

**CONVENTION '13**  
“PROFESSIONAL”—“ENGAGING”

**TSUNAMI OF REFORMS**  
IMPLEMENTATION: F-

**500 WORDS ON...**  
ESP TRAINING

# ACTIONLINE

The Magazine of the Maryland State Education Association   Volume 14 Issue 2 December 2013



**Student Learning Objectives**  
The promise of collaboration, reflection, and improved achievement

**SPECIAL FEATURE ▶**  
**SLOs—**

While the introduction and implementation of SLOs have been nearly as frenzied as the rest of Maryland's education reforms, they offer the promise of reflection, collaboration, and improved success for practitioners and students. Maryland's Teacher of the Year and a National Board Certified Teacher share their insights into why the SLO process is valuable one.



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Visit [marylandeducators.org](http://marylandeducators.org)  
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# ENTRIES

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More content, videos, and resources at [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital)

### WHEN TEACHERS HAVE TO

buy books and materials that are aligned with Common Core because local districts don't have the money to provide them, it's time. When too many districts entertain plans of privatizing support services as a cost-cutting measure, it's time. When educational equity and achievement gaps remain, it's time.

It's time to develop Thornton 2 and ensure that all Maryland public schools are adequately and equitably funded. The original Thornton legislation (called the Bridge to Excellence Act), which passed in 2002, has enabled Maryland to provide historic levels of aid to its public schools. Thanks to your hard work, it's fulfilled its promise. Our schools are now a national leader in so many categories—from kindergarten readiness rates to AP performance, high school graduation rates, and Education Week's coveted #1 ranking for five years in a row.

The Bridge to Excellence and original Thornton Commission, which developed the funding formulas we use today, have become a national model for public school financing. Yet Thornton is now 12 years old, and it's critical that we revisit the financing plans for our schools, especially as educators implement the resource-heavy demands of Common Core.

This year, we hope to pass legislation that would create a Thornton 2 Commission. This blue-ribbon commission would be made up of education stakeholders at the state and local level, including representatives from the General Assembly, higher education, the business community, and of course MSEA and other education advocates. The commission will be tasked with making recommendations on updating education financing formulas, ensuring adequate and equitable funding for programs and services mandated by federal and state laws and regulations, and ensuring excellence in school systems and student performance statewide. The time is right, and we need to make sure that our schools and educators like you have the necessary resources to help students succeed.

*Look for more updates on this issue in the future, and check out my digital ActionLine video with Sean Johnson, MSEA's chief lobbyist, as we share the other top priorities on MSEA's 2014 legislative agenda.*

Betty H. Weller  
MSEA President



Contact Betty at  
[bweller@mseanea.org](mailto:bweller@mseanea.org)

# IMPLEMENTATION: F-

### WHERE IS MY CURRICULUM?

In MSEA's survey, **43%** of teachers said they received their curriculum two weeks or less ahead of time, despite **96%** of them wanting to receive it more than two weeks ahead of time.

**IN MARYLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS,** everyone is feeling the pressure. Common Core Standards. New curricula. New evaluations. PARCC. It's what President Betty Weller often calls the "tsunami" of education reforms facing Maryland. From the new statewide standards that steer curriculum for every teacher and student, to job reviews delivered to principals and teachers in new evaluations, to navigating the delivery and alignment of new standardized tests, to concerned and confused parents, it's an unprecedented amount of change squeezed into an unconscionably narrow window.

"There is nothing wrong with change," Weller says. "But change without proper planning, input, and support, especially when there is so much at stake, is ill-considered at best,

and potentially destructive at worst. Unfortunately, every day it seems more and more like the latter is the case."

Despite unyielding criticism and constant suggestions for improvement from MSEA and our members, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) continues to fumble the implementation of the reforms. These fumbles are seen most disastrously as locals struggle to write and deliver new curriculum to keep up with classroom needs, and as educator workloads skyrocket to unsustainable levels in an effort to contend with all these changes at once.

As MSDE and the US Department of Education (USDE) remain fixated on the impossible timelines and ill-conceived mandates initiated by Race to the Top, educators have been forced to try to get these major changes right without the resources, professional development, or time that they need and deserve. Now, lawmakers, parents, and the public are watching as Maryland

loses its focus on what makes our schools, teachers, principals, and students the best in the nation.

No question, MSDE's implementation has been a mess thus far. So how can we right the ship? "We have a major opportunity over the next few months to craft an ESEA waiver that provides the time and support that educators desperately need," says Weller. "MSDE should listen to educators, principals, school boards, and superintendents and develop a waiver that helps us get these reforms right, rather than doubling down on an implementation process that is quickly losing credibility and sustainability."

