

School News



Work session Oct. 28

The Board of Education will hold a work session 4:30 p.m., Monday, Oct. 28, in the boardroom of the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building. To view the agenda, [click here](#).

Homecoming games

La Plata High School's homecoming game is 7 p.m., tonight, Oct. 25. The Warriors are playing the Chargers of Henry E. Lackey High School. The **Maurice J. McDonough High School Rams** will play their homecoming game 7 p.m., Friday, Nov. 1, against La Plata.

Canvas deadline Oct. 30

The deadline for finalizing Canvas LMS course setup is Oct. 30. The deadline was extended earlier this year by the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) Office of Teaching and Learning and the Office of Technology to allow teachers the time to complete the necessary training and apply correct course templates. Parents will have access to Canvas on Nov. 4. For assistance, email Canvas@ccboe.com or call 833-221-7466.

Early dismissal

A two-hour early dismissal for students is Thursday, Oct. 31.



Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) students and staff support Breast Cancer Awareness by wearing pink on Oct. 25. Students and staff used #ccpspinkout24 today to share their photos of wearing pink with the school system and community.

CCPS supports Relay for Life, a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society. The [2025 Relay for Life of Charles County](#) is 2-8 p.m., May 10, at St. Charles High School.



Arthur Middleton ES



North Point HS



Dr. Thomas L. Higdon ES



St. Charles HS



Matthew Henson MS

Notebook

On the cover

The Board honored outstanding employees at its Oct. 15 meeting. From left are Donna Osakowicz, attendance secretary, Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School; Zarina Ameen, pupil personnel worker, Eva Turner Elementary School; and Caitlin Timko, mathematics teacher, Piccowaxen Middle School. To read more, [click here](#).

Fall plays start

La Plata High School opens the fall play season with “Clue: On Stage.” Shows are 6:30 p.m. Nov. 1 and 2, and 2:30 p.m. Nov. 2. Tickets are \$5 students and \$10 for adults, with a CCPS badge honored. Tickets can be purchased at the door in cash only or [buy advance tickets online](#).

The documentary-style “Trap,” by Stephen Gregg will be staged 7 p.m., Nov. 7-9, at **North Point High School**. The show is rated PG-13. Tickets are \$5 for students who are 18 and younger and \$10 for adults. Tickets can be purchased online at [nphs7040.ludus.com](#) at the door.

Election Day

Schools are closed for students only on Tuesday, Nov. 5, which is Election Day.

Science Center event

The James E. Richmond Science Center and the CCPS Department of Community Engagement and Equity (DCEE) will present “Star Stories: Honoring Indigenous Identity and Culture” to recognize Native American Heritage Month. The event is from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 14, at the Science Center. The center is at 5305 Piney Church Road in Waldorf. Guests who attend the event can explore exhibits and activities, enjoy food and watch the planetarium star showcase highlighting Native American history, art and culture. RSVPs are preferred. [Click here to RSVP](#).

Graduation dates for Class of 2025 set

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) will celebrate the Class of 2025 during graduation ceremonies at Regency Furniture Stadium in May.

The ceremonies are set for May 27 through 30, at Regency Furniture Stadium in Waldorf. High school principals and CCPS will continue to provide graduation updates to parents and students through the school year.

On the day of a school’s graduation ceremony, the school will be closed to students in Grades 9 through 11.

Staff of the graduating school will be working at its commencement event.

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 graduate can bring one guest to Project Graduation.

Graduation schedule

- Tuesday, May 27 — St. Charles High School, 9 a.m.
- Tuesday, May 27 — Henry E. Lackey High School, 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 28 — La Plata High School, 9 a.m.
- Wednesday, May 28 — Maurice J. McDonough High School, 1 p.m.



Members of the Class of 2024 from Maurice J. McDonough High School celebrate at their graduation ceremony.

- Thursday, May 29 — Westlake High School, 9 a.m.
- Thursday, May 29 — Thomas Stone High School, 1 p.m.
- Friday, May 30 — 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 and each ceremony will be livestreamed at [www.ccboe.com](#).

