



# School News



## Board approves Smallwood renaming

The Board of Education of Charles County at its Nov. 12, 2024, meeting approved to move forward with the [renaming of General Smallwood Middle School](#). The renaming was first suggested in February 2024 by community members concerned with the school bearing the name of General William Smallwood, governor of Maryland from 1785 to 1788 who enslaved 56 people.

Under [Board Policy 7230](#) the Board may initiate or consider requests to rename an existing school facility at its discretion.

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) is seeking representatives to serve on a School Renaming Committee for General Smallwood Middle School. The system is also collecting name submissions via an online form. To learn more about the committee and how to submit potential names, [click here](#).

## Board meeting Dec. 10

The Board of Education will meet 1 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 10, at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building in La Plata. Public forum is at 6 p.m. To view the agenda, [click here](#).

## Winter Break

CCPS schools will be closed for winter break from Monday, Dec. 23, to Wednesday, Jan. 1. CCPS offices will be closed Dec. 23 through Dec. 25, and Jan. 1. (Note: The printed CCPS Parent Handbook/Calendar has CCPS offices open on Dec. 23.)



## LPHS places first in 'It's Academic'

For the second year in a row, the 'It's Academic' team of La Plata High School, top photo, took first place in the Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) contest. Above from left are La Plata students Christopher Burtch, a junior and team alternate, and seniors Sarah Dang, Anne Vazhappilly and Isaiah DeLeonard, team captain. The team from Maurice J. McDonough High School, right, placed second. Team members include Cynclair



Wilson, left, a junior and team alternate, junior William Benjamin, senior and team captain Julie Perriello and Cori Avent, a junior. La Plata's team is coached by social studies teacher Matthew Panzarella, while McDonough's team is coached by school librarian Joanna Hobbs and Mary Dempsey, science teacher. To read more, [click here](#).

## Smalls to serve as Board member at-large

Letonya Smalls, Ed.D., is joining the Board of Education of Charles County this month as the new at-large member elect. Under state law, her term officially begins the third Monday in December, Dec. 16. She will officially be sworn in at the Board's Jan. 14 meeting.

Smalls will serve in the at-large member seat through 2028. The next election for the other Board seats – two per Charles County Commissioner district – is November 2026. Board Chairperson Yonelle Moore Lee, Esq., said she looks forward to welcoming and working with Smalls on the Board.

"On behalf of the Board of Education of Charles County, I congratulate Dr. Smalls on her election and welcome her to the Board. We look forward to working with her to collectively ensure that our Charles County Public Schools scholars are receiving the best education possible in our 38 schools and seven educational centers,"



Letonya Smalls, Ed.D.

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 Notebook

## On the cover

Pictured on the front cover are Maria Farnham, kindergarten teacher, Mary H. Matula Elementary School; Erin Rhoades, science teacher, Milton M. Somers Middle School; and Brian Chase, building service manager, Gale-Bailey Elementary School. Farnham, Rhoades and Chase were among outstanding employees honored by the board at its Nov. 12 meeting. To read more, [click here](#).

## Blueprint plan accepted

Plans submitted by Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) staff for implementation of the [Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#) were recently approved by the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB), a group formed by the state legislature to oversee education reform plans for Maryland school systems.

“The submission of the system’s Blueprint plan is a culmination of work between various departments and agencies,” Chris Miller, coordinator of district innovation for CCPS, said. “Reform work requires the collaboration of many people.”

In November, CCPS was among the 15 local education agencies (LEA) with plans approved. Other plans approved by the AIB included those submitted by public school systems in Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Kent, Queen Anne’s, Somerset, Washington, Wicomico and Worcester counties. Approval of the submissions allows the AIB to release fiscal year 2025 Blueprint funds to the LEAs who have cleared the process.

The Blueprint tackles five policy areas — early childhood education, high quality and diverse teachers and leaders, college and career readiness, providing more resources to ensure all students are successful, and governance and accountability.

To read more, [click here](#).

## CCPS shows improvement on MSDE report card

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on Dec. 3 released state, school system and school-level results for the 2024 Maryland School Report Card. The report card includes data from the 2023-2024 school year about school accountability measures including academic growth, student performance, school quality and climate, and student attendance.

Data released for Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) shows improvement for the school system, with seven schools earning four stars, 27 schools earning three stars and five schools receiving two stars. No CCPS school earned a one-star rating.

