



# School News



## Work session April 28

The Board of Education will hold a work session Monday, April 28, at St. Charles High School. The change of venue is to accommodate the number of students and staff who will be honored for placing at state-level competitions earlier this year. St. Charles is at 5305 Piney Church Road, Waldorf. [To view an agenda, head to www.ccboe.com.](http://www.ccboe.com)

## Early dismissals

A two-hour early dismissal for students is Wednesday, April 30. Another two-hour dismissal for students will be Wednesday, May 7.

## School Lunch Hero Day

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) is celebrating Child Nutrition Employee Appreciation Week April 28-May 3. [School Lunch Hero Day](#) is Friday, May 2. The day recognizes and honors Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) staff members.

## Spring plays

Maurice J. McDonough High School will stage “**Mean Girls: High School Version,**” this weekend. Shows are 7 p.m., April 25 and 26, and 2 p.m., April 26 and 27. The show is not recommended for viewers younger than 13. Tickets are available at <https://mhsdrama303.booktix.com/>.

“**Matilda: The Musical,**” will be staged at Henry E. Lackey High School at 6:30 p.m. May 1 through 3.

La Plata High School performs “**Mamma Mia,**” 6:30 p.m., May 1 through 3, with a 2:30 p.m. matinee May 4.



Above, J.P. Ryon Elementary School students navigate a rock wall as part of an obstacle course. Left, Mary Winkler, a family and consumer science teacher at La Plata High School, visits a fourth-grade classroom to talk about “hidden” sugars and other ingredients in some food and beverages.

## To your health! Ryon holds Fourth-Grade Health Expo

The amount of sugar in a soda could not be that much, Denae Lancaster’s fourth graders at J.P. Ryon Elementary School reasoned.

Sure, it was bubbly, syrupy goodness, but it was only 20 ounces.

When Mary Winkler, a nutrition teacher at La Plata High School who is also a clinical exercise physiologist, asked students to estimate how many teaspoons of sugar select bottled and canned beverages contained — sweetened iced tea, soda, sports and energy drinks — they shrugged with a few calling out “Five, maybe,” and “No, I think it’s like seven.”

Students, equipped with teaspoons and clear plastic cups, doled out the equivalent of granulated sugar that was found in their select beverages.

The cherry Pepsi topped the charts of the offered drinks with 70 grams — or just shy of 17 teaspoons of sugar — hidden under the cap.

“Nope,” fourth grader Alaijah Parker said. “I’m never drinking soda again. I’m only drink-

ing water from now on.”

At Ryon, fourth graders participated in a 4th Grade Health Expo, an activity capping off the Food for Thought reading module.

During a module, students read different texts related to the theme aiming to answer an Essential Question, which is an overarching question students ponder during a module fostering critical thinking and engagement.

The essential question for the Food for Thought module was “What can we do to make more healthful food choices?”

“We wanted students to have a memorable experience and make valuable connections to the reading content,” Keah Mason, a core teacher at Ryon, said about the origins of the Expo. “The Health Expo engaged all students and provided them with a two-hour extension to our reading curriculum.”

To read more about the expo and how it came together, [click here.](#)



Notebook

**On the cover**

Staff members honored by the Board of Education at its April 8 meeting included Sandra Hoover, secretary to the principal, William A. Diggs Elementary School; Tiana Dukes, special education teacher, General Smallwood Middle School; and Dianne Claggett, instructional assistant, Thomas Stone High School. To read about their accomplishments, [click here](#).

**Teacher Appreciation Week**

CCPS is celebrating National Teacher Appreciation Week May 5 through 9. The week is dedicated to honoring and recognizing educators who play a pivotal role in the lives of children. Again this year, students, parents and colleagues can drop a digital note to teachers who are making a difference in the lives of children. [Visit www.cdboe.com](http://www.cdboe.com) to [send an e-card from May 4-10](#).

**Town hall set for May 6**

The Board of Education will host a virtual town hall to discuss school safety 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 6. The Board and CCPS staff will discuss the current safety measures, responses to incidents and enhancements moving forward. [The meeting link is here](#).

**Learn more about CCRSPA**

The Charles County Retired School Personnel Association (CCRSPA) fosters social opportunities for members, keeps members informed about legislative news from Annapolis that may impact the group, maintains a close relationship with the Charles County Board of Education and continues to be of service to the community — especially to students enrolled in CCPS. To learn more about the CCRSPA or join the group, [click here](#).



The National School Board Association recently honored the Board of Education of Charles County with a Magna Award in recognition of expanding mental health services to students.