The waiver is an extension of Maryland's current ESEA waiver, which is intended to re-

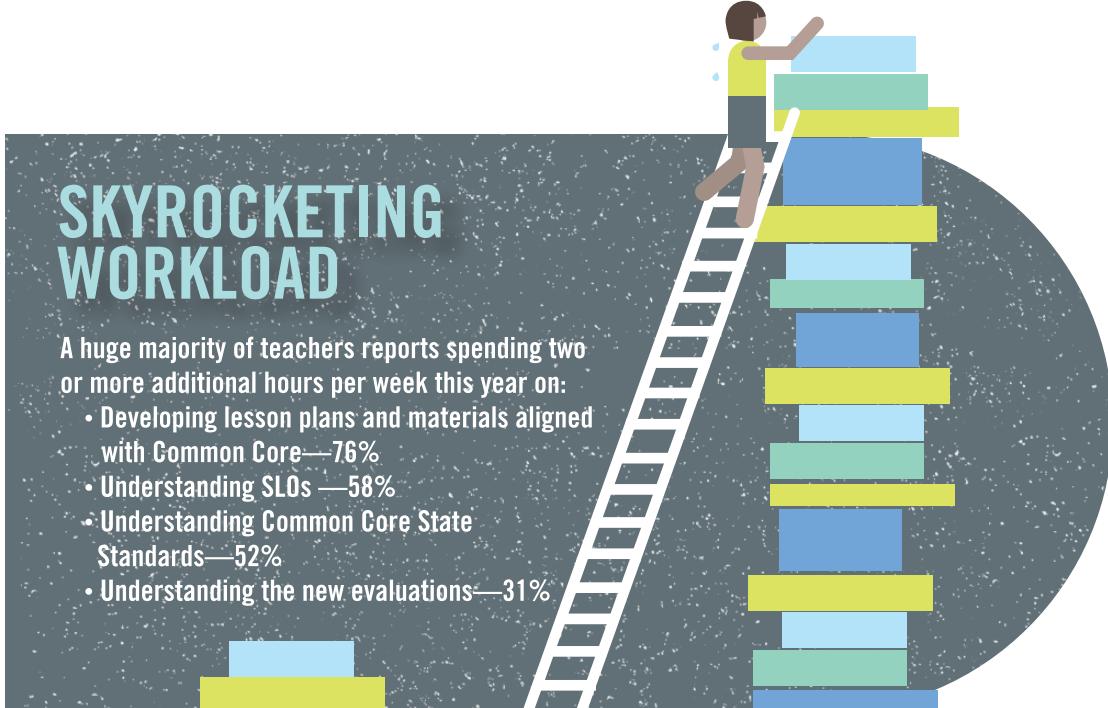
lieve the state from unrealistic No Child Left Behind school accountability measures like Adequate Yearly Progress. The waiver provides the opportunity to extend the period during which student test scores cannot count towards teacher evaluations. With experts saying that it takes at least three to six years before new assessments reflect a student's mastery of Common Core Standards—and in the absence of convincing research to show that state test scores are even a reliable indicator of a teacher's practice—this is just common sense.

Some common sense is also needed when it comes to student assessments. MSEA's survey found many counties and schools far from ready to give

### READY FOR PARCC?

MSEA's survey shows that fewer than 1 in 10 educators feel that their school has the capacity to administer PARCC next year.





## TEACHERS FEEL UNPREPARED FOR NEW COMMON CORE CURRICULUM, TESTS, SURVEY FINDS.

—THE MARYLAND REPORTER

the PARCC test. Smoke signals from across the state are rising with messages ranging from not enough bandwidth for students to take the web-based test to concern about students having adequate keyboarding and computer skills to successfully manage a high-stress timed test.

Yet instead of focusing on preparing for PARCC or giving students more time to learn the new curriculum, MSDE has not budged from its plans to force students to take the MSA this year, even though it is no longer aligned to content.

Editorials, news stories, and a petition begun by a Montgomery County teacher have made the case for the wasted time, expense, and uselessness of MSA testing. For now, MSDE insists that the MSA will be given this year, in the face of increasingly strong public opposition.

It's time for MSDE to move from its our-way-or-the-highway

position and accept that implementation is going to require flexibility and responsiveness to the obstacles faced by educators. This is true not only for Common Core implementation, but also for the implementation of new teacher evaluations.

MSDE has been adamant about including state test scores in teacher evaluations, despite common sense and despite local autonomy protected by state law to develop and mutually agree upon their own systems.

This autonomy and potential diversity of evaluation systems would only help us learn what works. Straitjacketing all locals into a single approach doesn't make sense and doesn't comport with Maryland law.

Educators have generally embraced the move to the Common Core Standards and support locally developed evaluation models with responsive, targeted professional develop-

ment. But so far, MSDE's implementation of these changes is getting an F-.

"This needs to be an evolutionary process—one that includes time for reflection and change—and one that responds to the needs of educators," Weller says. "Right now, we need time, resources, and professional development to get this right and move forward in a positive direction."

As the General Assembly prepares to meet in Annapolis, elected officials will debate how to help educators with the implementation process. MSEA and our members will be relied upon to provide guidance on how to salvage the implementation process and help educators

and students get Common Core and these major changes right.