Five schools moved up one star rating from last year, with 31 maintaining the same star rating from the 2023 Maryland School Report Card. For this reporting cycle, CCPS only had one school drop a rating, in contrast to the drop of 12 schools on the 2023 Maryland School Report Card. A breakdown of star ratings across Maryland and school systems is posted on the MSDE Report Card website.

Superintendent of Schools Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., said while the data shows improvement and gains in some areas, the school system remains focused on increasing academic achievement and continuing to expand courses and programs for students.

“The improvements are a result of the hard work our teachers and staff put in each day to ensure students are learning and excelling. We continue to see increases in our attendance rates as well, which means more students are consistently coming to school each day ready to learn and thrive. As outlined in the school system strategic plan, our focus this year remains on student learning and achievement, increasing access and opportunities, and focusing on school culture and climate,” Navarro said.

The Report Card includes a star rating for schools featuring a scale of one star to five stars. Star ratings are based on multiple indicators and schools earn between one and five stars based on the percentage of points earned across indicators.

Other gains for CCPS include improvement at the elementary, middle and high school levels in school quality and student success. This data point measures student attendance, student survey results and access to a well-rounded curriculum. Read more at [www.ccboe.com](http://www.ccboe.com).

## Smalls

Moore Lee said. “During her campaign, Dr. Smalls highlighted the need to increase support and compensation for our educators. We will collaborate with her to continue supporting our teachers, administrators and support staff. They are the heart and soul of our school system and make success for our students possible.”

Board member Michael K. Lukas currently serves in the at-large seat after winning the 2022 election. Due to changes in Charles County Commissioner voting districts in 2022, an at-large position was open for election for an initial two-year term. Lukas has served on the Board of Education since 2010. He has held positions as chairperson and vice chairperson and is heavily involved in both Board of Education subcommittees and at the state level with the Maryland Association of Boards of Education. His last meeting as a Board member is Tuesday, Dec. 10.

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“Mr. Lukas has been an instrumental part of the Board of Education for the past 14 years. Serving on the Board is a labor of love which involves sacrificing time with our own families to be of service to our community,” Moore Lee said. “The Board thanks him for his leadership, commitment and service to CCPS.”

Smalls is the founder and CEO of Little Dreamers Early Learning Program/Family Childcare in Waldorf. She has more than 30 years of experience working in education. Smalls completed her doctorate in Educational Leadership at Northcentral University in Arizona.

She has an advanced certificate in curriculum and instruction, a master’s degree in elementary education, a bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies and an associate degree in early childhood education.

# MAESP honors Gale-Bailey principal as connected leader

Principal of Gale-Bailey Elementary School Tangie Scales, Ed.D., was recently named a Connected School Leader by the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) for encouraging her staff to grow professionally and personally, while building and strengthening relationships with students, their families and the community.

MAESP honors principals who find ways to help others develop professional skills while providing time and guidance when they are called. Connected leaders foster a culture of open communications and collaboration which in turn can boost confidence among staff, according to a statement provided by MAESP.

“She builds connections with students, staff and our community,” Megan Parsons, the school’s assistant principal, said. “She shows every day that she is committed to our students and watching them grow.”

Sonia Matthew, Ed.D., an assistant principal at Mary B. Neal Elementary School, nominated Scales for the award. “When I heard about the Connected Leader Award, I immediately thought about Dr. Scales,” she said. “She leads from the heart and believes in connecting with students, staff and families to foster strong and meaningful relationships.”

Matthew has known Scales for 16 years, meeting when they both were teachers in Prince George’s County. In 2012, they worked together after being appointed master teachers by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). They’ve continued their friendship and professional relationship while serving on the Educational Equity Community Task Force through the CCPS Department of Community Engagement and Equity. “Dr. Scales is a servant and transformational leader,” Matthew said. “[She is] deeply invested in equity work.”

Scales grew up in Cleveland, naming her father as her No. 1 role model. When he encouraged her to volunteer at her son’s school, she gave it a try. She soon found she loved working with young children. “I got to work with small children and see the light bulbs go off,” she said, referring to a student’s understanding of a concept or lesson. “I think I’ve always been a teacher.” She remembered her third-grade teacher asking her to help other students when her work was completed. “I think I’ve been teaching all along,” she said.



**Tangie Scales, Ed.D., right, greets students as they arrive to Gale-Bailey Elementary School. Scales was recently honored with a Connected School Leaders Award from the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals. She has been principal at Gale-Bailey since 2019.**

“It’s been my only career.”

