



November 7, 2013

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**A few words
from State
Superintendent
of Schools
Lillian M.
Lowery**

Tune your sets – and set your DVRs – to Maryland Public Television at 7 p.m., Thursday, November 21 for "Today's Student, Tomorrow's Workforce," an education town hall broadcast.

Leaders in Maryland's K-12 education, higher education, and business fields will take part in an insightful discussion about the how and why of education reform and what is being done to prepare students to meet the challenges of the 21st century world. I hope you can join us and share the program with your colleagues and communities.

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There are three reasons why Maryland schools are the nation's best. First, there are the students themselves, who continue to reach for higher goals. There are also the educators, personified by Baltimore County's Sean McComb, our new Teacher of the Year (see story at right).

The remaining reason is our parents. Once again, Maryland is honoring a parent or guardian who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to improve public education. Nominations are now being accepted for the seventh annual Maryland Parent Involvement Matters Award (PIMA).

The award was created by MSDE to highlight the positive impact our parents have on public schools and to encourage all parents and guardians to get involved in any way they can. Eligible nominees are parents or those legally responsible for a child in a Maryland public school. Nominees will be assessed on their impact on public education over the past 24 months in the areas of communication, volunteering,

BALTIMORE COUNTY'S McCOMB NAMED TOP MARYLAND TEACHER

Sean McComb, an English teacher at Patapsco High School & Center for the Arts in Baltimore County, last month was named the 2013-14 Maryland Teacher of the Year.



New Teacher of the Year Sean McComb receiving his award from Governor Martin O'Malley.

Governor Martin O'Malley and State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery made the announcement during a dramatic gala in a ballroom filled with educators and dignitaries. Among those in attendance were Sen. Paul Sarbanes, Rep. John

Sarbanes, Comptroller Peter Franchot, Attorney General Douglas Gansler, and State Board Vice President Mary Kay Finan.

"Maryland schools have been ranked #1 by *Education Week* magazine for five years in a row because our teachers are the nation's very best," said Governor Martin O'Malley. "Sean McComb is a shining representative of the many great educators who dedicate their lives to working with our State's students. Maryland continues to invest in public education to ensure Sean and all of our educators have the resources they need to educate Maryland's next generation of leaders. Our children are in very good hands."

Dr. Lowery said that Maryland schools receive national recognition largely on the strength of its teachers. "Sean personifies the cutting edge Maryland educator," she added. "He is an energetic instructor, making certain his students set goals,

learning, collaborating with community, and decision making.

To learn more about the program and our previous winners – and to download an application – check out <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/pima>

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Congratulations to Prince George's County Superintendent Kevin Maxwell, just named Maryland Superintendent of the Year for his work at the helm of the Anne Arundel County Public Schools.

Maryland's outstanding school superintendents are another important reason for the success of our schools. Kevin has been a tireless champion of school improvement, working to move all Anne Arundel schools forward. I'm certain he'll have a similar positive effect on the schools of his home county – Prince George's.

* * *

American Education Week is just around the corner, November 18-22. It offers a great chance to celebrate the many accomplishments of our schools.

For those readers who do not work in a public school system, I encourage you to take the time during the week and visit your child's school, your grandchild's school, or a school in your neighborhood. Many schools are offering special programs during the week, showcasing the work being done by our talented students.

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Calendar

commit to those targets, succeed, and move forward toward college or career. His passionate work reflects well on our State's education system."

McComb focuses on creating critical readers, strong writers, and judicious thinkers. As coordinator of the school's Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, he helps hone student work habits and academic skills. He also teaches the value of service, working on projects with students that help feed the hungry in the community. McComb serves as a system curriculum writer and as an adjunct teacher at Towson University. He is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, where he also received a Master's in Education degree, and is currently pursuing School Leadership certification from Goucher College.

"Our schools must provide the opportunity for any individual to become educated and economically competitive," McComb said. "My teaching is built on the belief that relationships and engagement can turn challenges into opportunity for excellence for all students. As we embrace the truth, we create citizens who can live the American dream."

