentation available

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) Superintendent Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., hosted a State of the Schools event for parents and community members on Oct. 12, 2023.

During the event, Navarro shared a presentation about the state of school system and how it relates to the three focus areas of the [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.

A copy of the presentation and a video of the presentation portion of event is posted

on the CCPS website at <https://www.ccboe.com/about/superintendent/state-of-the-schools-2023>.

Following the presentation, attendees visited breakout rooms where staff from each CCPS school were set to speak about school improvement plans and how they tie into the overall CCPS strategic plan. Presentations about individual school improvement plans are posted to school websites, under the Announcements area.

Parents are asked to view the plan for their child’s school and complete a brief survey included at the end of the presentation. Questions about school-level plans should be directed to administrators at the individual school.

## Graduations

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graduate can bring one guest to Project Graduation.

### Graduation schedule

- Tuesday, May 28 — St. Charles High School, 9 a.m.
- Tuesday, May 28 — Thomas Stone High School, 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 29 — La Plata High School, 9 a.m.
- Wednesday, May 29 — Westlake High School, 1 p.m.
- Thursday, May 30 — Henry E. Lackey High School, 9 a.m.
- Thursday, May 30 — Maurice J. McDonough High School, 1 p.m.
- Friday, May 31 — North Point High School, 9 a.m.

Regency Furniture Stadium is at 11765 St Linus Drive in Waldorf. Each graduate will receive a set number of tickets to their graduation ceremony. Additional information regarding 2024 graduation ceremonies will be shared throughout the school year.

# Board of Education selects Thomas to fill District I vacancy

The Board of Education of Charles County on Oct. 24 selected Samichie Thomas to fill the vacant District 1 seat.



**Samichie Thomas**

Thomas was chosen after the Board conducted a search for applicants from District 1 interested in serving as a Board member. Thomas will officially be sworn into the role in the next few weeks. Once she is formally sworn into the role, Thomas will complete the remainder of the vacant District 1 Board member term through December 2026. The seat was left vacant earlier this year when a former Board member resigned.

Thomas was one of seven applicants from District 1 and interviewed with the Board last Friday. In accepting her selection to fill the vacancy, Thomas said she is excited to begin her term with the Board. "I look forward to being part of the Board and collaborating with all stakeholders to invest in the educational

future for Charles County Public Schools," Thomas said.

Board of Education Vice Chairperson Yonelle Moore Lee, Esq., said the selection process was challenging for the Board due to the expertise, experience and unique backgrounds of the applicants.

"The Board was impressed not only with the caliber of the applicants and their collective expertise, but also with each applicant's passion, interest and commitment to serving children in Charles County and their community as a whole. It was a difficult decision, and we greatly appreciate everyone who stepped up to serve. On behalf of the Board, we welcome Ms. Thomas and look forward to working with her as a Board member representing District 1," Moore Lee said.

Thomas ran in the 2022 Board of Education election for one of two seats on the Board for District 1. According to the official election results, Thomas received the third highest percentage vote among Board of Education District 1 candidates. During the election process, Thomas received official endorsements

from the Education Association of Charles County (EACC) and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) – the unions that represent school system staff and teachers.

Thomas applied in August when the Board announced it was seeking applicants for the vacancy. Thomas said she applied because she still had a desire to serve on the Board. "I am deeply passionate about education and believe in its transformative power," she said.

A resident of Hughesville, Thomas has an extensive background in human resources management with agencies such as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, NASA, Office of Naval Intelligence and Naval Criminal Investigative Services (NCIS).

She currently serves as the public sector consulting director and oversees business operations and resources with Oracle. Thomas has a master's degree in human resources management and development from Bowie State University, and a bachelor's degree in social work with a minor in education, also from Bowie State University.

## CCPS open enrollment open from Oct. 30 to Nov. 14

The annual open enrollment for Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) employee health benefits is Oct. 30 to Nov. 14. During open enrollment, eligible CCPS employees can either join a health care plan or make changes to their coverage.

Available benefits include medical/dental, basic life insurance, optional supplemental employee, dependent life insurance and flexible spending accounts (FSA).

To access open enrollment, visit <https://ccboe.hrintouch.com>. Benefits for employees who do not make any changes will continue in 2024, with the exception of FSA options.

Employees with FSA benefits must renew annually online. Changes and FSA benefits made during open enrollment are effective Jan 1, 2024, the start of the new benefit plan year.

Health insurance plans are provided by CareFirst and include a Preferred Provider plan (PPO/PPN) or a Blue Choice Opt-Out Open Access plan. Plan details are posted on MyCCPS under the Benefits & Pay tab. There are no rate changes for the medical plans for the calendar year 2024. Rates are as follows.

