



# School News

## Oracle training set

Performance evaluations for non-certificated staff, UB scale employees, and administrative and supervisory personnel must be completed in Oracle this year. To prepare, Oracle Performance Management Training for staff to learn self-evaluation training will be 10-11 a.m., Jan. 21 and 24. Employees are encouraged to participate in the training to familiarize themselves with the electronic evaluation process and learn how to use Oracle to complete evaluations. The training will cover goal setting, contributing reviewer feedback and the evaluation timeline. To register for a session, [click here](#).

## School closures

Charles County public schools and offices are closed Monday, Jan. 20, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. Schools will be closed for students only on Monday, Jan. 27, for semester break.

## Work session Jan. 27

The Board of Education will hold a work session 4 p.m., Monday, Jan. 27, at St. Charles High School. The meeting is taking place at the school to accommodate students, staff and their families who will be recognized for state championship wins.

## On the cover

The Board of Education honored CCPS staff members at its December meeting. Among those recognized were Scott Farren, physical education teacher, J.C. Parks Elementary School, left, and Hannah Sendrick, special education teacher, Malcolm Elementary School. To read more, [click here](#).



## Kindness matters

William A. Diggs Elementary School Principal Ben Harrington recently snapped a photo of kindergarten students Ariana Nembo, left, and Aarion Marcus. The friends — students in Emma Tomalewski's class — were walking in the hallway holding hands as a show of support.

## CCPS teachers earn, renew national certification

Several Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) teachers recently earned National Board Certification through the [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards \(NBPTS\)](#). The designation is an indicator of effective and accomplished teaching. This recent cohort of CCPS board-certified teachers is the largest group to achieve the designation in recent years.

National Board Certified teacher candidates must complete a review of their skills and work that includes a portfolio, student work samples, videos and a thorough analysis of their classroom teaching and student learning. Teachers also complete a series of written exercises designed to examine the depth of their subject-matter knowledge and understanding of how to teach the material to students.

National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) are viewed as experts in their field and are sought out for leadership positions within their respective schools. They also earn an additional annual salary stipend to reflect the certification. In a national survey conducted by the NBPTS, more than 96% of respondents reported that National Board Certification was among the top three most impactful professional development programs for teachers to advance their learning and practice.

The following CCPS teachers achieved National Board Certification in December 2024. Teachers are listed by certification area, position and school/work location.



- **Erin Amore**, Generalist/Early Childhood, second-grade teacher, Dr. James Craik Elementary School.
- **Kristina Blakeslee**, Art/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, art teacher, Maurice J. McDonough High School.
- **Stefanie Buzby**, English as a New Language/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher, St. Charles High School.
- **Rachel Clark**, Science/Adolescence and Young Adulthood, science teacher, La Plata High School.
- **Michael Colatruglio**, Social Studies-History/Adolescence and Young Adulthood, social studies teacher, St. Charles.

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## Last day of school date change

For the 2024-2025 school year, Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) identified in its calendar four possible inclement weather make-up dates in June 2025. As of Jan. 15, the school system has used three inclement weather school closure days.

The last day of school for students for the 2024-25 school year now moves to Friday, June 13. The last day for teachers moves to Monday, June 16.

CCPS still has one identified inclement weather make-up date in June 2025 for students: Monday, June 16. Charles County could still encounter inclement weather this winter and into the spring months.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), as well as state law, requires students to attend school for 180 days. Friday, June 13, is day 180 for students.

The early dismissal schedule identified in the calendar now shifts as follows.

- **Wednesday, June 11**, two-hour early dismissal for students.
- **Thursday, June 12**, two-hour early dismissal for students.
- **Friday, June 13**, two-hour early dismissal, last day of school for students.
- **June 6, 9 and 10** will now be full days of school for students.

Please make a note of the changes to print copies of the 2024-2025 Parent Handbook/Calendar received during the first week of school.

The online CCPS calendar at [www.ccboe.com](http://www.ccboe.com) has been updated to reflect these changes. MSDE has also extended some winter Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) windows for school systems due to statewide school closures.