**See the results of MSEA's November survey of members on Common Core, evaluations, and workload at [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital).**

**86% of MSEA members surveyed believe that significant challenges remain in their building to understand and implement Common Core.**

**82% believe that significant challenges remain to understand and implement the new evaluation systems.**

# 20 Questions with Candidates Anthony Brown and Ken Ulman

**First job? Best teacher? Walter White or Francis Underwood?** Discover for yourself the real Anthony Brown and Ken Ulman. MSEA's endorsed candidates for governor and lieutenant governor joined ActionLine for a recent Q & A. We feel like we know them a lot better now.



PHOTO: SHAUNNA JACKSON © 2013

**Name:** Anthony G. Brown

**Current job:** Lt. Governor of Maryland

**Spouse:** Karmen Walker Brown

**Children:** Rebecca (18), Jonathan (13), and Anthony Jr. (13)

**Current residence:** Bowie

1. What's the last book you read? *Young Thurgood* by Larry Gibson
2. What's your favorite date night? *Dinner and a movie with my wife*
3. Who was your best teacher? Kenneth Galbraith, AP Chemistry
4. What song best describes your work ethic? "Shining Star," by Earth, Wind & Fire
5. What's your favorite movie? Among my top five—*Saving Private Ryan*
6. What was your first job? Hot walker\*, Aqueduct Racetrack in Queens, New York
7. What trait do you most admire in your parents? My dad's service and my mother's determination
8. Geek, jock, drama club, or ... ? Student government president, senior year
9. Best book/movie series—Harry Potter, Hunger Games, or Game of Thrones? Harry Potter
10. What's the best advice you've given your children? *The world doesn't need perfection, just your full potential.*
11. Dinner at your house! What would you make? Ackee and saltfish, Jamaica's national dish.
12. What's your pet peeve? Being late
13. What's your favorite exercise—running, spinning, lifting, or yoga? Jogging
14. Favorite suspense/thriller/mystery author—Tom Clancy, Stephen
15. Who did you pass notes to in class? My twin brother Andrew.
16. Best TV villain—Walter White, Francis Underwood, or Cyrus Beene? *Star Trek's Khan*
17. Condiment—Hellmann's or Miracle Whip? Mustard
18. Who's your hero? Muhammad Ali, Sports Illustrated's Sportsman of the Century—"I run on the road, long before I dance under the lights."
19. Favorite kid food—fish sticks or chicken nuggets? Fish sticks
20. What's the first election you voted in? The 1980 presidential election—we lost

\*A groom who walks horses after a workout.

## CALENDAR

### Welcome back, legislators!

We'll have a lot to say to our senators and delegates in the next few months, but on January 8, it'll be a cheerful welcome back at MSEA headquarters in Annapolis. The Legislator Open House puts pols, MSEA leaders, and members together for some friendly chat before the hard work begins on January 9.

### Come aboard!

MSEA's retirees have got it right. They're cruising the eastern Caribbean islands early this spring and using their NEA and MSEA discounts to save money on an eight-day goodbye winter doldrums vacay! Call 800/819-3902, extension 82880, soon for the best deal. Don't forget to mention "MSEA-Retired."



### National Board Workshops January 11

At MSEA's top-rated NBPTS certification series, current NBC candidates examine and fine-tune their portfolios while veteran NBCTs focus on their renewal certification. Are you heading toward NBC? Learn more and register at [marylandeducators.org/NationalBoard](http://marylandeducators.org/NationalBoard)

- 1. What's the last book you read?** *Chesapeake*, by James Michener
- 2. What's your favorite date night?** *Pazo*, or any restaurant in Harbor East
- 3. Who was your best teacher?** Joe Mitchell, my high school social studies teacher at Centennial High
- 4. What song best describes your work ethic?** "Running Down a Dream," by Tom Petty
- 5. What's your favorite movie?** *The Shawshank Redemption*
- 6. What was your first job?** Basketball referee
- 7. What trait do you most admire in your parents?** Their high expectations of themselves and their unconditional love and support.
- 8. Geek, jock, drama club, or ... ?** I've always been a big sports fan and loved playing at Cole Field House for the Panhellenic Basketball Tournament Championship!
- 9. Best book/movie series—Harry Potter, Hunger Games, or Game of Thrones? Hunger Games**
- 10. What's the best advice you've given your children?** Treat people the way you want to be treated.
- 11. Dinner at your house! What would you make? Spinach salad with my homemade dressing (it's a secret!) with pasta and shrimp**
- 12. What's your pet peeve? Ties**
- 13. What's your favorite exercise—running, spinning, lifting, or yoga? Jogging or a pick-up game of basketball**
- 14. Favorite suspense/thriller/mystery author—Tom Clancy, Stephen King, or John Grisham? John Grisham**
- 15. Who did you pass notes to in class? My wife, Jaki, when we attended University of Maryland College Park together**
- 16. Best TV villain—Walter White, Francis Underwood, or Cyrus Beene? Francis Underwood (Big supporter of MD film!)**
- 17. Condiment—Hellman's or Miracle Whip? Honey mustard**
- 18. Who's your hero? My mom**
- 19. Favorite kid food—fish sticks or chicken nuggets? Chicken nuggets**
- 20. What's the first election you voted in? 1992 for Bill Clinton—four years later, I worked for his re-election campaign**



