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*action*Line

MARYLAND STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION • NEA

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 3

closing the GAP

4 strategies that work in Maryland schools

MSTA LIVE Convention 2006 Recap • ESP and School Safety •
Interview: Michelle Hammond, MD Teacher of the Year

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Representative Assembly by calling on delegates to light a fire for "change and progress" for all of Maryland's students.



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On Fire for Students and Public Education



MSTA is your advocate, but MSTA can only be strong if all of our members are on fire for change and progress.

THE POET WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS ONCE SAID, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." When you look into the eyes of a student, there is a spark, a flicker of potential, just waiting to be ignited by an understanding teacher or adult. Regardless of where they live, the color of their skin or the status of their families, every child has the right to attend a great public school where that spark can become a raging fire.

As educators, we take that spark and fuel it with high expectations. Whether you are an administrator, teacher or education support professional, we all share the responsibility of making sure our children are well educated and well cared for when they leave school. We must not let a wind of doubt cause the flame of learning to ever die.

We know we can't do it alone—each of us needs to turn up the heat in our school and community. We need adequate tools and resources, such as smaller class sizes and up-to-date technology, and more focused training and professional development using data to drive quality instruction. We need to put an end to portable classrooms, 12-hour days and 20-year-old textbooks.

MSTA is your advocate, but MSTA can only be strong if all of our members are on fire for change and progress. We must insist that the candidates who, thanks to our support, celebrated victory this November continue their commitment to great public schools for every child. We must remind these elected officials why they were chosen to serve.

What we need is shared responsibility and collaboration among educators, parents, the community and our elected officials—shared responsibility that will achieve results for all of our students. And what are these results?

Yes we want higher test scores, but we also need to create a lifelong love of learning, igniting a flame that awakens talent, skill and passion. We must steer students into careers that speak to their interests, while preparing them to be active and productive citizens. We must make sure that not 60 percent, not 70 percent, but 100 percent of Maryland's public school students graduate with a high school diploma.

I challenge you to rekindle that fire in you that caused you to come to the profession in the first place.

We want all of our children to glow with success. We can't afford to settle for lukewarm instruction, lukewarm service, or lukewarm communication with the community or our elected officials. Those eyes of a child with the sparks I mentioned are watching us, and we must do everything in our power not to let them down.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Write Clara:
MSTA, 140 Main Street,
Annapolis, MD 21401
cfloyd@mstanea.org

ASK A FRIEND TO JOIN US!

MSTA's 65,000 members constitute the largest, most influential group of employees in Maryland. Our participation in the recent successful campaigns of our endorsed candidates is evidence that we are passionate and focused. In other words, MSTA walks the walk.

Our influence can be even stronger. With every new member, MSTA raises the volume on issues that have a direct impact on our success: school funding, workload, salaries and benefits, school safety, student achievement, privatization, professional development, and other important issues that affect employee and student success.

You can help. If you know someone in your school or workplace who has not yet joined the only professional organization in Maryland with a proven track record of effective advocacy, ask them to join us. Share our success. Tell them it's time.

Visit MSTA OnLine, www.mstanea.org, Membership, for more information about joining MSTA and an online application.

Look for *MemberVoices* in each issue of *ActionLine*! We'll be asking questions of MSTA members all over the state and sharing their answers with you!

How do you think school safety can be improved in your school?



MARGUERITE MATTHEWS
Counselor
Carmody Hills ES
Member since 1988
Prince George's County

Staff in-services

Our principal is very involved in school security and discipline, and we have a **crisis plan**, which includes codes for **different situations**. If something happens, we put on orange vests and act according to our plan. We have staff in-services so that we are **aware, proactive** and know exactly what to do.

More ears and eyes on the kids

We had our first Code Red practice, and it went very well. Look, we have 1,200 kids and maybe 90 adults in the building—there are more ears and eyes on the kids! **The more vigilant they become, the more vigilant we all become**, and our school is a much safer place.



RALPH CHIARAMONTE
Teacher
Liberty HS
Member since 1991
Carroll County



ANN POWELL
Teacher
Salisbury MS
Member since 1974
Wicomico County

Deal with aggressive behavior

This is the first time we've had a resource officer in the school. I think there need to be **tougher laws, rules and consequences** when things happen and an alternative school, not just to get the children out of the school, but to **provide counseling** to deal with aggressive behavior.



MIKE JOY
Lead custodian/supervisor
Middletown HS
Member since 2004
Frederick County

Security cameras

The largest increase in our budget today is in the high schools where we've installed security cameras. The possibility of something going awry puts a **deep responsibility on school staff**. I'd like to see some sort of funding come back to the school districts to recoup some of these expenditures we've made for **safety and security**.



DEBORAH DURHAM
Teacher
Greencastle ES
Member since 1979
Montgomery County

Locked doors

We need to make sure that all but the main doors are **locked immediately** after kids get to school or come in from the playground. I think we should probably have **entry keys**. I'm concerned that we have more security devices in museums that we do in our own schools.

StartingLine

NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW

MSTA's membership growth calls for new board seats

MSTA's growing numbers not only mean more influence in the State House, but more votes on the influential NEA Board of Directors, one of the top decision-making bodies in NEA. Activist Barbara Yost, president of the Harford County Educational Services Council, has been tapped to fill the spot (which

includes membership on MSTAs Board) until this spring, when MSTAs members vote to fill the position permanently.

Also new to MSTAs Board is Somerset County teacher Sidney Hankerson, elected at MSTAs recent Convention to fill a newly created position to ensure minority representation.

In other NEA Board news, Cherryll Wilkerson, Bowie State University, was elected to fill the student director post by her fellow NEA Student Program members at the NEA Representative Assembly this summer.

One-year terms for Yost and Wilkerson began September 1. Hankerson's term is retroactive to September of this year and ends in August 2008.