Selecting McComb for the award was not easy for the judges. The other outstanding finalists were: Carol Garner, *Allegany County*; Jodie Hogan, *Anne Arundel County*; Ketia C. Stokes, *Baltimore City*; Steven Luthultz, *Cecil County*; George McGurl, *Howard County*; and Christina A. Ulrich, *Montgomery County*.

GRADUATION RATES RISE, DROPOUT RATES FALL

More Maryland students are receiving their high school diplomas, and fewer are dropping out of school prior to graduation, according to data released to the Maryland State Board of Education last week.

Maryland two years ago moved to the cohort graduation rate, which follows a set group of students from freshman year through their senior year, better tracking their progress. The four-year cohort graduation rate for the class of 2012 jumped more than 1.5 percentage points between 2010 and 2012, from 81.97 to 83.57 percent. The five-year cohort graduation rate – those students completing

November 18-22 – American Education Week

November 20-22 – Maryland Assessment Group Conference – Ocean City

December 10 – Maryland State Board of Education Meeting, Baltimore



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

News From The Board

October 30, 2013

Maryland releases HSA results. The Board discusses the Bridge Plan, and Board Briefs includes the announcement of a new Judy Center, new plans for GED testing, and Maryland's Teacher of the Year.



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

2013 - 2014 MD Teacher of The Year Video!

October 11, 2013

Maryland names Baltimore County's Sean McComb Teacher of the Year for 2013-14! The gala at Martin's West celebrates all teachers across the state, and especially the two dozen nominees from every school district. See the winning moment, and hear from the winner, Governor Martin O'Malley, Attorney General Doug Gansler, and Maryland Schools Superintendent Lillian Lowery.

In the News

Kevin Maxwell Named Maryland Superintendent of the Year

Washington Post

Harford Elementary Students Meet First Lady

Baltimore Sun

Maryland Graduation Rate Continues to Rise

Baltimore Sun

Turning Calvert County Fifth Graders into Scholars

Calvert Recorder

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their diploma in five years - improved from 84.57 to 86.32.

Four-year cohort data for the class of 2013 will be available next year, after summer data is finalized.

"Working together, Maryland has invested more in its schools, even during tough times when other states were cutting back. Those investments are paying off with better schools, better teachers, and students who are better prepared for tomorrow's challenges," said Gov. Martin O'Malley. "A quality education is a ladder of opportunity, and investing in schools is key to a strong and growing middle class."

State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery agreed, emphasizing that a high school diploma represents the first step in gaining the requisite preparation for a student's next step.

"We need our students to be prepared for a career or college, and we continue to strengthen standards to prepare them for the future," Dr. Lowery said. "We remain concerned about gaps in the graduation rate, but the trends are in the right direction. A Maryland high school diploma opens the door to a world of opportunity."

Data disaggregated by student subgroup finds success in nearly every category. Four-year cohort graduation rates for American Indian, African American, Asian, Hispanic, and White students improved between 2011 and 2012. Only the small Native Hawaiian and the two-or more race category tallied declines.

The 2012-2013 senior class was the fifth one for whom passing the High School Assessments (HSAs) in algebra/data analysis, biology, and English was a graduation requirement. An exam in government stopped being administered in 2011, but action by the General Assembly last year means that the exam returned this spring. Government returns as a graduation requirement for those students who entered ninth grade this fall.

Early data for the class of 2013 found that nearly 60,000 students completed high school - 58,776 receiving diplomas and 811 receiving special education certificates. Not a single student missed receiving a diploma solely because of failure to meet the Maryland High School Assessment requirement for graduation.

Of the students who received a diploma in the spring, nearly 90 percent met the HSA requirement through examination. Only 10 percent—5,831 students—met the requirement through the alternative Bridge Plan for Academic Validation. The Bridge Plan is the project-based alternative to the HSA exams.

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