PHOTO: STEPHEN CHERY PHOTOGRAPHY © 2013

**Name:** Ken Ulman

**Current job:** Howard County Executive

**Spouse:** Jacqueline Harf Ulman

**Children:** Maddie (12) and Lily (8)

**Current residence:** Columbia

More content, videos, and resources at [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital)



### Celebrating MLK, Jr.

Meet MSEAs 2014 honorees and celebrate Dr. King at MSEAs annual breakfast and awards program on January 18 at Martin's Crossroads in Greenbelt. Make plans now and you'll be joining MSEAs Minority Affairs Committee and Board of Directors at the breakfast event. Interested? Contact your local president.



### Bullying

On the latest podcast, you'll hear young victims, bullies, and school counselors talk about the bullying epidemic, the role of parental support, and the impact of programs and initiatives. A special focus on cyberbullying is must-hear info on new apps and how they help students. [maryland-educators.org/podcast](http://maryland-educators.org/podcast)

## Short Takes

# MEMBERS BLAST STATE BOARD WITH 9,000 EMAILS ON PROPOSED DISCIPLINE REGULATIONS

You've probably heard by now: the State Board of Education has proposed new regulations on student suspension and expulsion policies that would tie the hands of local school administrators and educators in addressing discipline issues. MSEA members have rallied in response, sending the 12-member board 9,000 emails disapproving of the proposed regulations and suggesting ways to improve them.

Creating safe schools and a positive learning environment for all students and school employees is one of MSEA's top priorities. We support proactive and appropriate discipline that works to assist students in making good choices so they can stay in school and maximize their learning potential. MSEA also supports local school systems having the flexibility and authority to make decisions regarding discipline policies.

In the member emails, and in a letter to Superintendent Lillian Lowery from President Betty Weller, MSEA has argued against proposed language that would micromanage a local school system's ability to address discipline issues and force educators to rely more on punitive, not preventive, measures. "The proposed amendments seem to focus on a reactive response and require substantial resources be directed after the suspension or expulsion which limits the resources available for proactive approaches," wrote Weller.

Troublingly, the proposed unfunded mandates for additional staffing and programs that Weller refers to must be provided and funded by the local school system. Without such programs in place, disruptive students would be returned to their classrooms, losing the benefit of meaningful interventions that could point the student toward success and achievement.

"We have concerns about the programs, because they're costly," MSEA Vice President Cheryl Bost told Fox45 News. "We need a multi-agency approach, and we need to look at what staffing and programs need to be funded and put into place so that we can be successful and really rehab students who have made poor choices."



Left to right: Larry Phillips, custodial specialist at the Frederick County Board of Education (FCPS), Vickie Brashears, lead custodian at Crestwood Middle School, and John Carnahan, custodial services manager at FCPS, were presenters at the county's ESP Professional Development Day. The team focused on career development, including how to climb the career ladder to become assistant or lead custodian.

## CALENDAR

Learn more about ESP Professional Development on the next page.



### Maple syrup—it's back!

Last year's warm winter meant a 40% drop in U.S. maple syrup production. That, plus a \$30 million syrup heist in Canada, threw North American pancake-making dads off their weekend game. With 2013 production up a sweet 70%, sticky fingers are back at school breakfasts.

### Are reforms keeping you up at night?

Don't miss face time with your legislators at your local's lobby nights in Annapolis where you'll meet your senators and delegates for Q&As on education issues affecting your job. Check with your local association and put a trip beautiful Annapolis on your to-do list.

### SAVE THE DATE

MSEA Election January 27

Retiree Lobby Day January 29

ESP Professional Development Day March 22

# ESP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



**Whether you're in the classroom,** behind a desk, keeping your

school safe and secure, or driving a bus full of noisy students, you know that ongoing training and skill-building is a vital part of a successful and fulfilling career.

For education support professionals, that means

**targeting what you need,** finding the resources to get it, and making sure career development is a part of your **negotiated agreement.**



Innovative leaders and staff—and **MSEA's annual ESP Professional Development Day**—have

helped thousands of Maryland support professionals improve their job and leadership skills. For union members, that translates to more respect on the job, better advocacy for **wages, benefits, and working conditions**, and higher vis-

ibility in your communities.

In **Frederick County**, the Frederick Association of School Support Employees (FASSE) partners with the county board of education to host the oldest—and largest—annual event in the state for their county's support professionals. The training's been a part of FASSE's **negotiated agreement** with the board since 2000.