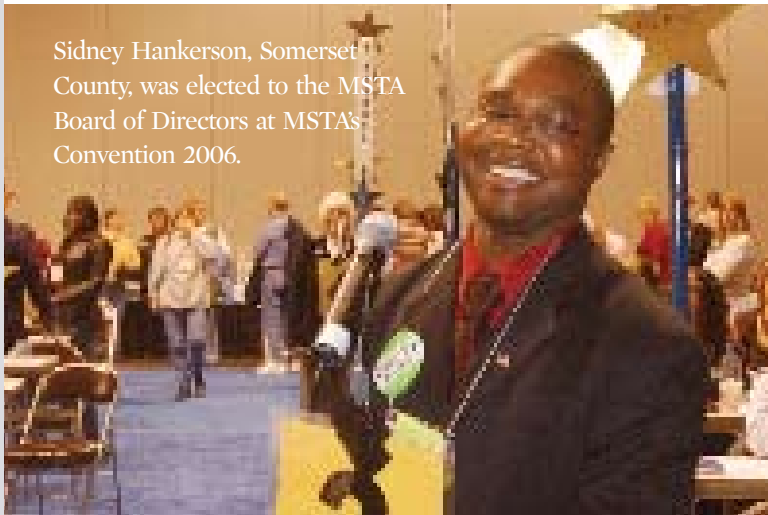
Washington State members go to Supreme Court in free speech case

When the U.S. Supreme Court hears an appeal of a state ruling that upheld the free speech rights of the Washington Education Association's (WEA) 80,000 members, expectations are that WEA will prevail. That's how it has played out in every court challenge filed by the conservative Evergreen Freedom Foundation, a group that has doggedly pursued the issue since 1998!

In the State Supreme Court decision last March, justices ruled that federal law gives non-union educators a simple and easy way to opt out if they don't support the Association's political advocacy. School employees represented by the Association are notified twice a year that they can opt out of paying for WEA's political efforts to improve public education. WEA has stated repeatedly that, like MSTAs and all NEA affiliates, it does not use non-members' fees for political purposes.

Fed accounting standards may change your health care benefits

"Our school districts pay for retiree health care on a pay-as-you-go basis, paying for the bill when it's due," explains MSTAs researcher Dan Gottheimer. "Recent accounting changes with the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) will pressure school districts to start setting aside money to pay for future benefits for those current and future retirees."



Sidney Hankerson, Somerset County, was elected to the MSTAs Board of Directors at MSTAs Convention 2006.

Quote

"Being elected to the Board was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life! I want to help improve collective bargaining, workload issues, teacher retention, and organize a living wage movement for ESP."

SIDNEY HANKERSON

The heat will be on school districts and other employers to reduce retiree health care benefits or cut back on health care for active employees to save for the projected needs of retirees.

School districts must account for the future retiree benefits, but do not need to fully fund them. "Nonetheless," says Gottheimer, "some counties are panicking and pressuring their Boards of Education to approach our Locals to sacrifice benefits now."

Protect your health care benefits! Visit *MSTA OnLine*, www.mstanea.org, where you can learn more about GASB and how it may affect the way your Local Association bargains your future contracts.

Labor takes a hit from the NLRB

Employees across the country should take heed of a recent ruling by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Acting on a case involving registered nurses, the board rewrote the definitions of supervisory duties, including assigning work and using independent judgment—a strike that cuts the potential union membership of nurses by hundreds of thousands.

Although the impact of the decision may not be felt for years, concerns are that, case-by-case, the decision will extend to all kinds of jobs, depleting rank-and-file union membership and eroding bargaining power and rights.

"[The] decision is the latest in the Bush-appointed NLRB's legal maneuvering to deny as many workers as possible their basic right to have a voice on the job and improve their living standards through their union," said the AFL-CIO's John Sweeney.

on the web www.mstanea.org

➔ School Safety

In October, the governor announced the appointment of 19 members, including MSTA Vice President Betty Weller, to a newly created Task Force on School Safety. "We'll be studying the safety and security topics that concern us all as caretakers of Maryland's students," Weller said. Weller is joined on the task force by members Lorraine Anders, Dorchester (DE); Jane Brandt, Frederick (FCTA); and Patricia Cook-Ferguson, Baltimore County (TABCO).

Learn the latest about school safety from these online resources.

NEA: School Safety

Site includes links to research, NEA resources, and other resources. www.nea.org/schoolsafety/index.html

White House School Safety Resources for Parents, Schools, Law Enforcement Officials, and Communities

Resources to help schools and communities prepare for, prevent and respond to school violence. Features

Montgomery County Public Schools' Emergency Response Plan. www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061010-1.html

Keep Schools Safe:

The School Safety and Security Resource

"All schools need to be safe and secure for everyone. We are here to help." www.keepschoolssafe.org

National School Safety Center

NSSC is an advocate for safe, secure and peaceful schools worldwide and is a catalyst for the prevention of school crime and violence. www.schoolsafety.us

The Center for the Prevention of School Violence

One of the country's first state school safety centers also serves as a think tank for efforts that promote safer schools and foster positive youth development.

www.ncdijdp.org/cpsv/

by the numbers

Percentage of School Resource Officers who said:

Violent incidences on school buses had increased in their districts	35%
Gang activity in their school district had increased	36%
The emergency plan for their school was inadequate	50%
The emergency plan in their school was not practiced on a regular basis	66%
They took a weapon away from a student on campus the previous year	78%
Schools are "soft targets" for potential terrorist attacks	92%
Their schools were inadequately prepared to respond to such an attack	74%

Source: National School Resource Officers Association, 2004 National Survey of School Resource Officers

MSTA celebrates 10 years Reading Across Maryland

Get ready for MSTAs 10-year anniversary of *Read Across America!* Look for 2007 RAA news, including a new program for middle school students, in *FrontLine**, *ActionLine* and on *MSTA OnLine*, www.mstanea.org; or contact Debra Williams-Garner, MSTA RAA coordinator, 800/448-MSTA, x144; dwgarner@mstanea.org.



*What's *FrontLine*? See the back cover of this *ActionLine* for more information about MSTAs weekly e-newsletter.

Closing the GAP

4 strategies that work in Maryland schools

The achievement gap is perhaps a humbling reality of public education. In Maryland, focused efforts by the state, individual educators show results, but it's a staggeringly large gap that continues to leave the promise of too many children

When it passed five years ago, the federal *No Child Left Behind* law was touted as the solution to the achievement gap. But, despite its promise, NCLB's rigid rules and funding shortfalls have made it more difficult.