Board to hold virtual town hall on Nov. 4

The Board of Education of Charles County is hosting a virtual Town Hall on Monday, Nov. 4, at 7 p.m. through Zoom. The topic of the Town Hall is school climate.

Superintendent of Schools Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., and CCPS staff will provide an [overview presentation about school climate](#), with the remaining time reserved for questions, answers and comments from Board members, staff and virtual attendees. The Town Hall will livestream on the CCPS website at [www.ccboe.com](#).

Parents, staff, students and community members are encouraged to attend to ask questions or provide comments about the Town Hall topic. Participants will be able to provide comments and ask questions in the chat area of the Zoom. A Spanish interpreter will be available in the Zoom.

To join the Town Hall through Zoom, participants must register in advance using the

link below. All participants must have an active Zoom account to participate.

[Click here](#) to register for the virtual Town Hall.

Questions, comments and/or other ideas shared at the Town Hall should reference education-related topics. A presentation about school climate is scheduled on the Board’s Oct. 15 meeting agenda. Board meetings also stream live on the CCPS website at [www.ccboe.com](#).

Parents, staff, students and community members can submit questions and/or comments in advance through the form linked below.

[Question/comment form](#).

The form closes at noon, Friday, Nov. 1. The Board and CCPS staff will address submissions as time permits during the Town Hall. Questions about the Town Hall can be submitted to [boardmail@ccboe.com](#).

CCPS hosts mock family reunification exercise

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) hosted a family reunification exercise on Sunday, Oct. 13, in which school system staff worked through a mock reunification activity at the Charles County Fairgrounds. In the event an emergency affects a CCPS building, school or larger campus, students and staff would relocate to the fairgrounds, which is the official CCPS family reunification site.

Participating in the exercise on Sunday were 99 CCPS students in Grades 4-12 who volunteered their time, with most earning student service learning (SSL) volunteer hours. In addition to students, the exercise included school counselors, pupil personnel workers (PPW), and other CCPS staff, who practiced in real time processes and procedures they would follow during an emergency.

First responders from local fire, police and rescue teams also participated in the activity to help simulate a live response.

The 99 students were dropped off by their parents at one of three CCPS school locations and taken by school bus to the fairgrounds.

While staff set up stations to process students upon their arrival at the fairgrounds, PPWs checked in students as their parents dropped them off at either La Plata or Thomas Stone high schools, or General Smallwood Middle School.

In the event of an emergency, a team of PPWs would be tasked with helping to account for students and assisting in any evacuation processes from schools or centers.

Upon arrival to the fairgrounds, buses were greeted by school counselors and PPWs, as well as other CCPS officials and staff participating in the event.

Students were checked in and sorted into groups by grade level and assigned to a station. Stations were monitored by PPWs and featured games for students to play while they waited for their parent.

Snacks were provided by CCPS food and nutrition services staff.

Within 30 minutes of each bus arrival, all students were checked in, accounted for and assigned to a staff member overseeing a station.

Parents were then notified that their child was safe, accounted for and ready to be picked up from the reunification site.

Jason Stoddard, CCPS director of school safety and security, helped to coordinate the

logistics of the event and said this was the largest scale reunification exercise in recent years for a Maryland public school system.

“Representatives from the [Maryland Center for School Safety](#) are evaluating our processes during this exercise and shared that this is one of the larger mock activities a school system in Maryland has hosted in recent years,” Stoddard said. “While this was an exercise and not an actual emergency, school staff today were able to run through an ideal framework of how we should approach what to do when an emergency occurs.”

Once parents arrived at the fairgrounds, they were required to show identification and complete paperwork before being reunited with their child.

This is part of CCPS processes to ensure either a student’s parent/guardian or emergency contact on file with the school system is picking up a student.

While initially more than 145 students registered to participate, a total of 99 students and their parent/guardian were accounted for and tracked in the CCPS student information system, Synergy.

