



September 2, 2014

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

Welcome back to school, educators and students. Some of us may be more excited than others about the prospect of the new school year, but we can all agree that it is important.

I visited several schools last week, and it is inspiring to take a look at what is going on in our classrooms. We look forward to a productive – and safe – school year.

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Maryland has the nation's best teachers, so choosing the seven finalists for 2014-2015 Maryland Teacher of the Year had to be a very difficult task. But what an outstanding group of educators!

The finalists are: Kelly O'Hara, **Cecil County**; Erin Doolittle, **Frederick County**; Jody Zepp, **Howard County**; Jane Lindsay, **Montgomery County**; Anna Breland, **Somerset County**; Bridget Whited, **Talbot County**; and Courtney Leard, **Washington County**.

MARYLAND SCHOOLS OPEN FOR THE 2014-15 ACADEMIC YEAR

With the opening of the Worcester County Public Schools today, all 24 Maryland public school systems have reopened for the 2014-2015 school year.



Baltimore City Schools CEO Gregory Thornton, State Superintendent Lillian Lowery, and Governor Martin O'Malley greet students at Baltimore's Holabird Academy last week.

More than 860,000 K-12 students are filling classrooms across the State and another 250,000 children are involved in some form of pre-kindergarten, Head Start, or licensed childcare program.

"In Maryland, we've made the better choice to invest in our schools and in our children. Together, working with students, parents, teachers and school officials all over our great State, we've built one of the highest ranking public school systems in the nation," said Gov. Martin O'Malley. "As students return to campus this fall, Maryland schools stand ready to provide them

The finalists were selected by a panel of judges from key Maryland education organizations representing principals, teachers, school boards, teacher unions, parents and higher education. Finalists were measured against a rigorous set of national criteria that include teaching philosophy and results, community involvement, knowledge of general education issues, and suggestions for professional and instructional improvement.

The big announcement of the 2014-15 Maryland Teacher of the Year will take place during a gala reception and dinner at Martin's West in Baltimore on October 10. The winner will receive cash awards, technology equipment, national travel opportunities, and a new car valued at more than \$25,000, donated by the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association.

The winner will go on to compete for National Teacher of the Year. Maryland's own Sean McComb currently serves in that capacity. For more on the finalists, [click here](#).

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Somerset County Public Schools last week became the first public school system in the State to implement the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) district-wide in School Year 2014-15. I was excited to join Somerset Superintendent John Gaddis at Somerset Intermediate School in an event last week announcing this exciting program.

The CEP is a component of the 2010 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act that allows eligible schools to serve nutritious school meals, **free** of charge, to all students. Somerset County joins schools in Washington and Howard Counties, as well as the SEED School of Maryland and Cedar Ridge Children's Home in implementing CEP. The

with the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in our 21st century global economy."

Schools are beginning the second full year of implementation of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. Also, this Spring will bring the first full administration of the new PARCC state assessments, which are online tests aligned to the State standards.

"Maryland is committed to preparing world-class students with more rigorous standards, meaningful assessment and continuous support for educators," said State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery. "Our students are preparing to meet the needs of local employers and to compete in the global marketplace. They deserve an education that prepares them for college and career-training opportunities without the need for remediation."

Among the headlines for the new school year:

- **Continued Integration of College and Career-Ready Standards.** More than 4,000 educators this summer took part in the voluntary College and Career Readiness Conferences, a follow-up to the successful Educator Effectiveness Academies, which took place the previous three summers.
- **Better Assessments Aligned to Higher Standards.** New PARCC state assessments aligned to the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards have replaced the MSAs.
- **Strengthening Educator Evaluations.** All school systems are using new evaluations, and State leaders have pledged to work

leadership demonstrated by Somerset County Public Schools is a model for districts across the State. Thanks to the program, all Somerset students will have access to nutritious school meals, ensuring they are ready to learn.

For more information on CEP, contact Bruce Schenkel, Program Specialist in the Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs, at bruce.schenkel@maryland.gov or (410) 767-0225.

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Calendar

September 15-19 – Homegrown School Lunch Week

September 23 – Maryland State Board of Education meeting, Baltimore



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

Back to School!

August 19, 2014

Maryland Schools Superintendent Dr. Lillian Lowery

collaboratively to keep improving those systems.