MSTA and NEA believe Congress must shift from the current focus that labels and punishes schools with a flawed one-size-fits-all accountability system to one that includes common-sense flexibility and supports educators in implementing programs that improve student learning, reward success, and provide meaningful assistance to schools most in need of help.

“If we’re lucky,” said Clara Floyd, MSTA president, “the new Congress will step up and address the issues of NCLB that plague our public schools. For Maryland, we expect the administration in the State House to fully fund the mandates of our Thornton law, and allow the resources to be fairly shared across the state with all students.”

In the meantime, MSTA members and their Local Associations are using creative and effective ways to help their students achieve and make progress in closing the gap. Here are several proven strategies.

High quality professional development

One way to close the gap is to make sure all teachers have access to high quality professional development. So when the Maryland State Board of Education accepted the recommendations of the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council in 2005, it signaled a new commitment to high quality, relevant enrichment for Maryland teachers.

Token one-time events have historically missed the point of what has come to be regarded as “job embedded” professional development, the kind that fosters collaborative planning, long-term follow-up and support, direct connection to classroom experience and evaluation of student learning.

“These standards state in clear, uncertain terms that *quality* professional development is what teachers should expect,” said MSTA President Clara Floyd, who serve on the Advisory Council. “Now, according to the standards, we as teachers have a legitimate voice in creating the professional development along with local school districts.”

More than 1,000 educators participated in 70-plus focus groups to provide input to the council’s final product—nine standards for what kind of professional development teachers need and how they should get it.

At a recent MSTA IPD Committee workshop, IPD Committee members from more than 15 Local Associations learned how they can become effective advocates for quality professional development that meets the new standards.

Floyd has charged MSTAs IPD Committee with helping Locals organize around the issues known to foster high student achievement and close the gap. Jan Erskine, MSTA school quality specialist, created a detailed monitoring rubric. “It’s a comprehensive tool for assessing how local professional development matches, one-by-one, the characteristics described in MSDE’s nine standards,” said Erskine.

“In order for us to do our job, we must have the tools and resources—which include quality professional development—to do it well. We must insist on it. The standards are very clear. If, in some counties, we aren’t advocating for and getting what we need,” said Floyd, “we need to simply apply more pressure to those accountable.”

School-by-school interventions

Montgomery County’s Broad Acres ES was on the state’s reconstituted list in 2000. Unexpected? Maybe. To some outside the county lines, Montgomery is thought of as uniformly white, wealthy and high-achieving. But Broad Acres Elementary, a school of 500 students, illustrates just how diverse the population there has become.

With a student demographic of 100 percent minority students—African American, Hispanic and Asian—and the highest poverty rate in the county, only five percent of third graders at Broad Acres were reading at grade level in 2000. The school was threatened with restructuring. Fearing the worst, the superintendent and the Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) created a collaborative plan to improve student achievement.

maps the most
education.
vidual schools and
slow process that
children untapped.

The plan focused on the quality of the teaching at Broad Acres by asking teachers to make a three-year commitment to the school and the improvement plan; those who couldn't were helped to find another school. MCEA stepped in to be sure the resources the teachers needed to make good on their commitment were available and negotiated an additional, and unprecedented, 15 work days per year as planning time.

"We felt that to be successful, teachers and teams really needed to be on the same page and in close contact," said Bonnie Cullison, MCEA's president. "In negotiating the planning time, our requirement was that the staff had to determine *collaboratively* how the time would be allocated and used. They decided to split the time into weekly two-hour blocks.

"All staff, including paraeducators, were expected to participate in team meetings," she added. "The focus of the meetings rotated between planning and data analysis and in-depth study sessions on subjects of their own choosing."

Cullison says teachers at Broad Acres believe their ability to plan and look at student work and data to inform instruc-

"In order for us to do our job, we must have the tools and resources—which include quality professional development—to do it well. We must insist on it. The standards are very clear. If, in some counties, we aren't advocating for and getting what we need," said Clara Floyd, "we need to simply apply more pressure to those accountable."

tion is what made the difference in student performance at the school. "The planning time is in a concentrated block, controlled by the team outside the hectic pace of the regular workday. It works for them."

The outcome? Supported by their Association and their school system, hardworking Broad Acres staff lifted the scores of their equally hardworking third-grade readers to a much-improved 75 percent scoring at grade level. There is no doubt that those children now have a better chance to succeed.

Build a successful school community

Cecil County's Bohemia Manor Middle School (BMMS) was a promising school, but a large gap separated the achievement of its special-needs students from the rest of the student body. The result? In 2004, BMMS failed to make the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) required by *No Child Left Behind*.

As in many schools, the struggle of BMMS special-needs students was not new. The veteran staff had already voiced their concerns over the gap, and, with the support of Washington College in Chestertown, studied reading strategies to improve student achievement.

But with the expectation of AYP, administration, staff and parents became uncomfortable that progress wasn't being made fast enough, and the pressure wore on the staff. School leaders saw the need for a dynamic change in the school culture, a change that would open doors to communication and the kind of collegiality known to have a positive impact on student achievement.

A team from BMMS had attended MSTA's BEST Program and found new ways to listen to and support one another.

"We learned that tension stemmed from our different communication styles, and not philosophical disagreements about our art as teachers," said Jean Clark, BMMS instructional resource teacher.

"As we built trust, we became part of a team. We were able to connect what we were learning from each other to student success. We were also able to see our teaching practice more clearly as the art it is, and make improvements to it from that perspective."

What they needed next was data on which to base a plan—no-frills, objective information based on reliable surveys—and to learn how to use it. Two such surveys administered by the county and the new principal clearly showed that the school climate was strained. The staff needed and wanted help, but there was no action plan. What finally got the buy-in, and trust, of the entire school community was the NEA KEYS 2.0 Survey, a tool of the BEST Program.

Analyzing the KEYS data put the findings in a scientific light, where information was irrefutable, but not damning. The BMMS staff discovered the special strengths and weaknesses of their school in areas defined by the survey: shared understand-

ing of school goals; communication and problem solving; and continuous assessment and professional development.