Synergy has unique tools CCPS staff can use to note when a student is accounted/unaccounted for, missing or picked up by their parent during an emergency.

The goal of the exercise was for CCPS staff to have hands-on experience managing the reunification process layer of an emergency.

Justine Jewell, longtime PPW with CCPS, said she and the student services team of counselors and PPWs were able to practice what they cover in drills and meetings in real time with current CCPS students.

Jewell led the exercise as the incident commander and advised PPWs, counselors and staff of where to be, when and what their role would be.

“The family reunification exercise provided valuable insight into how we can continue to develop our reunification plan. My team and I were able to practice using the emergency response system to track and reunify our stu-



Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) pupil personnel workers go over details with Steve Roberts, director of accountability, second from left, during the reunification exercise. From left are Tina Laury, Tiara King, Roberts, Linda Stocks, John Hairston and Monica Cherry.

dents and it allowed us to see what worked and what adjustments we’ll need to make moving forward,” Jewell said. “Together, we are better prepared to guide our colleagues and our students through a crisis where reunification would be necessary. We hope that we’ll never need to activate this plan but having one and this experience to draw from will be invaluable if we ever do.”

Staff from the [Maryland Center for School Safety \(MCSS\)](#) will provide CCPS with notes from the evaluation of the exercise. Stoddard will lead a follow-up meeting with staff to review the activity and discuss ways the school system can improve its processes and guidelines to reunify students with families during an emergency.

“The key is to be prepared and ready for when the time comes. While this exercise was on a small scale, emergency response management takes multiple teams and departments working together to ensure students are safe and ultimately reunified with their parents,” Stoddard said.

To learn more about safety processes and procedures used by CCPS, visit the school system website at <https://www.ccboe.com/quick-links/safety-and-security>.

School News is published by
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This field trip is for the birds

As seen on the @nanjemoycreek X account, fifth-grade students from Gale-Bailey Elementary School recently visited the Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center where they enjoyed a morning of bird watching. They spotted songbirds and saw a bald eagle. Some students helped staff members tag monarch butterflies before the pollinators head to Mexico for the winter.



Safety first

Safe Schools Week is Oct 20 to 26. SRO Caballero met with Berry Elementary School third graders from Kourtlan Copeland's class to talk about how they can keep themselves and their friends safe.

Submitted by Berry PR liaison
Jayme Emerson.

Personnel

Apply for positions online at www.ccboe.com/jobs/currentopenings.php. All teaching positions require a bachelor's degree and MSDE certification requirements.

Upcoming job fair

Temporary Instructional Assistant (IA) Job Fair — All grade levels, all schools, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m., Nov. 14, Starkey building, [RSVP here](#).

ASPIRE Teacher — C. Paul Barnhart Elementary School, 10-month position. Master's degree in appropriate field or Advanced Professional Certificate re-

quired. Minimum of five years of teaching experience at the elementary level, preferably at the primary level. Apply by Oct. 31.

Secretary To the Principal — Margaret J. Thornton Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Minimum of two years of experience in book-keeping or office management required. Apply by Nov. 1.

Technology Facilitator — Eva Turner Elementary School, 10-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Associate's degree (60 college credit hours) or pass the ParaPro assessment. Apply by Nov. 1.

Pupil Personnel Worker — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 11-month position. Master's degree required. Apply by Nov. 4.

Physical Education Teacher — Phoenix International School of the Arts (PISOTA), 10-month position. Bachelor's degree or higher and meets certification requirements as es-

established by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Apply by Nov. 6.

Special Education Teacher — PISOTA, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree or higher and meets certification requirements as established by MSDE. Apply by Nov. 6.

Third-Grade Teacher — Arthur Middleton Elementary School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree or higher and meets certification requirements as established by MSDE. Position open until filled.

Youth Engagement Advocate — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 10.5-month position. High school diploma or equivalent required with a bachelor's degree preferred. Previous experience working with kindergarten-12th grade students required. Position open until filled.

Extra Pay Position Assistant Boys Basketball Coach — St. Charles High School.