



School News



Tri-County concert

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) middle and high school orchestra students are set to perform in the Tri-County Orchestra Concert at 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 7, at Calvert High School at 520 Fox Run Blvd., in Prince Frederick.

Board meeting Jan. 9

The [Board of Education](#) will meet Tuesday, Jan. 9, at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building in La Plata. The meeting begins at 1 p.m., with public forum at 6 p.m. [Notes from the December Board meeting](#) are available at www.ccboe.com.

Calendar dates

A two-hour early dismissal for students is Wednesday, Jan. 10. CCPS offices and schools will be closed Monday, Jan. 15, for Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. A semester break is Monday, Jan. 22, with schools closed for students only.

Early College info

The College of Southern Maryland is hosting parent information nights for families interested in the Early College Program. The program is open to current high school sophomores and juniors who meet specific academic criteria.

A 6 p.m., Jan. 17, meeting will be held at North Point High School. To RSVP, [click here](#). A 6 p.m., Jan. 18, meeting will be held at St. Charles High School. To RSVP, [click here](#). The meetings are open to any family of current 10th and 11th graders regardless of a student's home school. To learn more, visit the [CSM website](#).



A day in the park

Top, Sheila Herbert, left, a special education instructional assistant at La Plata High School, hands Zaira Toye a football during the Explore and Engage event held at the White Plains Regional Park. Students in the CCPS adult independence program (AIP) visited the park to learn some activities that provide good exercise. Right, PE teacher, Alison Cheney, center, watches Adrian



Johnson, left, and Jaxon Foote, both of St. Charles High School, play cornhole during the event. To read more, go to Page 2.

CCPS welcomes Bunkyo Univ. students, seeks host families

Bunkyo University students who are studying to become teachers will visit the U.S. and Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) next month. CCPS is seeking host families to house the 29 college students while they are visiting the States, and will hold a virtual information session on Tuesday, Jan. 16, to discuss the process with interested host families.

The university students will be in Charles County for two weeks — Feb. 19 to March 1 — to learn more about the American education system, focusing on how teachers approach lessons and build relationships with students. CCPS and Bunkyo have been partnering for the program for more than 30 years.

Bunkyo students will work with school-based instructional staff to observe and con-

duct lessons while providing Japanese cultural experiences to enhance learning for CCPS students.

Host families will house the Bunkyo students during their stay. Families are needed to host at least two students and provide them with a bedroom and meals for the week. Other information for interested host families will be discussed during the Jan. 16 interest meeting.

Families interested in hosting a Bunkyo student should fill out an interest survey by Friday, Jan. 12, at <https://forms.office.com/r/2MZsH2J5fX> to take part in the virtual Jan 16 meeting. A meeting link will be sent from Sylvia Royster, CCPS director of community

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On the cover

The Board of Education of Charles County recognized staff members for excellence at its Dec. 12 meeting. Pictured on the front cover from left are Jill Locco, science teacher, John Hanson Middle School, Christina White, instructional assistant, Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School, and Alexandra Pobst, fourth-grade teacher, T.C. Martin Elementary School. Read more about the accomplishments of these and other staff members honored at the Dec. 12 Board meeting at the [Latest News](#) section of www.ccboe.com.

Chess tournament

The kings and queens of CCPS can test strategies and skills at the winter chess tournament in February. Held at Henry E. Lackey High School on Saturday, Feb. 10, the tournament is open to students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Students in sixth through 12th grade will use chess clocks allowing for 15 minutes per match. Students must be signed up to compete by Feb. 7. No walk-in registrations will be accepted. [To learn more and to register, visit \[www.ccboe.com\]\(http://www.ccboe.com\)](#).

EAP services available in 2024

The [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) provider, ComPsych GuidanceResources, can assist staff who are having issues with stress, depression, anxiety, workplace difficulties, substance abuse, marital problems, family or parenting conflicts, grief, violence and unhealthy lifestyles.

The service can also assist staff with finding child and elder care, hiring movers or home repair contractors, divorce, adoption, family law, wills and trusts, retirement planning, and other day-to-day issues. For additional information call toll-free at 1-877-465-0865. The TTY phone number is 800-697-0353. Online tools are available at www.guidanceresources.com. To create an account, click Register and use the web ID: CCPSEAP. To view a video on the program and its benefits, [click here](#).

PE teachers showcase park amenities for AIP students

No gym, no problem — members of the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) adult independence program (AIP) recently visited [White Plains Regional Park](#) to explore its accessible amenities and learn more about how engaging in leisure activities can reap physical benefits.

The AIP is a vocational rehabilitation program for students 18 to 21, who have completed the requirements for a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion. AIP students receive instruction that often takes place in the community, learning specific skills firsthand that will help them transition to the workforce and better integrate into their communities outside of school.