In 2005 and 2006, BMMS made AYP. But success can be seen in more than just the school's test scores, Clark says. "We've cultivated a number of young leaders at Bohemia Manor, which I think is a testament to our success and a reflection of the Association's strong influence. When teachers of less than six years become strong leaders in their subject areas, you know something wonderful is happening."

KEYS opened the doors that had been locked to Bohemia Manor, doors that needed to be opened for improvement to begin. Reliable data painted the picture—a committed staff of professionals brought it to life.

"Change is an ongoing, difficult process. We asked the really difficult questions: Who is responsible when students don't learn? Who is going to teach teachers new things? Where will the expertise come from?" Clark said. "We learned that as we worked toward our goals, we might run into each other. Yet, the product has improved student learning and revitalized our teaching practices."

Teacher-student connectedness

There are many facets of connectedness within the school setting. We know that when teachers feel connected to their colleagues through collaborative support they are less likely to leave the profession. We also know that when parents feel connected to school they are better able to support student learning through a supportive home environment.

Yet recent studies focusing on the importance of student connectedness to their school, particularly their sense of connection to their teachers, show that 40 to 60 percent of all students—urban, suburban and rural—are chronically disengaged from school. These students believe that the adults in their school don't care about them.

School connectedness—a student's feeling of being part of and cared for at school—is believed to be a strong protective factor in helping students cope with stress both within and outside the school setting.

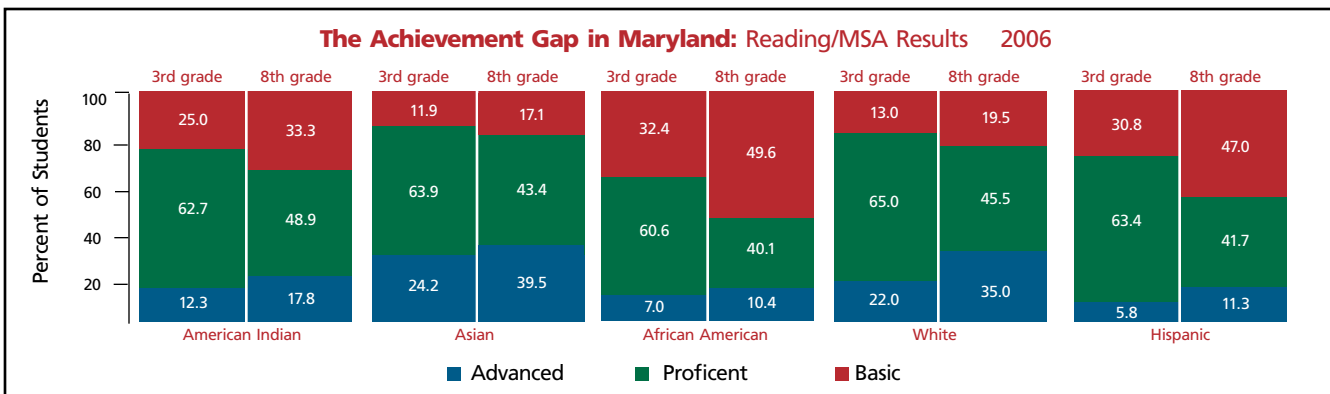
"In any school, when you have a principal in place with a very clear vision and all the teachers are connected to it, it filters down to the students. If it breaks down at the top, you have a problem," said Harford County member Andrea Johns, a school counselor at Roye-Williams ES.

At Roye-Williams, teachers and paraprofessionals act as volunteer mentors to coach and support at-risk children who may lack support at home. In some cases, says Johns, that connectedness can take a long time to establish, but, "can make a huge difference to the student. Knowing that there is one person at school who truly cares, besides their classroom teacher, is a very stabilizing influence for children whose home life is often difficult, at best."

In one of the school's most successful mentoring relationships, a paraprofessional has been with a student for three years, which is unusual in a school community where many of the students are from transient military families.

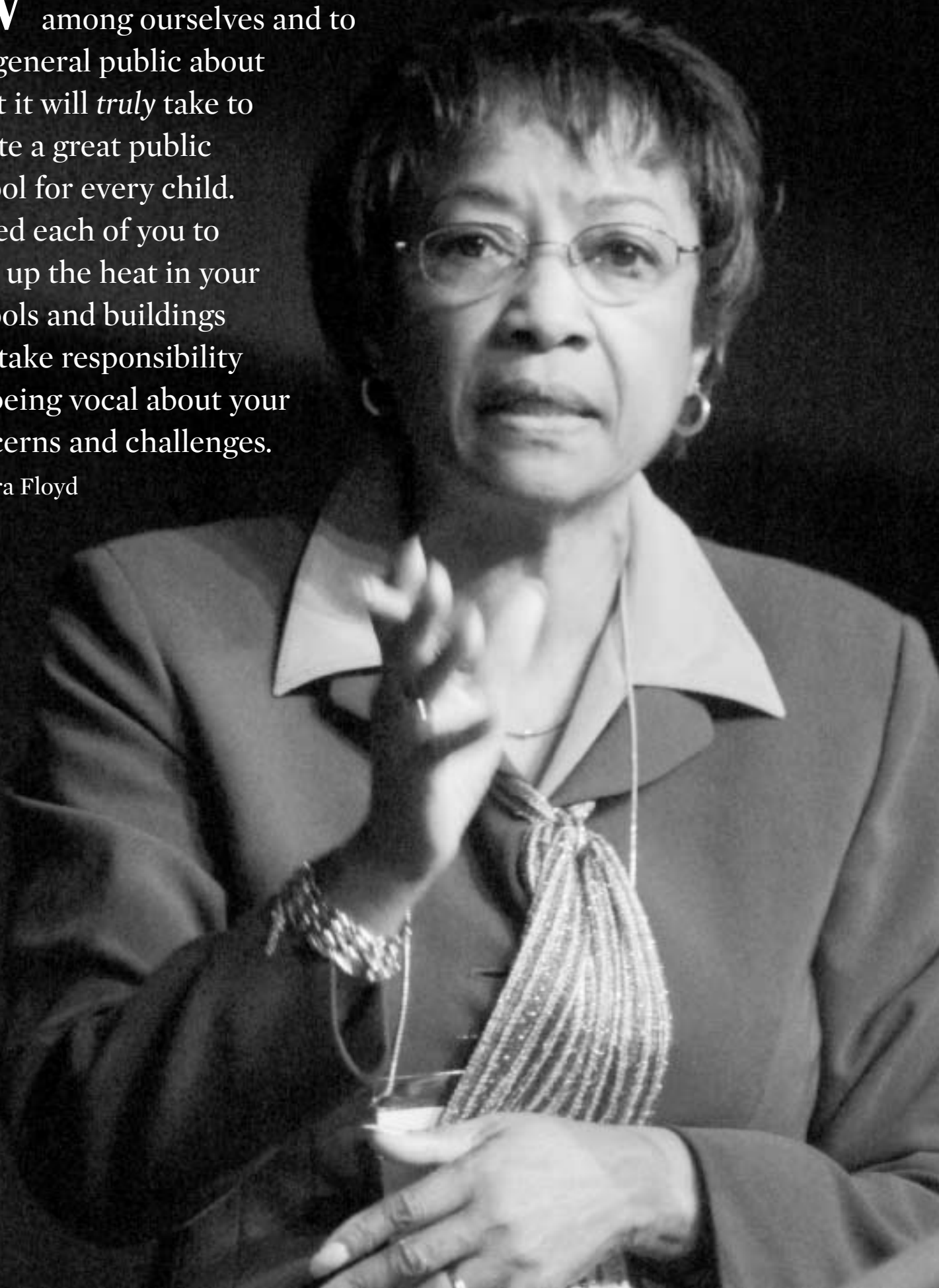
"The research is overwhelming on what needs to be done," said Robert Blum, of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore. "We need to engage kids in their own education and make them want to be a part of school. If we do that, we'll improve their prospects for academic success and reduce the likelihood that they'll become involved in a whole raft of dangerous behaviors."

