

MARYLAND Education Bulletin

News from the Maryland State Department of Education

May 31, 2012

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**A few words
from Interim
State
Superintendent
of Schools
Bernard J.
Sadusky**

The federal government this week approved Maryland's application for flexibility from many provisions of No Child Left Behind. This is good news for our schools and school systems.

Under the ruling, we will be able to focus on rewarding those schools making improvement and distribute resources to help all schools move forward. Our flexibility plan runs parallel with our ongoing Race to the Top project, and its efforts to strengthen educator evaluation and incorporation of student growth measures into that process.

Let me make one point very clear: we are not turning our back on accountability, and we will continue to work to make certain all schools and students improve. At the same time, we are pleased the U.S. Department of Education will allow us to funnel resources into those classrooms with the most vexing issues.

Under the flexibility plan, Maryland will reset the annual progress goals for the next six years on a trajectory toward 2017, at which time each individual school is expected to reduce its percentage of non-proficient students by half – for each subgroup as well as for all students. The flexibility proposal also will give us some room regarding how we recognize those schools that are making progress, and how we can focus attention on those schools in need of intervention.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known in its most recent iteration as No Child Left Behind, has had as its goal that every student reach proficiency levels in reading and

AMBAREEN JAFRI NAMED 2012 PIMA STATEWIDE WINNER

Ambareen Jafri of Anne Arundel County this month was named statewide winner of the fifth annual Maryland Parent Involvement Matters Awards program.



Ambareen Jafri accepts the 2012 Maryland Parent Involvement Matters Award.

Ms. Jafri, a tireless volunteer at Nantucket Elementary School, has served as an Urdu interpreter and has successfully used her communication skills with parents, teachers, and students. She promoted multicultural education and

programming for all students, helping launch the reading incentive "Pennies for Peace" program. The program is an international service-learning opportunity designed to inspire students to promote peace and education throughout the world. Ms. Jafri also built cultural understanding within the school staff, hosting sessions which provided teachers with the opportunity to learn more about the Muslim religion, Pakistani culture, traditions, and language.

Ms. Jafri was selected from five finalists also announced at the award ceremony on May 18. The finalists were narrowed down from a list of 24 semifinalists announced in March. In addition to Ms. Jafri, the finalists were:

- Anna Letaw—Linton Springs Elementary School, Carroll County
- Tawnya McKee—Washington Grove Elementary, Montgomery County

mathematics by the 2013-14 school year. While Maryland schools have made steady progress since the law was enacted in 2002, the rigid parameters of the law have been recognized by President Obama, Education Secretary Duncan, and other policymakers. We appreciate their interest in improving the program, as efforts in Congress have stalled.

Our new plan covered the principles required by the federal government under the program, including the development of college- and career-ready expectations for all students; state-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support for schools; and support for effective instruction and leadership. These are goals Maryland educators have embraced, and they will help us move forward our number one-ranked school system.

MSDE will continue to release information on what the flexibility plan means for Maryland schools. In the meantime, Maryland's entire application can be found [here](#).

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Towson University last week was named the 30th university to be selected as a site for the widely acclaimed UTeach program, designed to help build the next generation of mathematics and science educators.

The UTeach Institute recommended Towson, a selection confirmed by the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI). MSDE awarded Towson \$1.33 million in federal Race to the Top funds, while NMSI, through the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, added \$680,000 in funding to boost the initiative. The University System of Maryland has pledged another \$300,000 annually to support the effort aimed at significantly boosting the number of educators in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Strengthening STEM education is a high priority for Maryland, and it is woven throughout our Race to the Top program plans. Getting UTeach off the ground in our State will really supercharge math and science education throughout our schools.

Fewer than 10 percent of completers in Maryland's 23 teacher education programs are in the STEM areas of teaching. Towson, the State's largest producer of teachers, expects to graduate up to 250 new teachers in the STEM disciplines within four years.