## NSBA honors Board for expanding mental health services for students

The Board of Education of Charles County recently received the Magna Award through the National School Board Association (NSBA) on behalf of Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) for the expansion of mental health services in the school system. For 30 years NSBA has recognized exemplary school-system programs and this year CCPS was one of three school systems, nationwide, to be named a grand prize winner. According to the NSBA website, the 2025 awards focus on innovation in education and districts that solved an educational challenge with creativity and out-of-the-box strategies.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, CCPS saw a significant need for mental health support for students and felt the extension of support was a school-level responsibility.

“Many issues that impact students being ready and focused on learning originate from challenges outside of school,” Superintendent of Schools Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., said. “Addressing these issues, by providing additional mental health supports, help students participate effectively in the classroom and foster a more supportive and productive learning environment.”

The school system continued to explore possible solutions to the complex problem and came up with four main areas of focus: increasing access to services, embracing remote mental health options, identifying and capturing funding for services, and early intervention screenings.

Through grant funding, CCPS expanded mental health support to students by partnering

with a nationwide organization, Hazel Health. With the partnership students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade have access to in-school telemental health services. Students in Grades 3-12 can also meet with a therapist virtually at home.

From November 2023 to November 2024, 2,071 total remote sessions have been provided along with 906 students referred.

“We have seen approximately a 30% reduction from pre-assessment to post-assessment in areas of depression and anxiety of students who are receiving the services,” Mike Blanchard, Psy.D., CCPS director of student services, said.

CCPS has nearly 190 school counselors, psychologists, pupil personnel workers (PPW) and outside providers, providing mental health support to students. With funding through the Community Health Resources Commission (CHRC), CCPS has implemented programs such as the Signs of Suicide (SOS) offered at high schools, Move This World, a social-emotional learning platform for elementary schools and BARK for Schools, an early alert system for student concerns.

“I was so thrilled,” Board Chairperson Yonelle Moore Lee, Esq., said about receiving the Magna Award. “Especially because of why we won the award, for mental health. I was so incredibly proud of the work that our staff has done, Dr. Navarro has done. Recognizing that mental health is just as important as physical health.” The Board accepted the award earlier this month at the NSBA conference in Atlanta.

Learn more about Hazel Health and how it is helping children by [watching a feature on the CCPS YouTube channel](#).



# Adam of J.P. Ryon Elementary is named CCPS Principal of the Year

Nicholas Adam, principal of J.P. Ryon Elementary School, was named the 2025 Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) Principal of the Year.

Before coming to Ryon in 2023, Adam spent five years as principal of Walter J. Mitchell Elementary School after serving as an assistant principal at William A. Diggs and Malcolm elementary schools.

“He is not only a principal, but an inspiring leader who embodies the values of empathy, innovation and resilience,” Nicholas Gardiner, a fifth-grade teacher at T.C. Martin Elementary School, said. Gardiner worked at Mitchell when Adam was principal at the school and knows he carried exceptional leadership skills to Ryon.

“He ensures that students feel heard, supported and motivated to reach their full potential,” Gardiner said. “Mr. Adam is an exceptional mentor and role model for the teaching staff.”

Adam began his career in education as a special education teacher at Eva Turner Elementary School following his graduation from Keuka College in Keuka Park, N.Y. He was at Turner for seven years before taking on the job of assistant principal at Malcolm where he stayed for two years before moving to the AP role at Diggs for another couple of years. In January 2018, Adam was named principal of Mitchell. He moved to Ryon at the start of the 2023-2024 school year.

He described his vision for Ryon as both aspirational and realistic. Adam is dedicated to integrating technology and new learning meth-



Nicholas Adam

odologies into curriculum which in turn prepares students for the demands of a rapidly changing world. What students see is a role model who cares about them, who is helping cultivate a school environment where they are safe to learn and grow.

Azariah Jackson, a fifth-grade student at Ryon, said Adam is the best principal he’s had, and he likes that they can joke around. “But when it is time to be serious, [he’ll] tell me the honest truth,” Jackson said. “[He] tells me what’s right and wrong.”

At Ryon, Adam seems to be everywhere at once. “I have been surprised by how fast he is,” fifth grader Keyla Mendez Hernandez said. “Even though [he] had something very important to do, [he] was still going places and helping as fast as [he] could. I have realized that Mr. Adam always comes to check on everyone’s classroom to see if we are doing to the right thing.”

Adam champions professional learning for staff to pursue innovative methods and share their knowledge with their peers. “Mr. Adam leads courageous conversations that promote, encourage and develop the best parts of each individual staff member,” Kayla B. Hawkins, assistant principal at Ryon, said.