Students who perceive their teachers as creating a caring, well-structured learning environment in which expectations are high, clear and fair are more likely to feel connected to their schools and, in turn, participate *and* succeed.



What we must do is talk more among ourselves and to the general public about what it will *truly* take to create a great public school for every child. I need each of you to turn up the heat in your schools and buildings and take responsibility for being vocal about your concerns and challenges.

- Clara Floyd



From the booming opening of “Let’s Get Ready to RUMMMBBBLE!” delegates to MSTA’s 139th Representative Assembly knew they were in store for a weekend packed with the serious business of the Association plus a healthy mix of fun and friends.

Presiding over her first RA, MSTA President Clara Floyd set the tone by calling on delegates to light a fire for “change and progress” for all of Maryland’s students. “We must work together,” said Floyd, “so that we can rise to the highest level of performance that will help every child receive a high quality public school education.”

Together, Floyd and David Helfman, MSTA’s executive director, unveiled a new calling card for Association activists—*Great Public Schools are a Basic Right for Every Child!* The message, as MSTA and NEA raise the volume for equity and achievement for every student, will be the starting point for the Association’s future advocacy.

Delegates were also pumped up to get out the vote by NEA President Reg Weaver and MSTA’s endorsed candidates for governor, lieutenant governor and the U.S. Senate. (Visit *MSTA OnLine*, www.mstanea.org, to see video clips of their speeches.)

Important business

Delegates discussed and voted to support New Business Items on class size, National Board Certification, additional Board members for ESP and minority representation, clerical support for teachers, electronic balloting for MSTA elections and much more.

Sidney Hankerson (Somerset) was elected to fill a new seat on MSTA’s Board of Directors, and the RA endorsed Theresa Lochte (retired, Baltimore County) as candidate for trustee on the State Pension and Retirement Board to fill the seat of longtime trustee and MSTA member Carl Lancaster. Iris Harris was reelected to oversee MSTA’s Crisis Fund.

MSTA L!VE 2006

Hundreds of delegates keep their eyes on the prize: Progress for students, members



MSTAConvention'06

For Shirley Adams, the RA atmosphere proved the perfect entry point for a first-time delegate. Adams, a Prince George's bus driver and AFSCME Local 2250 member, said she looked forward to returning next year. "Fellow members were very respectful, helpful and made me feel like family," she said.

A packed agenda

But the RA floor wasn't the only happening place. Members had the chance to sit in on more than 40 professional development workshops, browse an unprecedented number of exhibits,

listen to student and member performances on the MSTALIVE stage, and flock to MSTA's first-ever party at OC's famous nightclub, Seacrets.

Also featured this year as part of the LIVE theme was the presence of four delegate-"bloggers," who recorded their musings about the Convention activities and posted them on *MSTA OnLine*. As one of the four, Frederick County teacher

Dawn Lynch-Jones, put it in her blog: "The MSTAConvention was a thrilling experience. I love having the opportunity to listen to all the new business and vote on it. I have a say in what's happening in education. My vote counts." (See next page for more about MSTA's bloggers!)

"There was so much energy and positive reinforcement for all the great things educators do each and every day," said Deborah Russ, president of the Calvert Education Association. "Our delegates walked away from this year's Convention knowing they are appreciated."

"This Convention provided a wonderful opportunity for members across the state to discuss and vote on the issues that affect not only their jobs, but all students and public schools," said Floyd. "I hope that everyone returned home more energized and passionate than ever about doing the vital daily work of ensuring that all of Maryland's children have access to a high quality public education."



Prizes!

If you missed the Convention, you missed the chance to win some great prizes donated by the MSTAFund for Children and Public Education!

Target Gift Card for the most pre-RA raffle ticket sales

Ken Haines, Prince George's. Haines sold \$1,200 worth of tickets.

Fund for Children and Public Education Raffle

\$500

Jarice Banks, Prince George's

\$1,000

Erika Hamada, Anne Arundel

Digital Camera

Faith Abernethy, St. Mary's

Kris Pritchard, Charles

Joe Staub, Howard

iPod Nano

Denise Curtair, Baltimore County

Jane Hardy, Montgomery

County PAC awards

Allegany

Highest percentage of members contributing with 39.2%

Montgomery

Highest average \$ amount per member donated with \$14.61

Talbot

Highest percentage increase of \$ donated with 570.6%

NEW! MSTA LIVE member blogs!

