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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D. *Lillian M. Lowery*
DATE: February 25, 2014
SUBJECT: Good News – Commendations for Sean McComb, 2014 Maryland Teacher of the Year Selected as a National Finalist

PURPOSE:

The State Board will commend Sean McComb, our 2014 Maryland Teacher of the Year, who was recently selected as one of only four finalists for the title of National Teacher of the Year. Sean is an English and AVID Resource Teacher at Patapsco High School and Center for Arts in Baltimore County. Sean will be joined by his wife, his principal, and Superintendent Dr. Dallas Dance. Sean will comment on the importance of this opportunity to represent teachers across the nation and to showcase excellence in teaching and learning.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Maryland is once again proud to be in the National Teacher of the Year spotlight with our 2014 Maryland Teacher of the Year who was selected as one of only four finalists [out of over 55 nominees] for National Teacher of the Year. In the past eight years, The President of the United States honored two National Teachers from Maryland and an additional two finalists have been named. In 2006, Kimberly Oliver Burnim, then a kindergarten teacher from Montgomery County, was selected as America's National Teacher of the Year. In 2011, Michelle Shearer, an AP Chemistry teacher from Frederick County, achieved celebrity status when she was selected as the National Teacher. Last year, Rhonda Blankenship, a high school English Teacher in Cecil County was selected as one of four finalists and this year, Sean McComb has received this very high honor with hopes of being awarded National Teacher of the Year status by President Obama.

Sean has a poignant story of personal growth and the importance of teachers in helping him overcome family adversity. He now has a role in "paying it forward" and in helping so many of his students who need support and encouragement. He emphasizes the need for teachers to play a most important relationship as well as instructional role in creating critical readers, strong writers, and judicious thinkers. As coordinator of the school's AVID Program - Advancement Via Individual Determination, he helps to build student

work habits and academic skills. He also teaches the value of service and works on student projects that help feed the hungry in the community and abroad. McComb serves as a system curriculum writer and is also 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 says. “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.”

Sean will join the other 2014 National Finalists in Washington DC March 2-4, 2014 for an intensive set of interviews and presentations used to determine who will be selected as the next National Teacher of the Year. The other finalists are from Florida, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The national announcement will be made by President Obama at the White House in late April. If selected as America's national teacher spokesperson, Sean will spend this coming year presenting an education message to thousands of people across America and the world. He would deliver over 150 speeches and visit an average of three US cities per week plus engagements in China, Japan, and Singapore.

The Maryland Teacher of the Year Program is sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education with its presenting sponsors: Comcast, The Maryland Automobile Dealers Association, McDonalds Family of Maryland, and Northrop Grumman. Platinum sponsors are: Bank of America, BGE, Lockheed Martin, Maryland Public Television, NTA Life, and Whiting-Turner.

ACTION:

The State Board will commend Mr. McComb and wish him “good luck” as he moves forward in the competition.

Attachment

SEAN MCCOMB

2014 MARYLAND TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Sean McComb began his teaching career in Baltimore County Public Schools in August 2006. Determined to make a difference in the lives of at-risk students, he chose to teach at Patapsco High School and Center for the Arts, located in the working class community of Dundalk, MD. At the time, there was a sharp increase in the number of students coming from low-income home to Patapsco. The school decided to take action and tasked McComb with developing a mentor-based college-preparation program to serve the school community. Through this AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program, McComb shepherds and supports cohorts of 9th grade students through a rigorous course path focused on college-readiness, the admissions process and onto graduation. This program, in concert with a devoted faculty and administration, has helped Patapsco become recognized by two national publications as one of America's top high schools. This accomplishment is all the more remarkable as the school's FARMS population rose from 27% to 50% over the last seven years.

In his eighth year of teaching, Mr. McComb remains unflinchingly confident that all children can learn, and that ability is maximized through a relationship with a teacher who believes in, values, and expects great things from all students. His dedication and rapport with students are hallmarks of his work and the joy of teaching and learning is evident in his classroom. McComb is also dedicated to integrating technology tools to meet students where they are and to encourage their creativity in his English and AVID classes. From Twitter and blogging to student created digital magazines and mini-documentaries, McComb's students use tools that help them become more collaborative learners and critical thinkers. To meet the demands of their future, Mr. McComb knows that students must be more than knowledgeable, they must be able to apply knowledge creatively; they must be "knowledge-able." In addition to teaching, McComb now shares his expertise and supports his colleagues at Patapsco through coaching, training, and mentoring.

During his time in Baltimore County, Mr. McComb has coached indoor track and tennis, become a lead-writer for county English curricula, presented numerous professional development workshops and served as a chaperone for the immersive, two month BCPS China Cultural Exchange Program. McComb has also been an adjunct faculty member in Towson University's Department of Education since 2008.

Mr. McComb earned both his bachelor's degree in English with *summa cum laude* honors and master's degree in English Education from the University of Pittsburgh, where he received the 2005 Student Government Board's Student Leadership Award. He has also earned a certificate in School Improvement Leadership from Goucher College. Mr. McComb lives with his wife Sarah, AP Psychology and AVID teacher at Patapsco, in Joppa, MD. The couple is expecting their first child in March.