Now, an October “Teacher Work Day”—a day in October when support professionals were formerly left to make copies and run errands—finds Frederick's support professionals **upping their game** at 20 workshops developed collaboratively with the school board.

This year, more than **500 school employees** attended the day-long staff development day with top-notch trainers at the front of the class—heck, even the school superintendent hosted a 90-minute workshop! (“**Relationship building like that never hurt anyone**,” says FASSE President Norma Davis.)



FASSE and the board make sure training relates to **current job skills and demands** with work-

shops as varied as Excel basics, resume writing, leadership development, navigating the county's school system employee portal, secretary training, and many more that spell **career development** and job security for employees. Post-event surveys guide future events.

East of Frederick, the **Harford County** Educational Services Council (HCESC) is in charge of the planning and delivery of ESP staff training.

The school board supports the 10 year-old program and releases staff who want to attend.

Locals in Frederick and Harford aren't the only ones working hard for ESP-driven staff training. On the Eastern Shore, the **Wicomico County**

Education Association is proposing ESP professional development in current **bargaining sessions with their board**, and

other locals are working on similar goals.



**MSEA's Donna Schulze, NEA's 2013 ESP of the Year**, opened the door to conversations about school reforms in

“How to Build a Collaborative Relationship with Teachers,” a workshop for HCESC's event. Confident and friendly body language, professionalism, and an awareness of student confidentiality, says Schulze, can be underestimated as skills ESPs can use to make important connections with teacher partners.

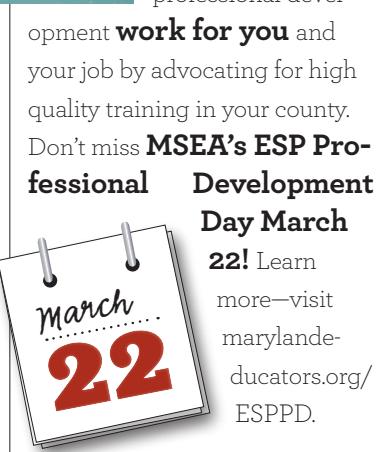
Schulze says **professional development for para-educators** working with new curriculum is badly needed.

“How can we support teachers with little or no training on changes in content and delivery?”

You can make professional development **work for you** and your job by advocating for high quality training in your county.

Don't miss **MSEA's ESP Professional Development Day March 22!** Learn

more—visit [maryland-educators.org/ESPPD](http://maryland-educators.org/ESPPD).



other locals are working on similar goals.

## Meet Kristopher Jensen

Marine Biology and Biology Teacher, Kent Island High School, Queen Anne's County



**1 SQUIDS FOR KIDS** A Stanford University-based program, Squids for Kids, provides iced squids for us to dissect.

**2 KNITTING** Knitting keeps me grounded after a hectic day. This is a silk scarf I designed and knitted. The needles are handmade in Montana.

**3 MR. PUFF** My toy blowfish, Mr. Puff, brings daydreaming students back to earth.

**4 EQUITY STICKS** The sticks are labeled and color-coded by period. They help me keep class participation fair.

**5 MICROSCOPES** We use our microscopes often for essential hands-on learning.

**6 SCUTTLEBUTT E-FORUM** Hosted by the Virginia Institute of Marine Biology, Scuttlebutt keeps me up-to-date on the latest research and lesson ideas, with inspiration from colleagues across the country.

**7 INFLATABLE GLOBE** This gets tossed back and forth among students to keep conversation lively and them involved. It also helps me infuse my lessons with a geography perspective.

**8 MY BACKGROUND IS NORDIC.** One of my tattoos illustrates the Swan of Tuonela (a Finnish tone poem by Sibelius); the other is from the Book of Kells and has Nordic and Celtic design elements.

# INSIDE MSEA WITH DAVID HELFMAN



I've been amazed by the intense media attention that MSEA and our members have received this school year. Every week, there are major stories on how the poor implementation of what President Weller so aptly calls the "tsunami of education reform" is affecting our members.

The personal stories we've heard from you show that you're working harder than ever and are overwhelmed, frustrated, and stressed—but always committed to doing your best for your students. It's our job to share your stories—your professional challenges, needs, and goals—and make sure they are heard by journalists, policymakers, and parents across the state.

Because here's the thing: your story matters.

At a recent Maryland Senate hearing on Common Core with Superintendent Lowery, senators recounted the stories that educators had shared with them about the poor implementation of the new standards. These stories had clearly made a huge impact on the senators, and their concern and disappointment were palpable.

Last month, when members of the State Board received 9,000 emails from members on the proposed discipline regulations (see page 8), it got their attention. Several called President Weller to learn more about the concerns behind the stories in your emails.

Every reporter who contacts MSEA wants to hear your stories so they can share them with their readers. Keep sharing them with us and with neighbors, parents, and policymakers. We'll do our work and together, we'll make progress in getting the implementation of Common Core, and the many other changes we're faced with, right.