Visit *MSTA OnLine*, www.mstanea.org, for the complete blogs of Nori Burkhardt and John Hendrix, plus those of Dawn Lynch-Jones (Baltimore County) and Sally MacAteer (Allegany).

Nori Burkhardt
Talbot

Excerpted from blog entry:



10/20/06 - Noon
Session 1 is over and it was definitely an interesting experience!

Reg Weaver was the keynote speaker! I always look forward to his column in *NEAToday*, and I was not disappointed. He was extremely motivating. I just really wish that we could get the public to understand the sort of things that we as educators have to deal with.

John Hendrix
Montgomery

Excerpted from blog entry:



10/21/06 - 4 p.m.
I thought that the coolest thing was the passage of an

item that will give counties the option of electronic voting for MSTA elections starting in 2008. There was considerable pushback on that from members with valid concerns, but, in the end, the majority saw fit to step to dip their toe into the inviting waters of the 21st century.

Convention speeches focus on student achievement and member activism



Clara Floyd

MSTA is your advocate; we are working to create better environments for all educators and children. But, MSTA can only be strong if our members and local affiliates are strong. We—your MSTA—need each of you to be *on fire for change* and *on fire for progress*. You have the power to do that.



Reg Weaver

I don't care whether you are a Republican or Democrat. I don't care. I care about who is going to step up and support Clara when it comes to educating these kids! I don't care who you are. And, if we find that some of the folks that say they are our friends start acting crazy, then we have a responsibility to tell them, "Don't depend on us in terms of support if in fact we cannot depend on you for support." They have to know that!



David Helfman

As we pushed for a better pension, we built a stronger union: we strengthened relationships with our labor and education partners; we signed up 2,000 new members; our locals negotiated greater pay increases; and the MSTA Fund for Children and Public Education jumped by 34 percent.

Each year, delegates at the RA discuss and vote on a number of items presented by colleagues. You can read the *New Business Items* discussed at Convention 2006 in full on *MSTA OnLine*, www.mstanea.org, *MembersOnly*.



LocalLine

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MSTA LOCALS

Across the State

Maryland's Teachers of the Year 2006-2007

MSTA members take honors in every county!*

Congratulations to the state's 24 Teachers of the Year! The Maryland State Department of Education program culls seven finalists from county picks, and then conducts interviews to decide the statewide award winner. The finalists included a career changer, a National Board Certified Teacher, a registered paramedic, department chairs and community and education activists. Every county winner is a member of their Local Association and MSTA!

"These 24 teachers show the kind of intelligence and enthusiasm our students hunger for and deserve," said MSTA President Clara Floyd. "They embody the very best of our profession—true dedication to students and a passion for lifelong learning."

Winner:

Michelle M. Hammond,
Stephen Decatur MS
(Worcester)

Read an interview with Hammond on page 21

Finalists:

Susan A. Casler, Crofton MS (Anne Arundel); Kenneth B. Fischer, Winters Mill HS (Carroll); Mark C. Sunkel, Linganore HS (Frederick); Lisa M. Bender, Southern Garrett HS (Garrett); Stephanie B. Flick, Benjamin Banneker ES (St. Mary's); Diana D. Churchman, Charles H. Chipman ES (Wicomico)

Teachers of the Year:

Alan W. Hammond, Allegany HS (Allegheny); Andrea L. Jackson, Northwood ES (Baltimore City*); Michelle Lee Dressel, Loch Raven Academy (Baltimore County); Barbara Redgate, Patuxent HS (Calvert); Tamra Baurys, Greensboro ES (Caroline); Gail Dillaway, Rising Sun HS (Cecil); Sarah Smith, Milton M. Somers MS (Charles); Lorraine Anders, Warwick ES (Dorchester); Susan Jones Healy, North Bend ES (Harford); Brooke Kuhl-McClelland, Hammond HS (Howard); Lisa Marie Orem, Henry Highland Garnett ES (Kent); Robert Dahlin, Ridgeview MS (Montgomery); Denise Dunn, Deerfield Run ES (Prince George's); Honey Michele Voermann, Stevensville MS (Queen Anne's); Andrew Todd, Somerset 6-7 Intermediate School (Somerset); Lisa Kline, Tilghman ES (Talbot); Nancy Souders, Smithsburg MS (Washington)

**Baltimore City teachers are represented by the Baltimore Teachers Union, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers.*

MSTA members are the newest Milken Award winners!

MSTA member-teachers Dana Perdue, Anne Arundel, and Evelyn Sweeney, St. Mary's, were among 72 surprise recipients across the country to receive the \$25,000 Milken Family Foundation (MFF) National Educator Award this month.

Perdue, a third-grade teacher at Central ES, is a teacher mentor and is credited with helping her school achieve some of the highest test scores in the state. A career changer, Sweeney moved to teaching from domestic social work

and finance. She teaches a bilingual third-grade class at Leonardtown ES.

Since the program began in 1987, more than 2,200 educators have received the cash award of \$25,000 to use as they wish. To date, MFF has awarded over \$56 million to U.S. educators. The foundation alternates annually in honoring primary and secondary teachers.

Mark your calendars! MSTA's Leadership Training Programs



Don't let the name fool you! It's called the Women's Leadership Training Program (WLTP), but it's open to any MSTA member interested in leading the next generation of professional educator-activists. WLTP has trained hundreds of men

and women eager to grow, learn and share as they support their profession.

On December 8-9 in Linthicum, MSTA hosts Personal & Professional Decision-Making Skills, an opportunity for self-discovery while exploring values, skills and ambitions.

MSTA's Group Process Skills, presented February 2-3, 2007, in Frederick, is a study of the intricacies of group dynamics, a useful skill in many areas.

On March 16-17, 2007, MSTA brings Personal Assessment Leadership Skills to St. Michaels. The program is especially for members who have little or no Association experience but are eager to mature as leaders.

Visit MSTA OnLine, www.mstanea.org, for information including specific locations, directions and more.

Allegany

Members take charge in Allegany

At \$31,579, teachers in Allegany County had the lowest starting salary in the state.