Students in the AIP from La Plata, St. Charles and Thomas Stone high schools — along with teachers and instructional assistants (IA) — attended the “Explore and Engage” event at the park in White Plains. While there, they played bocce and cornhole, frisbee golf, played catch with a football and walked a track that allowed for different levels of ability.

“White Plains has an asphalt walking track that is able to be used by people with gate trainers, wheelchairs or walking assistance devices,” Alison Cheney, a CCPS adapted physical education (PE) teacher, said.

The outing was an opportunity to intro-

duce students to leisure activities that can double as exercise.

“Fitness levels in the disability community tend to be lower compared to the general population,” Seth Rak, an adapted PE teacher, said. “It is vital to promote and facilitate physical activities for improved health and wellbeing.”

Adapted PE staff came up with the “Engage and Explore” event to create authentic opportunities for AIP students. “The overarching aim is to continually identify community activities that are accessible and to develop a program that facilitates a smooth transition for students into suitable activities,” Rak said.

It was fun too, Caroline Foster, a special education teacher at St. Charles, said. While the visit to the park gave students a chance to explore new activities, it served as a reunion of sorts. “Students are seeing old friends and making new friends,” Foster said.

Other parks in Charles County have amenities that can be used by people of various physical abilities. [Pisgah Park](#) in La Plata has a paved loop, [Laurel Springs Regional Park](#) in La Plata has a turf field, an accessible baseball field known as the “Field of Dreams,” and a playground that is accessible for people with disabilities, and [Bensville Park](#) in White Plains has an accessible basketball court that could be adapted for various activities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) event set for parents, educators

Members of the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) Office of Technology will be joined by staff from the Maryland Center for Computing Education at the University Systems of Maryland on Tuesday, Jan. 23, for an Introduction to Artificial Intelligence for Parents and Teachers.

The live virtual event will be from 6 to 7 p.m. on the Webex platform. The beginner-friendly webinar will explore the essentials of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education. Learn how to foster digital literacy, stay informed about AI developments and find out how it is integrating responsibly into classrooms and homes.

Speakers will discuss how parents and educators can prepare children for the ever-evolving technological landscape, while equipping them with the skills they will use in the future.

To register, go to <https://tinyurl.com/CCPSandAI>.



CCPS inclement weather procedures, codes

If weather conditions pose a potential hazard to students, school officials may dismiss students early, delay the opening of schools or close schools for the day.

If conditions require the closing or delayed opening of schools, decisions are usually made by 5 a.m.

The most reliable sources of school closing information are the school system's 24-hour information line and website. The 24-hour information line is 301-934-7410 or 301-932-6656.

When possible, decisions are made the preceding evening.

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) also uses its notification system, School Messenger, to send email notifications and text message alerts to parents with a valid email address and an opted-in cell phone number from their child's emergency notification card.

Television and radio stations are also notified; however, they do not always report the most reliable information.

CCPS does not use the phone call system to announce school closings or delays.

However, in the event of a widespread power outage or school closure during the school day, CCPS may send phone call notifications.

A delayed opening permits buses to operate under safer conditions after traffic has diminished and roads are salted and/or cleared.

Buses run routes one or two hours later than scheduled.

If it is necessary to close schools during the day, local radio and television stations are notified and asked to make announcements, usually by 10:30 a.m. Afternoon and evening meetings and activities are canceled if schools close early, or are closed for the day. If hazardous weather is predicted for later in the evening, afternoon activities may be allowed and evening activities may be canceled. Afternoon activities are those that end by 6 p.m. Evening activities begin at 6 p.m. or later.

Inclement Weather Staff Codes and Procedures (see graphic at right)

The following codes are used to inform employees of working conditions.

- **Code 1** — 1-hour delay in reporting to work (with some exceptions).
- **Code 2** — 2-hour delay in reporting to work (with some exceptions).
- **Code Red** — Schools closed, only essential employees report to work.
- **Code Blue** — All buildings are closed. No employees report to work.

When schools are closed for students and there is no code announcement, offices are open. Only 12-month employees follow the code system.

INCLEMENT WEATHER STAFF CODES AND PROCEDURES

January 2024

The following codes are used to inform employees of working conditions. Notification is made to radio and television stations at the same time school closings are announced (radio and television stations are also listed on Page 10 in the [Parent Handbook and School Calendar](#). Please be mindful that radio and television stations do not always run our information.

When schools are closed for students and there is no code announcement, offices are open. Only 12-month employees follow the code system.

1

Code 1
1-hour delay in reporting to work, except for all maintenance and operations staff employees, who report to work on time. Liberal leave is in effect.

2

Code 2
2-hour delay in reporting to work, except for all maintenance and operations staff employees, who report to work on time. Liberal leave is in effect.

Code Red

Code Red
Schools closed, only essential employees report to work.

Code Blue

Code Blue
All buildings are closed. No employees report to work.



File photo

Bunkyo con't from Page 1

engagement and equity, to those who fill out the interest survey. For more information, email Royster at sroyster@ccboe.com.