**"I want to work in a safe and orderly environment, and I want to support proactive and appropriate discipline that works to assist students in making good choices so they can stay in school and maximize their learning potential."**

—Member email to members of the State Board

## A WORD FROM MSEA'S LEGAL TEAM



### Can Your Administrator Snoop? Is Your Workplace Your Own Space?

It's true, as a public school employee you are protected from unreasonable searches of your workplace, but that doesn't mean that anything you leave in plain view on your school-owned desk or file cabinet—or anything saved on your school computer—is off limits to administrators. Administrators can inspect school-owned property at their discretion, and have done just that, including searching computers for emails and other information.

And that's not the only thing. While the purse, messenger bag, or briefcase that you bring to your classroom or worksite is considered private property when you are at work, the administration can search them if there's reasonable suspicion that there's an item inside that violates the law or school policy.

### BOTTOM LINE?

Be aware ... don't store personal items in a school-issued desk or file cabinet. And maybe most important, never use your school-issued computer for personal emails—wait until you get home.

# STOs

CRACKING THE  
UNIQUE MOTIVATION  
CODE FOR  
EACH STUDENT





**SHARING SLOs WITH  
MY ADMINISTRATOR  
PROVIDES AN  
OPPORTUNITY FOR  
ME TO TALK ABOUT  
WHAT MAKES  
MY CLASSES UNIQUE  
AND HOW I AM  
RESPONDING TO THE  
VARIED NEEDS WITHIN  
MY CLASSROOM.**

—DAWN PIPKIN,  
NBCT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
STEPHEN CHERRY



"This practice is something I believe most teachers do on a more informal basis constantly in their classrooms, but having the opportunity to plan, consult, and debrief the process in a more formal and explicit way presents important opportunities to reflect and improve our practice."



**BY**  
now, every teacher in Maryland has been introduced to student learning objectives (SLOs), the teacher-developed, data-based, curriculum-aligned measurable teaching tool that is created in partnership with a school administrator. SLOs play a role in the "tsunami" of school reform because they are one of the multiple measures of student growth in the new teacher and principal evaluation models.

That's good enough reason to get off on the right track as you research, write, and collaborate on your SLOs. But there's another reason, too—according to American Institutes for Research, SLOs are a proven and widely endorsed measure of student growth. In fact, nearly half of U.S. states require, recommend, or identify SLOs as an example of student growth.

While the introduction and implementation of SLOs have been nearly as frenzied as the rest of the reforms, they offer—when developed and executed well—the promise of reflection, collaboration, and improved success.

"SLOs emphasize multiple best practices for teachers," says Sean McComb, 2014 Maryland Teacher of the Year and an English teacher at Baltimore's Patapsco High School and Center for the Arts. "Their implementation encourages teachers to employ pre-assessments, analyze data to identify student deficits, and tailor instruction to student needs and monitor progress. I consider this cycle to be key to strong instruction."

NEA thinks so, too. MSEA is part of a nine-state consortium of state affiliates set to receive an NEA Great Public Schools grant specifically to roll out additional training on SLOs to supplement the training provided by MSDE. "We're finding that there is some confusion about what a good SLO looks like. Educators are looking for more information and support," says MSEA Vice President Cheryl Bost.

"With this grant, we'll provide expert SLO trainers to every county, and we'll work with MSDE to make sure that high quality professional development on SLOs reaches everyone," Bost adds. "The plan is to help create consistency in creation and quality so the SLOs can be the

**PHOTOS:** Thank you to the administrators, educators, and students at Eastport Elementary School (Anne Arundel County), Glade Elementary School and Thomas Johnson High School (Frederick County), and Mechanicsville Elementary School (St. Mary's County).

**THE HEART OF OUR WORK IS DECIPHERING  
WHERE STUDENTS START WITH A  
SKILL AND THEN PLANNING, ADJUSTING,  
AND MONITORING VARIOUS EXPERIENCES  
TO MOVE THEM FORWARD.**

**—SEAN MCCOMB, MD TEACHER OF THE YEAR**



PHOTOS © WWW.STEPHENCHERRYPHOTOGRAPHY.COM 2013

effective tool they are intended to be. What we don't want to do is quash the local creativity and ambition some locals have already shown."

While many states have fully developed guidebooks, templates, support for creating high quality assessments, and other guidance, the introduction of SLOs has been rolled into the overload of changes this year. This has left educators strapped for time to familiarize themselves with SLOs and threatens the integrity of the SLO process. Educators need to be trained on creating SLOs and evaluators need to be trained on how to assess them. Although MSDE has been working hard to train as many people as possible, much work remains to be done.

In a November survey, 43 percent of MSEA members said they are spending one to two additional hours per week developing a better understanding of SLOs, and 40 percent are spending two hours or more per week. Add that to the time spent on understanding and creat-

ing materials aligned to Common Core and you have the distracting and skyrocketing work overload illustrated on page 5 of this issue.