### Individual coverage

- PPO/PPN \$216 monthly, \$108 bi-weekly
- Blue Choice \$160 monthly, \$80 bi-weekly

### Family coverage

- PPO/PPN \$579 monthly, \$289 bi-weekly
- Blue Choice \$458 monthly, \$229 bi-weekly

Medical coverage includes pharmacy (CVS/Caremark), dental (Preferred Provider), and vision (Davis Vision Plus). CCPS does not offer stand-alone plans.

A representative of Aflac will be at the schools during the open enrollment period to assist staff interested in enrolling in the supplemental insurance program.

Employees can also sign up for group term life insurance or group supplemental life insurance. Group supplemental insurance is provided to CCPS through ReliaStar Life Insurance, part of the Voya Company with a guaranteed issue of \$250,000. Insurance above \$250,000 requires the employee to complete the evidence of insurability (EOI) medical questionnaire. Coverage is also available for eligible children of employees who select the optional coverage. For more information, visit the [Employee Benefits section of MyCCPS](#) and select [Supplemental Group Term Life Insurance](#) from the menu at the top of the page.

Two FSA options are available for employees: medical and dependent care. FSA accounts do not renew annually. Participants must re-enroll during open enrollment annually. Depending on an employee's tax bracket, an employee can save nearly 30% on most medical, health and child or eldercare expenses. A representative of Aflac will be scheduling dates for one-on-one meetings with CCPS staff at schools and facilities. To learn more, go to the [online benefits website](#) and select Flexible Spending Account from the Benefits menu.

Visit the benefits page of the MyCCPS employee website for more information on CCPS benefits.

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Fax: 301-932-6651

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**Editor/Writers**

Shelley Mackey  
Sara K. Taylor  
Jordan Wilson

The Charles County public school system does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability in its programs, activities or employment practices. For inquiries, please contact Kathy Kiessling, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (students) or Niki M. Majors, Title IX/ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (employees/ adults), at Charles County Public Schools, Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, P.O. Box 2770, La Plata, MD 20646; 301-932-6610/301-870-3814. For special accommodations call 301-934-7230 or TDD 1-800-735-2258 two weeks prior to the event. 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).

# Chat with the Chief event is Nov. 8

Join Charmaine Thompson, chief of instructional technology for Charles County Public Schools (CCPS), for a Chat with the Chief event on Wednesday, Nov. 8.

The virtual chat from 6 to 7 p.m. will cover topics ranging from how parents and families can protect their children while they are online, to how to manage a child's cell phone use and screen time safety.

Thompson began working with CCPS in July 2017. Prior to joining CCPS, Thompson worked for the U.S. Department of Labor and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

She was an instructional systems specialist with the U.S. Department of Defense Media Activity, Defense Information School, and served as the interim director of instructional technology

and distance education with the Johns Hopkins University Whiting School of Engineering for one year.

Thompson began her teaching career in technology as a computer science teacher with Montgomery County Public Schools in 2001.

She later transitioned to a position in 2005 as the director of academic technology with Sidwell Friends Middle School in Washington, D.C.

To register for Chat with the Chief, visit the [Webex event page](#).



**Charmaine Thompson**

# Retirement planning sessions set Nov. 2 and 7

Staff members planning for retirement will want to attend one of two sessions held next month at North Point High School. Held from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., Nov. 2 and 7, the event will include information on retirement planning, risks of retirement, income strategies, social security and the Maryland pension. The course is the starting point to understanding the different elements that make up retirement planning. It discusses social security, pension plans, and employer sponsored plans. It illustrates a step-by-step method to retirement planning. Staff need only to attend one session. North Point is at 2500 Davis Road in Waldorf.

## 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**

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

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

**Art Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Business Education Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Computer Science Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Cyber Security Teacher** — Location to be

determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Elementary Science Teacher** — All elementary schools. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Engineering Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**English Teacher (high school)** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**ESOL Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Family and Consumer Science Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**French Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Library Media Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Mathematics Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**Reading Resource Teacher (elementary school)** — Location to be determined. Apply

by Dec. 31.

**Science Teacher** — Location to be determined. Apply by Dec. 31.

**School Counselor** — Phoenix International School of the Arts, 11-month position. A master's degree in school counseling and eligibility for certification in School Counseling as determined by MSDE, as well as a minimum of a 600-hour practicum or experience teaching or counseling in a school setting. Position open until filled.

**Extra Pay Positions:**

**Cheerleading Coach** — All high schools. Apply by Oct. 30.

**Cross Country Coach** — All high schools. Apply by Oct. 30.

**Field Hockey Coach** — All high schools. Apply by Oct. 30.

**Winter Cheerleading Coach** — All high schools. Apply by Jan. 30.