

# School News



## Strategic plan meetings

Superintendent of Schools Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., will host meetings about the school system's strategic plan for 2025-2029. A virtual meeting for students is **March 17**. A meeting for Spanish-speaking families only will be 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, **March 18**, at Arthur Middleton Elementary School. Superintendent Navarro will present this meeting in Spanish. A community meeting will be 6 p.m., Wednesday, **March 26**, in the auditorium of Thomas Stone High School.

For more information on the strategic plan process, visit the [CCPS website](#).

To provide feedback on the strategic plan, [click here](#) or scan the QR code at the right.



## HITS Expo

The HITS Expo is 1-5 p.m., Saturday, **March 22**, at St. Charles High School. The History, Industry, Technology and Science Expo features science and history fair projects and interactive displays and activities. An awards ceremony for projects starts at 5:30 p.m. St. Charles is at 5305 Piney Church Road, Waldorf.

## Work session March 24

The Board of Education will hold a work session 4:30 p.m., Monday, **March 24**, at the Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 5980 Radio Station Road, La Plata.

## Early dismissal

A two-hour early dismissal for students is Wednesday, **April 2**.



## Under a spell

The gymnasium at Benjamin Stoddert Middle School was buzzing March 5 as middle school students took part in the 47th annual Charles County Spelling Bee. Above, Gavin Booker, an eighth-grade student at Matthew Henson Middle School, left, James Harper, a sixth grader at Milton M. Somers Middle School, and Savannah McLaughlin, a Mat-tawoman Middle School eighth-grade student, finished in the Top 5 at the competition. Harper was the runner up behind Aruuke Rayeva, inset, a seventh-grade student at Archbishop Neale School. Rayeva will represent Charles County in the Scripps National Spelling Bee later this year. Read more about the Bee on Page 2.

## State superintendent visits Middleton Elementary

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) welcomed Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Superintendent of Schools Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., Feb. 13, for a visit at Arthur Middleton Elementary School.

Wright visited to get a closer look into the county's [first dual language, two-way immersion program](#).

The program at the school is the first to be launched in CCPS for students in prekindergarten and kindergarten.

Board of Education of Charles County members, Superintendent of Schools Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., and CCPS staff also visited the dual immersion program classrooms during a guided tour by Middleton Principal Nicole Hawkins and students at the school.

"I enjoyed seeing the little ones. It puts a smile on my face," Wright said. "It was interesting to see what they are learning as they are learning both English and Spanish. Starting them off young is powerful because it only grows as they grow."

The goal of the program is for students to become bilingual and biliterate rather than just fluent in English. "I'm so excited that the board invited Dr. Wright to visit Middleton," Navarro said. "She is a lifelong public education advocate; she always remembers that the work starts first in the classrooms, and I hope that she takes these classroom visits with her as she makes decisions for the entire state."

Read more about Wright's visit at [www.cbboe.com](http://www.cbboe.com).



### On the cover

The Board of Education of Charles County honored outstanding employees at its March 11 meeting. Pictured on the cover from left are Tony Chase, building service manager, Robert D. Stethem Educational Center; Melissa Revell, CISCO programming teacher, North Point High School; and Melanie Sokol, language arts teacher, Phoenix International School of the Arts. To read more about staff members who were honored at the March meeting, [click here.](#)

### Summer learning

The Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Office of Teaching and Learning is preparing the 2025 Virtual Summer Workshop Series. This program offers teachers and school leaders the opportunity to engage in virtual professional learning sessions designed to enhance their skills and support student success.

The inaugural event is designed on a modest scale to ensure a focused foundation. The 2025 Virtual Summer Workshop Series will begin on Monday, July 21, and will offer sessions through Friday, July 25. More information can be found on the Staff page of [www.ccboe.com](http://www.ccboe.com) or by [clicking here.](#)

### NBCT info sessions set

CCPS is holding information sessions for teachers interested in the National Board Certified Teacher process. Sessions are held 4:30-5:30 p.m., with teachers selecting a virtual meeting on March 18, April 8 or 22. To register, [click here.](#) Contact Corrin Deavers at [cdeavers@ccboe.com](mailto:cdeavers@ccboe.com) or Ext. 5587 with questions.

# CCPS middle school students compete in Bee

The gym of Benjamin Stoddert Middle School was a hive of activity Wednesday evening when the top middle school spellers in the county stepped up to the mic for the 47th annual Charles County Spelling Bee.

Seven Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) middle schools were represented by a team of three students — save one that boosted two members.

Students from county private schools and a home school co-op also participated.