Scales earned her Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education and a master’s degree in educational leadership from Cleveland State University, and recently earned a doctorate in education leadership and policy from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Her first teaching job was in Ohio as a fifth-grade teacher for three years before teaching math to seventh and eighth graders. But her first job as a teenager was working in a grocery store, where she met her future husband, a fellow employee. He climbed the ranks of the store and was a manager when the chain started closing locations in Ohio. Now parents — they have three sons — the couple started to look around to see where they could move for more opportunities. Maryland won out and Scales took a teaching job with Prince George’s County Public Schools where she stayed for five years.

She came to CCPS as a math resource teacher at Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School. Scales went into administration as an assistant principal. She served as an AP at Milton M. Somers Middle School, Henry E. Lackey High School and John Hanson Middle School. She was appointed as principal at Gale-Bailey in 2019, which she calls the “best school in Charles County.” She hopes the school’s staff members feel the same way.

“She creates a collaborative environment among her staff at the school building,” Parsons said. “By facilitating regular leadership meetings and by having an open-door policy, our building thrives on a culture of open collaboration.”

Scales meets with a different instructional leadership team each week to go over what’s happening in the areas of reading, math, gifted and data collecting. She meets with grade-level staff to review lesson plans and tries to greet each staff members personally every morning, popping her head into classrooms and walking through the halls to connect with employees before students show up. Scales and Parsons have a standing weekly meeting on top of their daily morning check ins. “She strives to be open and honest while building trust with the staff members,” Parsons said.

Scales tries to greet students as they arrive in the morning. Fist bumps, waves and the occasional hug accompanied by encouraging words are given as the students stream by. “It’s a great way to connect with the students and make sure they’re OK,” Scales said. The daily greeting helps Scales and her staff get an idea of how students are doing. “Sometimes they come in sad and might have to see the counselors, others share good news,” she said. “I try to stay connected that way.”

To read more, visit [www.ccboe.com](http://www.ccboe.com).

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## Mt. Hope ES holds annual community event

Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School held its [35th Senior Citizen Thanksgiving Community Dinner](#) Friday, Nov. 22. The event — shelved twice in recent years due to COVID restrictions — brings together senior citizens in the community and beyond to meet, eat and get treated to a student performance.

The annual dinner was started by the late Elvira Barnes, a Mt. Hope teacher who later became a school counselor. She held a small Thanksgiving meal in her classroom for her students and their parents that grew into a community-wide event.



**Fifth-grade students perform 'The Turkeys go on Strike' during the Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School event.**

## Model UN clubs attend event

**Model UN clubs from North Point, pictured at top, and St. Charles high schools, above, recently attended the Model United Nations Training Day at Towson University to prepare for a spring conference. Social studies teachers Hayley Ressler and Jonathan Perry sponsor the St. Charles team, while Liam McCammon, a social studies teacher, is the North Point club's sponsor.**

## 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**

**Building Service Manager** — Milton M. Somers Middle School, 12-month employee. High School diploma or GED is required. One to five years of supervisory experience in the building service or a related field required. Apply by Dec. 10.

**Executive Assistant to the Board** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month employee. Associate's degree or equivalent required; or a combination of education and experience. Bachelor's degree preferred. Apply by Dec. 10.

**Community School Coordinator** — Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School, 12-month employee. Master's degree required in social work, counseling, pupil personnel, psychology/sociology, administration and supervision, or a related human services field. Minimum of three years of experience working in an educational setting. Apply by Dec. 11.

**Building Service Manager** — Mary B. Neal Elementary School,

12-month employee. High school diploma or GED is required. One to five years of supervisory experience in the building service or a related field. Apply by Dec. 12.

**Human Resources Assistant** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required with an associate's degree in human resources, business or a related field preferred. Apply by Dec. 18.

**Secretary** — T.C. Martin Elementary School, 11-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by Dec. 17.

**Social Studies Teacher** — General Smallwood Middle School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree or higher and meets certification requirements as established by the MSDE. Apply by Dec. 17.

**Assistant Principal Pool** — View the application process at [www.ccboe.com/careers](http://www.ccboe.com/careers). Apply by Jan. 19.

**Principal Pool** — View the application process at [www.ccboe.com/careers](http://www.ccboe.com/careers). Apply by Jan. 19.

**Career Coach** — Piccowaxen Middle School, 10-month employee. Minimum of two years of college with at least 60 college credits. Bachelor's degree and experience in youth development preferred. Position open until filled.