All the more reason for MSEA to step in to support teachers on this most promising of the reforms. "SLOs put student growth measures directly in the hands of practitioners which leads to quality conversations about student achievement," Bost says. "It's data that you can monitor and use throughout the year—allowing for analysis and course correction."

Like Bost and Sean McComb, Dawn Pipkin, a St. Mary's County National Board Certified Teacher and a member of the statewide Educator Effectiveness Council, thinks SLOs are a positive addition to teachers' professional practice, particularly the built-in opportunities for collaboration with both colleagues and administrators.

"Sharing student learning outcomes gives my administrator the opportunity

to see the thinking behind my instructional plan, my content knowledge, and the knowledge I have about what my students' strengths and challenges are," Pipkin says. "Sharing at this level provides an opportunity to talk about what makes my classes unique and how I am responding to the varied needs within my classroom. It's about how I create learning experiences while taking the needs of my students into account."

Learning communities that support collaboration and sharing are already happening all over the state, but the need for alignment, quality assessments, and fine-tuning SLOs will create even stronger communication, collaboration, and collegiality in every school. "For most American teachers, there's not that much opportunity for real collaboration," said education scholar Linda Darling-Hammond in a 2011 interview with the National Council of Teachers of English. "The opportunity [for teachers] to share what they know with each other allows

them to be individually successful and successful as a team—and teaching is definitely a team sport.”

“The most rewarding part of creating an SLO is the fact that I get to discuss instruction with my colleagues,” Pipkin says. “There is great power in building a shared knowledge around how we interpret the expectations for students that exist in the standards. This opens the door for sharing strategies and lessons which can lead to enriched classroom experiences for all students.

McComb likes the opportunity SLOs give teachers and administrators to have longer—and deeper—collegial conversations about instructional planning and practice. “Usually instructional conversations regard an observation lesson, and perhaps what came before and will follow that single lesson. The SLO conversation presents an opportunity to discuss intentional, long-term planning with the end in mind.”

But McComb also values what SLOs will bring him as a teacher. “I enjoy meaningfully thinking about my students’ needs and challenging myself to create the learning experiences that will help them grow. This is, of course, what I believe most teachers got into the profession to do, so I am thankful that this portion of the quantitative piece of our evaluation aligns so closely to our work.

“The heart of our work,” McComb says, “is deciphering where students start with a skill and then planning, adjusting, and monitoring various experiences to move them forward. In practice, this effort means accounting for myriad variables, striving to build relationships to encourage risk-taking, and constant reflection and adjustment.

“It means cracking the unique motivation code for each student.”

## HISTORY OF SLOs

According to the Reform Support Network\*, SLOs first emerged in Denver when the union and the city’s school system agreed to pilot a program using monitored learning objectives. The evaluation of the pilot showed that “teachers who developed high-quality SLOs produced better student achievement gains, and student achievement increased as the length of teacher participation in the pilot increased.”

Maryland’s Education Reform Act of 2010 requires that a significant part of teacher evaluation must be student growth, which must be made up of multiple measures. SLOs fulfill the requirement for multiple measures.

\*The Reform Support Network is a US Department of Education program that helps Race to the Top states as they implement education reforms.

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# “Professional.” “Student

**THE BUZZ** around the 2013 MSEA Convention this year was about taking action for strong schools and a strong association. Four gubernatorial candidates all came to discuss education policy and vie for MSEA’s highly valued endorsement. Lively debate on the convention floor engaged the 600 delegates’ interest in fine-tuning best practices in the classroom and at the workplace.

Speeches from Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, Harford County Executive David Craig, Attorney General Doug Gansler, and Delegate Heather Mizeur during day one of the representative assembly touched on many of the current issues vexing Maryland educators—evaluations, Common Core Standards, school construction, salaries, and more.

President Betty Weller explained to delegates why it was so important for them to hear from the candidates and make an endorsement decision: “Our elected officials are far more likely to be there for us if they know that we were there for them when it mattered. And right now, it matters for these candidates and for the 2014 election. If we want to be relevant,” she said, “and help set the policy agenda, we must make an endorsement now.”



In day two, members debated and overwhelmingly adopted the recommendation of MSEA’s nearly 100-member endorsement council to recommend Anthony Brown for governor.

Brown, who with his running mate Howard County Executive Ken Ulman talked with members throughout the weekend, said he was honored by the endorsement. “I will rely heavily on the advice and support of MSEA to both win this election and to make the critical governing decisions to invest in our educators and schools and continue to move Maryland’s schools forward.”

There was also a lot of buzz throughout the convention about the 2014 election and the importance of electing education-friendly leaders not only to the governor’s office, but to county councils, school boards, and General Assembly seats across the state. MSEA’s PAC—the Fund for Children and Public Education—blew past the fundraising totals of recent years, topping \$23,000 in a drive led by county PAC captains spreading the word.