In the end, the Final 5 spellers were Milton M. Somers Middle School sixth grader James Harper, seventh grade students Aruuke Rayeva of Archbishop Neale School (ANS), and Eli Woodall of Grace Lutheran School, and eighth graders Gavin Booker of Matthew Henson Middle School and Savannah McLaughlin of Mattawoman Middle School.

The final rounds were between Harper and Rayeva.

They volleyed back and forth, but when Rayeva correctly spelled “farkleberry,” and Harper stumbled on “jettison,” in the ninth round, she only had to correctly spell one word to be crowned the 2025 champ.

Rayeva will represent Charles County in the 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

The competition takes place in late May near Washington, D.C.

At the local level, ANS, coached by Laura Schreyer, took home a plaque for earning the most points in the March 5 competition with Rayeva receiving a \$1,000 check from Bee sponsor Educational Systems Federal Credit Union and a trophy for being the top speller.

The remaining finalists — Booker, Harper, McLaughlin and Woodall — each received a trophy.

The Charles County Spelling Bee is sponsored by CCPS, the credit union and SMECO.

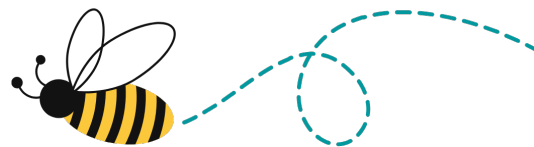
Students compete in school-level spelling bees to advance to the county contest.

The team members and coaches for each school that competed are listed below.

- **Theodore G. Davis Middle School** — Xavier Obannon, Eliakim Quirante and David Regennitter. Coached by Delishia Deavis.
- **John Hanson Middle School** — Delante Nash Jr., and Jayde-Marie Tucker. Lindiwe McFarlane was unable to attend. Coached by Kimberle Johnson.



Olivia Hays, left, a seventh grader at Piccowaxen Middle School, correctly spells “dillydally.” Xavier Obannon, right, a Theodore G. Davis Middle School eighth-grade student, smiles after correctly spelling a word during a round of the 47th annual Charles County Spelling Bee.



- **Matthew Henson Middle School** — Booker, Andrew Larkin and Malik Ndiaye. Coached by Debby Holder.
- **Mattawoman Middle School** — Alivia Lanier, McLaughlin and Demencio Calhoun. Coached by Chris Rubenstahl.
- **Piccowaxen Middle School** — Jayson Armstrong, Roman Brueckner and Olivia Hays. Coached by Amber Sullivan.
- **General Smallwood Middle School** — Montez Fiore, Eva Gonzalez and Emily McLeary. Coached by Shannon Elder.
- **Benjamin Stoddert Middle School** — Maximus Bailey, Saniyah Latimer and Ryker Widener. Coached by Taylor Covington.
- **ANS** — Rayeva, Eben Schlereth and Brandon Williams. Coached by Schreyer.
- **Grace Lutheran School** — Oliver Brown, Blair Mausen and Woodall. Coached by Curt Springer.
- **Neighborhood Creative Arts Center Homeschool Co-op** — Haley Adams, Basilio Benitez and Eze Edmund Onodugo. Coached by Georgia Bonney.
- **St. Peter's School** — Jeneva Anderson, Jacob Dewey and Isabella Pinola. Coached by Tina Wagner.
- **Southern Maryland Christian Academy** — Brennan Klemme, Angelo Milazzo and Savannah Slusher. Coached by Lanaya Ramsey.

# CCPS musicians stay in tune

■ High school students share their love of experience and love of music with young musicians

In a house where the mother is an elementary school music teacher and the daughter, now 17, has been playing the violin since she was 3 years old, the importance of music can often come up as a topic of conversation.

Elizabeth Tober, a junior at La Plata High School, and her mom, Catrina, a music teacher at Billingsley, T.C. Martin, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd and Mary B. Neal elementary schools, were discussing how disappointing it is to find out younger students lost interest in or quit playing an instrument once they reached middle or high school.

“[My mom] was saying ‘It’s such a shame that a lot of my kids haven’t continued with music,’” Tober recalled. “I said, ‘Maybe we should show them what music looks like in high school.’”

From that, the Music Mentors program was born.

Tober talked with La Plata’s principal, Douglass Dolan, to get his thoughts on the program. If Tober could get some friends from band and orchestra interested, could they visit feeder elementary and middle schools to show younger music students the benefits of continuing to play an instrument? Dolan gave the thumbs up and Tober headed to La Plata’s summer band camp to drum up support.