He builds partnerships with community organizations to collaborate and bring resources and opportunities to students which reinforces the idea that education extends beyond the classroom. “His dedication to the community and commitment to the school climate and culture is remarkable to experience,” Hawkins said.

To read more about Adam’s accomplishments, visit [www.ccboc.com](http://www.ccboc.com).

# Gale-Bailey teacher named finalist for WaPo Teacher of the Year Award

Georgia Green, a special education teacher at Gale-Bailey Elementary School, was named the 2025 Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) nominee for *The Washington Post’s* Teacher of the Year Award program.

One of five children born to educators, Green was inspired to go into the field of special education by her brothers — twins who are intellectually disabled. She came to CCPS in 2018 after teaching in her native Jamaica and Washington, D.C. Green describes herself as a “lifelong learner” who is passionate about co-teaching, differentiation and teaching the whole child.

“She approaches each student with patience, empathy and a positive attitude, viewing obstacles as opportunities to support her students further,” Andrew Houghton, a special education teacher at Gale-Bailey, said.

## Helping students succeed

Gale-Bailey’s principal, Tangie Scales, Ed.D., described Green as a “warm demander,”— a teacher who expects a lot from her students,



Georgia Green

encourages them and helps them reach their goals. Convinced that all students can learn, Green helps them reach their potential by creating a structured classroom. “She has high expectations and knows how to give each of her case load students the equity and individualized support they need to succeed,” Scales said.

Green recalled a time when she introduced a lesson to her students that called for them to read the historical fiction novel, “Esperanza Rising,” by Pam Munoz Ryan. At first, the students grumbled about having to read the book. But once Green and her co-teachers took turns reading passages aloud and playing snippets of the audiobook, the students became invested in the story.

“Students who struggled with independent reading liked the audio. Students who spoke Spanish as their first language helped with the pronunciation and explanation of Spanish vocabulary in the text; they proudly explained customs mentioned,” Green said. She explained other aspects of the novel such as what a passport was by showing her Jamaican passport. “I shared some of my experiences, allowing students to see similarities and differences to Esperanza’s family’s. This helped them make a connection with what they read.”

To read more about Green and her career, [click here](#).

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## Miles of thanks for bus drivers, attendants

Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) celebrated Bus Drivers and Attendants Appreciation Day on April 23. Drivers and attendants stopped by Laurel Springs Park in La Plata to pick up lunch — a cookout was manned by staff of the transportation department and other offices — and socialize before hitting the road for afternoon dismissals. Two bus drivers and an attendant were honored with a plaque and custom letterman jacket as Bus Drivers and Bus Attendant of the Year for their service. Top left, Karen Cooksey, a driver with Compton Bus Services, was named a 2024-2025 CCPS Bus Driver of the Year. She is pictured with Jason Tonkins, CCPS director of transportation. Top right, DeJuan Freeman Jr., left, pictured with Superintendent Maria V. Navarro, Ed.D., was named the 2024-2025 Bus Attendant of the Year. Shawnee Clark, a CCPS bus driver, was also named a 2024-2025 Bus Driver of the Year. To learn more about becoming a CCPS bus driver or attendant, [visit the CCPS transportation website at www.ccboe.com](http://www.ccboe.com).

## Personnel

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

### Information sessions

- **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.](#)

### Job openings

**Data Technician** — La Plata High School, 12-month employee. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by April 26.

**Guidance Secretary** — McDonough, 11-month position. High school diploma required. Apply by April 28.

**Media Specialist** — Mattawoman Middle School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree and MSDE certification. Apply by April 28.

**Retirement Benefits Manager** — Jesse L. Starkey Administration Building, 12-month. Bachelor's degree required preferably in human resources, business or related field. With at least six years of experience in the field. Apply by April 28.

**Reading Resource Teacher** — Matthew Henson Middle School, 11-month position. Master's degree required. Apply by May 1.

**College and Career Advisor** — Maurice J. McDonough High School, 10-month position. Bachelor's degree or relevant experience, along with the ability to earn appropriate certification within two years. Apply by May 1.

**Building Service Assistant Manager** — Margaret J. Thornton Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma and one year of experience required. Apply by May 6.

**Building Service Worker** — Margaret J. Thornton Elementary School, 12-month position. High school diploma or GED required. Apply by May 6.

**Bilingual School Counselor** — Arthur Middleton Elementary School, 10-month employee. Master's degree and eligibility for licensure determined by MSDE. Position open until filled.

**Bilingual First-Grade Teacher** — Arthur Middleton Elementary School, 10-month employee. Bachelor's degree required. Position open until filled.