CCPS has requested a waiver to MSDE of one inclement weather snow date, since Gov. Wes Moore declared Monday, Jan. 6, as a state of emergency. This would again change the last day of school for students and teachers; however, the waiver could be denied, or a response delayed. MSDE requires school systems to demonstrate use of its identified inclement weather make-up days when considering waiver requests.

Any additional calendar changes will be shared with parents, staff, teachers and the community on the CCPS website at [www.ccboe.com](http://www.ccboe.com).

## In Memoriam Cornelia "Connie" Barnas

Connie Barnas, school nurse at Dr. Samuel A. Mudd Elementary School, passed away Jan. 1, 2025, following a two-year battle with cancer.

Born Cornelia Cieslik on Aug. 30, 1962, Barnas spent more than a decade as Dr. Mudd's school nurse. Barnas's family moved to Charles County in 1972. She was a member of the first graduating class of Maurice J. McDonough High School in 1980.

Barnas earned a Bachelor of Science in nursing from Salisbury State College — now Salisbury University — and started her career as a nurse in a hospital.

She spent 25 years as a nurse in an obstetrics and gynecology private practice before transitioning to school nursing.

She was the school nurse at Dr. Mudd for 12 years where she tended to students and staff in need of medical assistance.

Dr. Mudd's assistant principal Shellia Soderstrom knew Barnas for a decade and considered her more like a sister than a friend. "[She was] one of the most compassionate and caring humans you could ever have in your life," Soderstrom said. "Nurse Connie was the glue at Dr. Mudd because of her positive outlook, friendly demeanor and love for Dr. Mudd staff, students and families."

Parents sending their children to Dr. Mudd knew they would be cared for by Barnas.

"She cared for every student with a level of dedication that went far beyond what her role required," Natasha Smith, mother of two Dr. Mudd students, said.

When one of Smith's children had to stay in the hospital, Barnas checked in regularly with the family. "She became a pillar of emotional support and comfort," Smith said. "Her warmth and grace touched countless lives, including mine, and I will always be grateful for the light she brought into this world."

Nikki Cottingham, the mother of Dr. Mudd students, said she would get almost



**Cornelia  
"Connie"  
Barnas**

daily calls from Barnas. "My son Ricardo had an amazing bond with her. He loved her dearly and would fake illnesses just to see her," Cottingham said. "We used to laugh because I swore he had the biggest crush on her. That was the telling sign that her spirit was pure and the love she gave the kids was real. The kids were drawn to her."

Barnas built strong friendships with staff members of

Dr. Mudd. "I could write an entire book describing how beautiful she was," Renee Hamilton-Robinson, food and nutrition manager at Dr. Mudd, said. "Connie was vigilant. Every child, any medical health issue — she was on top of it. No student was overlooked."

Teri Williams worked with Barnas at Dr. Mudd as a fellow school nurse. "[She was] absolutely the most selfless, kind person around," Williams said, adding that some students visiting the nurse's office needed a little attention, but not always for a medical issue. They just wanted to see Barnas.

"She had a smile that would light up a room and a hug that healed," Williams said.

The mother of two, Barnas was active in her children's lives as they were growing up. She was a Girl Scout troop leader, field trip chaperone and sewed all their Halloween costumes. Born in Germany, Barnas enjoyed traveling back there to visit relatives and the Alps.

Barnas is survived by her husband of 39 years, Robert, who she met in high school; daughter, Ashley and her husband, Steve; son, Michael and his wife, Lauren; two grandchildren with one on the way; her mother, Anneliese Cieslik; her loyal shih tzu, Merlin and Paprika; and several family members and friends. Services were held earlier this week. Memorial contributions may be made to [St. Jude's Research Hospital](http://St.Jude'sResearchHospital.org). To read a complete obituary for Barnas, [click here](#).