“Our members know that the best way to defend public education and support good candidates is by contributing to our political action fund,” said Debbie Haan, one of the 2013 PAC captains for the Education Association of Charles County (EACC). Activists like Haan, who signed up more than 50 percent of members at Arthur Middleton Elementary School, helped EACC make a splash at convention as the top fundraising local by nearly doubling contributions from 2012 to 2013.

Successful new business items—the one-year directives passed by delegates that help guide the work of the association—were centered around the on-the-ground complications of implementing Common Core Standards (including standards aligned for special education students), numerous aspects of the new teacher and principal evaluations, MSDE’s proposed changes to discipline regulations (see page 8), renewed privatization concerns and the outsourcing of education support professional jobs, and retiree concerns. You can read all of the new business items passed at the convention at [marylandeducators.org/2013NBI](http://marylandeducators.org/2013NBI).



# -focused.” “Engaging.”



PHOTO © WWW.SPEECHPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



**Never been to MSEA's convention? Montgomery County delegate Beth Blacklow is a first-timer who definitely gets it.**

Outside the representative assembly hall, close to 2,000 educators attended workshops and exhibits throughout the convention center. MSDE experts in the areas of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and student learning objectives (SLOs) offered insight into the implementation of CCSS and advice on targeting, writing, and analyzing SLOs. Others were subject-driven, including more than 30 presentations on CCSS, math and language arts best practices, diversity, bullying, technology, and student, career, and personal growth provided members in all job categories new ideas, skills, and strategies to use and share on the job.

**Want to be a delegate at next year's MSEA Convention? Contact your local association office to find out how you can represent fellow members on the representative assembly floor at Convention 2014.**

**WE WORK!** Educators made proposals about what our union should be doing. We debated and then voted them up or down.

**WE PARTY!** Perhaps you've heard of the luxurious and exclusive Ocean City establishment, Seacrets. We took it over one evening.

**MSEA HAS GOT YOUR BACK.** I've never agreed 100 percent with anyone other than myself, but a huge chunk of the weekend was spent reinforcing what we know about the right way to assess students, educators, and schools, and reinforcing MSEA's commitment to fight the fools who don't know better. I agreed with all of that.

**IT'S POLITICAL.** It has to be because politicians run the education show. We heard speeches, debated amongst ourselves, and voted to endorse Anthony Brown. Personally, before voting I wanted to invite the candidates back for a dance off. If you want to run the education show, you should prove you've got the right moves.

**IT'S CHEAP!** Your local will help cover your gas and lodging.

**BIG MONEY.** We raised serious money for the PAC. This will be key in upcoming 2014 political races as well as for our ongoing battles just generally fighting The Man.

**FREE TIME!** Turns out the convention was not all work. I spent Sunday afternoon with the ponies on Assateague and wandered the cultural path known as the OC Boardwalk. A lovely beach weekend.

**FASHION!** Who chose bright ORANGE to be MSEA's official color? I'm super-pale and wearing the color makes me look sickly. But at last, there's a look I can rock—check me out in this year's black convention hoodie in the photo above! I still look frighteningly pale, but not sickly. What do you think?

**BIG LOVE.** No joke, it feels so darn good to be around thousands of educators who care about our profession.

## My Turn

# Mona Long

Pupil Personnel Worker, Homeless Education Liaison  
Calvert County

PHOTO: BRION MCCARTHY PHOTOGRAPHY © 2013



Mona Long is a pupil personnel worker in Calvert County. Her goal is to try to level the playing field—using resources and a bit of savvy to help students whose lives beyond the school building lack stability, and sometimes even a home.

Most families who hit difficult times are victims of bad luck or bad timing. It can happen to any of us at any given time. Sometimes people have been evicted from their home or it has gone to foreclosure. A devastating medical event may mean choosing between a doctor's care or paying the mortgage. A parent may have a mental health illness or addiction issue, or simply make poor choices. Children have no say and no control.

To help these families and students, we have to be supportive, creative, flexible, and sometimes push the envelope. But most importantly, we have to assess the situation, not judge the adults or their children. My role is to serve as a liaison between the family, the school community, and the agencies and services to ensure child-centered decision-making, school access and stability, and success.

I'm also concerned about another issue that may be making its way into our communities—human trafficking. Our area, and its proximity to major airports, highways, and cities, is convenient for moving young people in and out. We have a constant influx of people who want to be "entertained" and for some of them, their preference is young girls and boys. Trafficking has been reported throughout the country, including Maryland and Washington, D.C.

This isn't going away. The more we know about this continuing trend, the safer our students will be. But there are signs we can all be aware of—conversations about frequent trips to other cities, physical trauma, depression, a lack of control over their schedule, signs of drug addiction, a change in their clothing style, an expanded knowledge of sexual situations beyond age-specific norms, and boyfriends who are noticeably older.

**Watch Mona's video in digital *ActionLine* and learn about the signs and symptoms of young victims of human trafficking. [marylandeducators.org/aldigital](http://marylandeducators.org/aldigital)**

**"We work hard to make a connection with that child. If a child trusts you, the parents usually will too."**



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