- **Developing New Principals.** A new program was launched in Maryland to help prepare a new generation of school leaders.
- **Expanding Academic Requirements, Programs.** The Class of 2015 is the first to benefit from Maryland's environmental literacy requirement. This school year also will see major expansion in some Career and Technology Education programs, including Computer Science.
- **Boosting Early Learning.** A new grant will open up more quality PreK programs to economically disadvantaged students. In addition, a new PreK assessment will help teachers and parents better understand the learning needs of Maryland's youngest learners.
- **Helping Students with Disabilities.** School systems are required to provide more information to parents of students with disabilities.
- **Maryland Welcomes New Charter Schools.** Two new charter schools are scheduled to open this fall, bringing the total to 50.
- **Keeping Students Healthy.** Maryland's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is requiring new immunizations for children entering kindergarten and seventh grade.

Enrollment in Maryland public schools has been on a steady rise for the past five years. After reaching a

welcomes students back to school for the 2014-15 school year. She talks about College and Career Readiness Standards, PARCC, professional development and more.



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

Board News!

July 22, 2014

July's Board News features a deep discussion of school discipline as Maryland sets parameters designed to keep kids in school. Also, MSA results – and the transition to PARCC, and meet the newest member of the MSDE team. Watch the mp4 – it's big and beautiful.



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

Inside Educator Evaluations Videos

June 30, 2014

Maryland Schools Superintendent Lillian Lowery sits down for an in-depth discussion about Teacher Principal Evaluations with 2013 Cecil County Teacher of the Year Steve Luthultz.

Teacher Principal Evaluations Videos

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

In the News

Commentary: Back to School and Winning the Future

Huffington Post

Dr. Charlene Dukes Starts Third Term as Maryland State Board President

Washington Post

Editorial: Failing Grades for Bus Safety

Baltimore Sun

high point of 869,113 students in 2004, enrollment fell to 843,861 by 2009. Since then it has rebounded, reaching 866,169 students last school year – the State's highest enrollment level since its record setting year of 2004.

Maryland's student population also has experienced major changes over the past decade. Maryland has educated a majority-minority student population for several years. White students represent nearly 41 percent of the student population, followed by African American students, who make up 35 percent of the student population. Both the White and African American student populations have been in decline as a percentage of the student body in recent years.

Hispanic students represent 14 percent of the student body, while Asian students account for approximately six percent. Percentages of Hispanic and Asian students have been steadily rising. Also increasing is the percentage of students identifying themselves as two or more races.

This accounts for nearly about 4 percent of Maryland students.

Also increasing in the State's schools is the percentage of students coming from circumstances of poverty. Last year, for example, 50.4 percent of Maryland elementary students were eligible for free- or reduced-price meals, the federal proxy for poverty. Ten years earlier that tally stood at 37.1 percent – a dramatic increase over the decade.

More information on Maryland school demographics can be found on the Maryland Report Card website, www.MdReportCard.org.

Editorial: Setting Reasonable Goals for Students
WBAL-11

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September 2, 2014 Education Bulletin.

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More information on the opening of Maryland schools
can be found here:

http://marylandpublicschools.org/press/08_14_2014_a.html

NEW MPSSAA PANEL LOOKS TO IMPROVE ATHLETE SAFETY

Maryland schools have been at the forefront in the
drive to strengthen safety for student athletes, and
additional efforts are underway.

The Medical Advisory Committee for the Maryland
Public Secondary Schools Athletic Association
(MPSSAA), established in the past year, joined the
Maryland State Board of Education last week to
discuss its ongoing work to educate coaches,
parents, and students. With more than 110,000
students participating in interscholastic athletics in
the past year alone, education is an ongoing
concern.

Maryland in recent years has established new
guidelines designed to reduce brain injuries and
heat-related injuries, and has placed various
limitations on practices. One area of concern
continues to be how to best protect student athletes
from injuries caused by overuse of muscles and
joints. This is especially true for students choosing
to play a single sport year around, according to Dr.
Yvette Rooks, a sports medicine expert at the
University of Maryland Medical Center and chair of
the advisory committee.

Board member James DeGraffenreidt said the issue

goes well beyond the high school practices fields, as students are involved in club sports, AAU teams, and more. "You are asking the hard questions," he told the panel.

Board President Charlene Dukes said the work of the Medical Advisory Committee will become increasingly critical as Maryland continues to search for ways to keep children safe.

"I know this dialog is not finished," Dr. Dukes said. "We'll be inviting you back."

The Maryland Education Bulletin is Published by:

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A Publication of the Office of Communications, Partnerships, and Grants

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MSDE Videos: <http://www.MarylandPublicSchools.org/MSDE/newsroom/videos>

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