- **Linden Coscia**, Social Studies-History/Early Adolescence, resource teacher, Benjamin Stoddert Middle School.
- **Maggie Fitzgerald**, World Languages/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, world language teacher, Piccowaxen Middle School.
- **Sherrie Gibney**, Science/Early Adolescence, science teacher, Piccowaxen.
- **Jennifer Goddard**, English Language Arts/Early Adolescence and Young Adulthood, English teacher, McDonough.
- **Melissa Hatch**, Social Studies-History/Adolescence and Young Adulthood, social studies teacher, Thomas Stone High School.
- **Samantha Hayden**, Career and Technical Education/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, family and consumer science teacher, St. Charles.
- **Morgan Houston**, Generalist/Early Childhood, first-grade teacher, Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School.
- **Kailey Howard**, Exceptional Needs Specialist/Early Childhood through Young Adulthood, coordinator of special education, Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building.
- **Sara Keener**, English Language Arts/Early Adolescence, English/language arts teacher, Piccowaxen.
- **Charles McCoy**, Career and Technical Education/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, technology education teacher, Stoddert.
- **Jessica McCoy**, English Language Arts/Early Adolescence, academic mentor, Stoddert.
- **Holly Michael**, English as a New Language/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, ESOL teacher, John Hanson Middle School.
- **Chelsey Short**, Generalist/Early Childhood, third-grade teacher, William B. Wade Elementary School.
- **Alicia Stahl**, Career and Technical Education/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, business education teacher, Westlake High School.
- **Amber Sullivan**, Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood, reading interventionist, Piccowaxen.
- **Caitlin Timko**, Mathematics/Early Adolescence, mathematics teacher, Piccowaxen.
- **Angelisha Wells**, English Language Arts/Adolescence, English teacher, Stone.
- **Nikia Williams**, Career and Technical Education/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, business education teacher, Westlake High School.
- **Eric Wittenbach**, Physical Education/Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, physical education teacher, Milton M. Somers Middle School.

Several CCPS teachers and administrators also hold current National Board Certification.

- **Tammy Barnes**, specialist in research and assessment, Starkey.
- **Laura Buzzell**, content specialist for high school mathematics, Starkey.

- **Casey Cleary**, mathematics teacher, Stoddert.
- **Christina Cockerham**, special education teacher, Stone.
- **A'leese Dickerson**, English teacher, North Point High School.
- **Robin Droter**, second-grade teacher, Mary B. Neal Elementary School.
- **Amanda Gilbert**, fourth-grade teacher, Craik.
- **Matthew Golonka**, content specialist in physical education, Starkey.
- **Juliana Herscher**, fifth-grade teacher, T.C. Martin Elementary School.
- **Lynn Hopkins**, English/language arts teacher, Piccowaxen.
- **Matthew Howard**, social studies teacher, St. Charles.
- **Kathryn Jenkins**, mathematics teacher, La Plata.
- **Marcie Jett**, special education teacher, Piccowaxen.
- **Aparna Joshi**, social studies teacher, St. Charles.
- **Michele King**, instructional specialist in ESOL, Starkey.
- **Gary Lesko**, principal, Somers.
- **Kelly Lundeen**, third-grade teacher, Craik.
- **Sonia Matthew, Ed.D.**, assistant principal, Neal.
- **Daniel Meltsner**, computer teacher, Hanson.
- **Pamela Mengel**, third-grade teacher, Craik.
- **Kristen Modes**, content specialist for gifted education, Starkey.
- **Wendie Newcamp**, English/language arts teacher, Theodore G. Davis Middle School.
- **Elaine Potter**, mathematics teacher, Mattawoman Middle School.
- **Jessica Pratta**, social studies teacher, North Point.
- **Tiffany Rybarczyk**, prekindergarten teacher, Early Learning Center, La Plata.
- **Teonna Scott**, reading interventionist, Hanson.
- **Michael Serpone**, social studies teacher, North Point.
- **Paige Serpone**, mathematics teacher, North Point.
- **Brooke Shnipes**, English teacher, La Plata.
- **Cary Smith**, English teacher, North Point.
- **Mary Smith**, prekindergarten teacher, Indian Head Elementary School.
- **Beth Sorsby**, coordinator of elementary education, Starkey.
- **Monica Strobel**, language arts teacher, Somers.
- **Jessica Tompkins**, social studies teacher, Matthew Henson Middle School.
- **Melissa Veneracion**, high school resource teacher, Stone.
- **Sheila White**, second-grade teacher, Dr. Thomas L. Higdon Elementary School.
- **Melinda Wright**, second-grade teacher, Mt. Hope/Nanjemoy Elementary School.