- Shana Taylor—Park Hall Elementary School, St. Mary's County
- Lauralyn Geiser—Fruitland Primary School, Wicomico County

"Ambareen Jafri's work with students and teachers provide an outstanding example of the exhaustive assistance that parents and other volunteers provide in Maryland public schools every day," Dr. Sadusky said. "Strong parental involvement lifts up our classrooms and strengthens the work of our teachers and administrators. Maryland public schools would not lead the nation were it not for the efforts of parents and guardians to help our schools succeed."

The Target Corporation this year joined Maryland's Parent Involvement Matters Award as Platinum Sponsor of the event.

"Target is committed to building stronger communities, and there is no better place to fuel that effort than at our neighborhood schools," said Chip Farris, District Team Leader for Target. "Parents contribute to our schools on a daily basis, and we are proud to work with the Maryland State Department of Education to recognize them for their involvement, inspiration, and enthusiasm."

In addition to the finalist and statewide winner announcements, Barbara Fisher of Prince George's County, was presented with the JoAnne L. Carter Memorial Award in recognition of her involvement with Carrollton Elementary School. This award is given annually in honor of JoAnne L. Carter, Deputy State Superintendent for the Maryland State Department of Education, who lost her battle with cancer in 2009. A parent herself, Ms. Carter was a staunch advocate for parental involvement in education. The award is given annually to a parent that exemplifies all that she held dear.

The Parent Involvement Matters Award is the nation's first and only statewide award program of its kind. The Maryland State Department of Education's program recognizes parents and guardians for their exceptional support of public education. Parents were nominated for demonstrating significant, positive impact in their communities across five areas of parental involvement: Communication, Volunteering, Learning, Decision Making and Community Collaboration.

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Calendar

June 13 – Last day of school in Baltimore City (the last scheduled school day for any Maryland system for the 2011-12 year)

June 26 – State Board Meeting, Baltimore



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

Parent Involvement Matters Award Gala

May 18, 2012

From across the state, parents, teachers, schools and families gather for the Parent Involvement Matters Awards. This fifth annual celebration of parents' involvement in their children's education is one-of-a-kind in the country. Every public school jurisdiction in the state celebrates its candidate, with the grand award winner this year from Anne Arundel County.

In the News

Maryland Receives "No Child" Waiver

Washington Post

Towson Receives \$2 Million to Boost STEM Education

Baltimore Sun

Arundel Parent Receives Honors

Baltimore Sun

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STATE BOARD REVIEWS STUDENT DISCIPLINE COMMENTS

A report by the Maryland State Board of Education on student discipline elicited scores of comments over the past few months, and board members last week began sifting through them as they continued their efforts to reduce the amount of class time lost to suspension and expulsions.

The State Board in February released, "A Safe School, Successful Students, and a Fair and Equitable Disciplinary Process Go Hand in Hand: A Study of School Discipline Practices and Proposed Regulatory Changes." The report chronicled the educational time lost to student discipline procedures and suggested that regulations might be necessary to reduce suspensions and expulsions, and Board members asked for feedback.

State Board President James DeGraffenreidt said that the Board gained important information in the comments. He emphasized that the Board had no intention of "ignoring the needs of good students in favor of bad or disruptive students." Rather, DeGraffenreidt said, the Board was intent on understanding the types of resources and supports that are necessary for educators to decrease the use of suspensions.

Donna Hill Staton, a member of the Board, agreed. "Our students come to us imperfect. They come to us needing support," she said. "They shouldn't be pushed aside. At the same time, the schools need support."

Board member Dr. Ivan Walks said that students turned away from the classroom create a bigger societal issue. "What happens if we don't figure out this problem? We have more kids going to jail," he said. "We have more adults going to jail."

State Board members plan to revisit the student discipline issue in the coming months and may propose changes in State regulation in an effort to reduce the amount of class time lost to suspensions.

The Maryland Education Bulletin is Published by:

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A Publication of the Division of Academic Policy

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