[Bunkyo University](#) is in Tokyo's Shinagawa ward. The school is known for its focus on education and preparing students to become teachers.

CCPS partners with telemental health service

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) is partnering with Hazel Health to offer short-term telemental health services for students in sixth through 12th grade.

The service is free and offered to all students regardless of insurance and/or immigration status, or a family's ability to pay.

Hazel Health offers two ways students can receive virtual counseling — at home or at school. The at-home visits will be available prior to, and during winter break, while school appointments will start in mid-January.

For children to receive at-home virtual visits, they must have access to a web-enabled device and a person 18 and older must be in the vicinity of the child during the visit.

At-school visits take place during school hours on a Hazel Health-provided iPad in an area designated for the sessions and coordinated by a trained staff member. Students are afforded privacy during at-school visits.

Students can be referred for services by parents/guardians or school staff members such as counselors, school psychologists or pupil personnel workers. Parents must consent for their child to receive services if school staff refers them.

To [learn more about Hazel Health and its partnership with CCPS](#), visit www.ccboe.com.



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JROTC program holds annual military ball for students

By **MECHELLE JOHNSON-REEVES**

Communications youth apprentice

High school students in the [Junior Reserves Officer Training Corps](#) — better known as JROTC — gathered Friday, Dec. 15, for the Col. Donald M. Wade Joint Services Military Ball held at North Point High School. The annual event celebrates the high school JROTC program that has a membership of more than 740 students attending one of the county's seven high schools. The ball is an opportunity for instructors to honor seniors participating in their respective school's JROTC.

Sydney Gunther, a St. Charles High School senior, has been a member of her school's JROTC since she was a sophomore.

While she does not plan on enlisting in the military, Gunther plans to continue her post-secondary education at college. She is not the first in her family to participate in the program, as her older sister was a cadet at North Point High School for four years before graduating with the Class of 2022.

Gunther said she joined JROTC because of the connections that can be made in the program. "My sister's experience in JROTC at North Point and all the friends she made encouraged me to join," she said.

Gunther's favorite memory is playing 'Knock Out' with her peers, a competition in which cadets

practice drills. "It's so nice to see everyone's competitive spirit come out and really put into practice their listening skills while carrying out succinct movements," Gunther said.

Naima Ligondé is a North Point senior and has been a member of JROTC since she was freshman. She wants to go to college or cosmetology school after high school. "My favorite memory in JROTC is when Lt. Col. Brown and Lt. Col. Ray danced with every cadet at the North Point ball in 2021," she added.

The Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) JROTC programs represent four branches of the U.S. Armed Forces. U.S. Army programs at Maurice J. McDonough and Thomas Stone high schools; the U.S. Navy is represented by La Plata and Westlake high schools; St. Charles High School has a U.S. Marine Corps program; and the U.S. Air Force is represented by Henry E. Lackey and North Point high schools. The ball is named in honor of the late Col. Donald Wade, who served as a member of the Board of Education of Charles County and was instrumental in bringing the JROTC program to CCPS. The Joint Services ball incorporates various military traditions, including presenting colors and toasts and honoring prisoners of war and those missing in action.

To read more about the event, [visit the Latest News section at www.ccboe.com](#).

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

Guidance Secretary — Westlake High School, 11-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by Jan. 7.

Secretary — Westlake High School, 11-month employee. High school diploma or equivalent required. Apply by Jan. 7.

Youth Engagement Advocate — Henry E. Lackey High School, 10.5-month position. High school diploma or equivalent, bachelor's degree preferred. Apply by Jan. 7.

Administrative Intern — Location to be determined, 11-month position. A bachelor's degree and Standard Professional Certificate issued by the MSDE, along with three years

of teaching experience. Position open until filled.

Elementary School Principal — J.C. Parks Elementary School, 12-month employee. A master's degree is required and applicants must hold a current Maryland Advanced Professional Certificate with Administrator II endorsement. Three years satisfactory teaching experience and three years of satisfactory experience as an assistant principal are required. Position open until filled.

ESOL Teacher — Location to be determined, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree or higher, and meets certification requirements. Position open until filled.

Instructional Assistant — Arthur Middleton Elementary School, 10-month position. A high school diploma is required with an associate or bachelor's degree preferred. Position open until filled.

Instructional Assistant — Location to be determined, 10-month employee. High school diploma required, experience working with children preferred. Position open until filled.

Parent Liaison — Indian Head Elementary School, 10-month employee. High school diploma or equivalent required, and a general knowledge of the Title I program, Part A and Microsoft Office 365. Position open until filled.

Reading Resource Teacher — Location to be determined, 11-month employee. A master's degree is required. Position open until filled.

School Technology Facilitator — Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School, 10-month employee. High school diploma and associate of arts degree or passing grade on Para-Pro assessment. Position open until filled.