National Board Certification is valid for five years after which a teacher may choose to remain nationally certified through the Maintenance of Certification process in five-year intervals. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future encourages teachers to earn and retain a [NBCT designation](#) with a salary increase and more opportunities for advancements while having a direct impact on students.



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## Board of Education Members

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# Members reelect Moore Lee, Kreamer to Board leadership

The Board of Education of Charles County re-elected Yonelle Moore Lee, Esq., as its chairperson and Nicole M. Kreamer as its vice chairperson at the start of its Jan. 14 meeting.

The Board votes annually in January to elect a chairperson and vice chairperson. The chairperson and vice chairperson serve a one-year term. Both Chairperson Moore Lee and Vice Chairperson Kreamer were the only members nominated for their respective roles and received a unanimous vote from fellow Board members to continue serving in their roles as chairperson and vice chairperson.

Moore Lee, who has described her leadership style as "collaborative," thanked her colleagues for believing in her and working together as a team. "It means a lot to me," she said. "Not just to serve on the Board but serve as chair. Nothing happens without all of us coming together and being in agreement. I'm proud of what we've accomplished."

Following her nomination, Kreamer echoed Moore Lee's sentiments and said she was prepared to continue the work of the Board. "It's been quite a journey over the last year," she said. "I see Board leadership more about service than leadership." Kreamer also extended an offer to continue to work with fellow Board members to provide quality education to Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) students.

Moore Lee is an attorney, mediator and small business owner. She received a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of D.C., and a juris doctor from Pepperdine University School of Law. Moore Lee is the Region IV Treasurer and ADR Section Secretary of the National Bar Association. She was also appointed to the American Bar Association's Fund for Justice and Education, and is a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

Moore Lee is a graduate of both the Leadership Southern Maryland Executive Program and the Dorothy Irene Height Global Leadership Academy. She is married to her husband, Jonathan, and is the mother of three children — including two current CCPS students and a 2023 graduate.

Kreamer is a senior-level healthcare professional and has worked part-time as a substitute teacher for CCPS. A graduate of the University of Maryland, University College with a dual master's in healthcare administration and an MBA, she is active in several community organizations including the Charles County Branch of the NAACP, and is a mentor with Stella's Girls Inc., an alumni mentor for University of Maryland Global Campus, a certified facilitator for the Gals Lead mentorship program and a certified Blueprint Advocate with Strong Schools Maryland.

She is also a member of the board of directors for the American Association of Healthcare Administrative Management (AAHAM) since 2020 and currently serves as the chairwoman of its charitable and community contributions committee.

Kreamer has three children, including two CCPS graduates and a current student.

Moore Lee and Kreamer were first sworn into office as Board members in December 2022. Before she took the role of Board chair in 2024, Moore Lee served as the vice chairperson in 2023.

## Personnel

### Virtual Teacher Informational Sessions

Human Resources staff hold virtual sessions for staff interested in becoming teachers. Sessions are scheduled throughout the school year. [Click here to register.](#)

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

**Administrative Intern** — Early Learning Center, Waldorf, 11-month position. Bachelor's degree and Standard Professional Certificate issued by MSDE required, along with three years of successful

teaching experience. Apply by Jan. 20.  
**Secretary** — Thomas Stone High School, 11-month position. A high school diploma is required. Apply by Jan. 23.

**Electronics Technician III** — Annex I, 12-month position. Minimum of two years of experience in installation and maintenance of life safety systems, public address systems and intrusion systems preferred along with a degree from an accredited technical school/college. Apply by Jan. 24.

**English/Language Arts Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month employee. Bachelor's degree or higher and MSDE certification. Apply by Jan. 31.

**Instrumental Music Teacher** — Middle and high school, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree or higher and MSDE certification. Apply by Jan. 31.

### Upcoming job fairs

**A food service job fair** is 9 a.m. to noon, Jan. 28, at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 5890 Radio Station Road, La Plata. [Click here to register.](#)

**A teacher and counselor fair** is 9 a.m. to noon, April 5, at La Plata High School, 6035 Radio Station Road, La Plata. [Click here to register.](#)