But, thanks to top-notch negotiating last spring by Allegany County Teachers Association (ACTA) President Valeria Arch, UniServ Director Steve Benson and the local bargaining team, a new contract boosts starting salary to \$40,000 beginning August 2008.

The bargaining win, which includes additional increases for teachers with Master's degrees and advanced placement certificates, and an increase in retirees' health care benefits, puts the beautiful Western Maryland county in a much better position to attract and retain educators.

But in the same contract, the Board of Education axed funding for the current full-time president position. "After ACTA's strong win at the bargaining table, our members saw the Board's action for what it was—an attempt to rein us in," said Benson. Recognizing the value of their new contract and the need to maintain the Association's presence, foresighted members took the lead and agreed to a dues increase of \$80 per year to continue funding a full-time ACTA leader. Congratulations, ACTA!

"Our members saw the Board's action for what it was—an attempt to rein us in."

Allegany UniServ Director
Steve Benson

Anne Arundel

Anne Arundel teachers change the tide

After laboring for three years under the weight of a difficult school superintendent, the Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County (TAAAC) is on a roll, thanks to an attractive new contract. Now teachers there can look forward to a condensed salary scale, a 6 percent increase for each of the next two years, and a 5 or 6 percent increase the following year (bringing starting pay for teachers to a healthy \$48,235 in 2009).

TAAAC's good news, says President Tim Mennuti, "reflects the skills of our bargaining team and the activism of our members. We bargained for and got access to all Board of Education new teacher sessions, too, where we were able to share our success. We enrolled a record 93 percent of all new teachers who obviously saw the value of our advocacy."

The contract isn't the only sign of progress. The new superintendent attended TAAAC's annual back-to-school picnic and, shortly after, invited Mennuti to accompany him on visits to each of the county's 118 schools.

In an environment of collaboration, Mennuti notes, "Teachers have been open and honest in their appraisals of what they need to be successful, and principals have been candid about their needs.

"We'll still have disagreements, but the more we work together, the better our chances of avoiding a breakdown when we broach the tough issues."

datebook

DECEMBER 2006

- 1-2 MSTA Board of Directors Meeting
- 8-9 NEA Board of Directors Meeting
- 8-9 MSTA Minority Leadership Seminar
- 8-9 MSTA Personal & Professional Decision-Making Skills Training
- 12 MSTA East Meeting
- 12-13 Maryland State Board of Education Meeting
- 14 MSTA Urban Bargaining
- 16-24 Hanukkah Begins December 15 at sunset
- 22 First Day of Winter
- 25 Christmas Day
- 25-1 MSTA office closed
- 26-1 Kwanzaa
- 31 New Year's Eve

JANUARY 2007

- 1 New Year's Day
MSTA office closed
- 8 MSTA West Meeting
- 9 MSTA East Meeting
- 9-10 MSTA Board of Directors Meeting
- 10 General Assembly Begins
- 10 MSTA Open House
- 11 MSTA Urban Bargaining
- 13 MSTA Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Breakfast Observance & Minority Recognition Awards
- 15 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day
MSTA office closed
- 18 Joint Governance Staff Meeting
- 18 Presidents' Advisory Meeting
- 20 Islamic New Year Begins
January 19 at sunset

MSTA staff help lead the way to victory



He drove election efforts in the Lower Shore; nobody ever had to ask him for help. He knew what had to be done.

J.C. PARKER IS ONE OF MY HEROES.

He's an MSTA UniServ Director on the Lower Shore, serving our members in Somerset and Worcester Counties.

Before joining the MSTA staff in 2001, J.C. was active in his Local Association. Over the years, he served as chief negotiator, legislative chair, and president of his Wicomico County Local.

His extensive state-level service was highlighted by 16 years as chair of MSTA's Legislative Committee.

This column allows me to share my insight into the Association's operation. Usually, I'll address our programs, initiatives, successes or failures. Sometimes, though—like this month—I'll veer off that track a bit to shine a light on just one of many of the dedicated and talented staff who devotes their life to serving MSTA leaders and members.

I am blessed to lead a staff that is loaded with talent. I expect to highlight some others in future issues of *ActionLine*. But let's get back to J.C. Parker.

J.C. poured his heart into the 2006 election. He drove election efforts in the Lower Shore; nobody ever had to ask him for help. He knew what had to be done. J.C. began his days before the sun came up and ended them long after it set, working tirelessly on behalf of candidates endorsed by MSTA and its Locals.

J.C. didn't restrict his efforts to his own Locals in Worcester and Somerset Counties, but also covered campaigns in Wicomico County. This was a historic year in Wicomico, where voters elected their first county executive, Rick Pollitt, a nine-year veteran of the Wicomico Board of Education, endorsed by our teacher and ESP Locals.

Another winner, Delegate Norm Conway, is chair of the House Appropriations Committee and a good friend of education. Del. Conway has a reputation for true bipartisanship. He takes the gubernatorial budget proposals and crafts budget bills that have gained overwhelming support from Democrats and Republicans alike.

J.C. championed the effort to distribute 10,500 Apple Ballots at the polls, each listing Norm Conway as a teacher-recommended candidate. More than 22,000 pieces of literature supporting Conway's election, paid for by our Fund for Children and Public Education, were mailed to voters. Conway won by just 235 votes. Our efforts clearly made the difference.

While many across Maryland have focused most of their attention on Governor-Elect Martin O'Malley and Senator-Elect Ben Cardin, I'm savoring some of our local victories. Without the leadership and dedication of staff members like J.C. Parker, there would be much less to savor.



Many winners of local races from both parties had MSTA and its Locals to thank for their victories. Some of the highlights:

In Charles County, which had a school board dominated by opponents of public education, 5 of 7 winning candidates were heavily supported by the Local, EACC.

The Prince George's County Educators Association, which led a return of the local school board to an all-elected body, saw 6 of 8 recommended candidates emerge victorious (with one race still undecided at press time).

Winning Republican candidates endorsed by MSTA and its Locals included David Craig for Harford County Executive and delegates Bob Costa (Anne Arundel), Sue Krebs (Carroll), Rick Weldon (Frederick) and Barry Glassman (Harford).

The Queen Anne's County Commission now has a pro-public education majority, thanks to a strong grassroots effort by the Local, QACEA.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Write David:
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Annapolis, MD 21401
dhelfman@mstanea.org

MSTA priorities: The resources and support to provide a great public school for every child!