La Plata music teacher Wes Harler agreed to be the club’s sponsor and Tober started pitching the Music Mentors idea to other students. “We have really great musicians at this school, so I put up a sign and a bunch of people gave me their email addresses,” she said.

Elias Alicea Jr., a senior at La Plata, was on board. “I thought it was a cool idea,” Ali-



**Elizabeth Tober, left, has experience playing many different instruments. While her main instrument is violin, during a recent Music Mentors session, she joined the flute section next to Jaida Armstrong, a seventh-grader at Piccowaxen Middle School.**

cea, a percussionist, said. “A lot of students at La Plata will do anything when it comes to music.”

Tober, who La Plata’s liaison to the Board of Education of Charles County, connected with Andrew Blumhardt, a Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) fine and performing arts content specialist, who helped coordinate the visits and transportation.

The plan was to visit the feeder schools — Dr. Thomas L. Higdon, Mary H. Matula and Walter J. Mitchell elementary schools and Piccowaxen and Milton M. Somers middle schools — four times a year or once a quarter, but snow put a crimp in that this year, and the trips were cut down to three visits. There was also the dynamic schedules of high school stu-

dents to contend with, Tober said. “It is hard to get high school kids to commit but so many are willing to sacrifice to be part of the program,” she said.

Recently, the group stopped by Higdon, Piccowaxen and Somers. At Higdon, where fifth graders are just starting to play instruments, the La Plata students showed off their skills and led small group workshops, while at the middle school level they sat among the students and joined in practice. Alex High, a Piccowaxen seventh grader, said he enjoys when the La Plata students visit. “You hear how the music ‘should’ sound,” he said.

To read more about the Music Mentors program, [click here](#).



## Read Across Charles County

Colleen Morris, treasurer with the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA), visited Karen Walker’s third-grade classroom March 7 at Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer Elementary School for Read Across Charles County. Morris read “What’s Your Name,” written and illustrated by Bethanie Deeney Murguia. Later in the day, Walker’s students would go on to read the book and others that were donated by MSEA to kindergarten students. Morris was invited to the school by members of the Education Association of Charles County (EACC).

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## Ryon receives book donation

Monise A. Brown, in her role as a member of the Southern Maryland Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, recently donated books to J.P. Ryon Elementary School. Members of the chapter participated in a community service project during which they collected new and gently used books for children and teens. Ryon's school librarian, Jenell Steis, said the children's books will be among those that will be offered to guest readers visiting the school later this month for the Read Across Charles County event. The books better suited for advanced readers will be available to parents and families through the school's Community School program. Pictured from left are Steis, Wanda Proctor, Ryon's Community School coordinator, and Brown, a judge for the Charles County Circuit Court.

## ComPsych provides assistance to CCPS employees

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) works with ComPsych to provide an [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#).

The benefit is no cost to employees and their dependents.

The EAP can assist with many issues, including stress, depression, anxiety, workplace difficulties, substance abuse, marital problems, family or parenting conflicts, grief, violence and unhealthy lifestyles.

### Upcoming job fairs/info sessions

- **A virtual information session for federal employees** interested in exploring a new career is Thursday, noon to 1 p.m., Thursday, March 27. [Click here to register](#). Session is open to federal employees only.
- **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](#).
- **Virtual sessions for those interested in becoming a teacher** will be held 3 to 4 p.m., May 13, and noon to 1 p.m., June 25. [Click here to register](#).

Learn more about CCPS careers at [www.ccboe.com/careers](https://www.ccboe.com/careers)

### Personnel

Apply for positions online at <https://www.ccboe.com/careers>. All teaching positions require a bachelor's degree and MSDE certification requirements.

#### Job Openings

**Building Service Manager** — La Plata High School, 12-month position. High school diploma and one-to-five years of experience in the field. Apply by March 18.

**Infant & Toddler Physical Therapist** — F.B. Gwynn Educational Center, 12-month employee. A bachelor's degree required, with a master's preferred. Apply by March 18.

**Attendance Secretary** — T.C. Martin Elementary School, 11-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by March 25.

**Secretary** — Margaret J. Thornton Ele-

mentary School, 11-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by March 25.

**Human Resources Generalist** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month position. A bachelor's degree in human resources, business management or related field required. Apply by March 26.

**Teaching positions open for the 2025-2026 school year. Other teaching openings are available at <https://www.ccboe.com/careers>.**

**Art Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month position.

**Physical Education Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month position.

**Early Childhood Teacher** — Location to be determined, 10-month position.