Maryland's election returns showed many pro-public education candidates winning national, state and local offices, with a major helping hand from MSTA members. Now, the Association is focusing on our education priorities over the next several years with the General Assembly, the State Department and State Board of Education, and local school boards and districts across the state.

To support our lobbying and collective bargaining efforts, MSTA and Local Associations adopted a new message for elected officials and the public: *Great Public Schools Are a Basic Right for Every Child*. We must keep the focus on reforms we know will help educators boost student achievement and close the achievement gap.

A key part of this message is that *everyone* shares the responsibility of ensuring every child can attend a great public school. Educators know that every day we must have high expectations for all our students and give them the attention they need to succeed, but parents, communities and public officials also must do their part.

For national, state and local policymakers, that means providing educators with the tools and resources needed to meet high standards and put every student in Maryland on the road to success. Among the additional tools and resources MSTA will advocate for in 2007 and beyond are:

► **High quality instruction in every classroom** Research clearly shows that to raise student achievement across the board, there must be a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. Yet too many schools in high-poverty areas struggle to attract and retain the high quality teachers that students need to succeed. Increasing support for candidates for National Board Certification and providing professional development aligned with the new Maryland standards will help.

► **Increased school funding** The Thornton funding increases will be phased in by 2008. MSTA and other education groups will work with the governor and legislature to fully fund Thornton by including the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) in the approved budget. Pre-K and all-day kindergarten in Title I schools remain MSTA priorities.

► **Greater funding for school construction and renovation**

The Kopp Commission recommended spending at least \$250 million every year for 10 years to meet the backlog of construction needs. Maryland has already fallen behind this schedule by \$322 million, leaving 70,000 Maryland school children in classroom trailers, so MSTA will push to eliminate this backlog.

► **Reduced class size and workload** Research also shows that students need individualized attention from teachers and instructional assistants to meet high standards, which means lowering class sizes. At the same time, *No Child Left Behind* and state requirements have saddled educators with more bureaucracy and paperwork that take time away from teaching, planning and analyzing data that should drive individual school improvement plans. MSTA will advocate for addressing these issues through legislation, regulation and collective bargaining.

Of course, MSTA and Local Associations will continue to fight at the bargaining table and in Annapolis for the professional pay and benefits needed to recruit and retain the high quality educators needed to get the job done. That includes a starting teacher salary of at least \$40,000, a living wage for all ESP, decent health care benefits and further pension improvements.

Help elect another friend to the State Retirement and Pension Board!

MSTA member Theresa Lochte, a retired Baltimore County speech pathologist, is on tap to replace State Retirement and Pension Board trustee and longtime friend, Carl Lancaster. MSTA member Bill Brown remains on the board.

Help Lochte collect and submit the 500 signatures of active and retired members of the teachers' pension and retirement systems necessary for nomination! Pass the nomination form around in your school!

For nomination forms: Visit *MSTA OnLine*, www.mstanea.org, and look for "Download a pension trustee nomination form," or contact your Local Association.

Deadline for receipt: January 31. Return original to Randy Mickens, MSTA Government Relations, 140 Main St., Annapolis, MD 21401.

MSTA's ESP Day is February 24, 2007

Look for more information on MSTANet, www.mstanea.org, and in the January ActionLine!

ESP and School Safety



Steve Brooks, Calvert County, says school safety is a real issue for ESP on the front lines.

Negotiations have recently begun, and Calvert County ESP President Steve Brooks, building supervisor at Patuxent HS, wants to be sure his members get the training and support they need to keep students and themselves out of harm's way.

Education support professionals are truly the first line of defense in most public schools. While teachers are focused on their students in the classroom and other staff is often tucked away in offices, some ESP are tending to the physical plant—maintaining the grounds and facilities of Maryland's schools and, most often, working individually.

Many MSTANet ESP members across the state have already experienced frightening incidences involving an agitated student or intruder. For Brooks, the point is simple. "The building supervisor doesn't have enough training to actually be on the front line. I think it's wrong," Brooks said, "for the pay we get to have to be on the front line dealing with potentially dangerous situations from inside and outside the school. Police and security officers are specially trained and paid well to do that.

"I'm going to bargain hard this year to have at least one day of special training for building supervisors. We need to know what to look for. I would take it to the state level to lobby if need be—if I don't see that we're making any progress on this issue."

By all standards, School Resource Officers (SROs) are the best choice to help students and employees stay safe. Most school incidents arise from conflicts among students, says Cpl. Mike Rudinski, president of the Maryland SRO Association and SRO at Hyattsville HS in Prince George's County.

"A trained SRO who can nurture relationships with the players in their school community can act as preventive intelligence, sharing what's happening at the school with the community," said Rudinski. "And, because an SRO is also plugged into the local police department, they know details of gang or community violence from the night before and can prepare the school for crisis response."

There are just 200-250 SROs stationed throughout Maryland's 1,300 schools.

Rudinski's comments may seem out of touch for smaller or more rural counties, but Brooks, in quiet Calvert County, thinks the wake-up call has already been made, and it's time to take the need seriously.

"We ought to have at least one officer present at my school. That would deter a lot of things. Our county has always been small and safe, but it's getting to the point where people have to be realistic," Brooks said. "We've got a nuclear reactor in the county, so people come from everywhere. The most important thing is to keep the kids safe."

Just recently, Brooks and a police officer drew a detailed map of Patuxent HS, plus a photo guide of every entrance and exit in the building, including those only a seasoned building supervisor or maintenance employee would know. "I know my building inside and out. With this new site plan, if something should ever happen," Brooks said, "officers will be able to get in and move around and nobody would even know they were in the building. It was a good team effort and made our school safer."

Learn more about school safety

MSTANet ESP Professional Development Conference
Saturday, February 24, 2007 • Maritime Institute
Linthicum Heights, Maryland

Join your colleagues from across the state at MSTANet's first-ever all-day ESP Professional Development Conference! One course, Crisis Response Team (CRT) Training, will show you how to help prepare your school community for emergency health and safety concerns, including school violence.

Look for information and a complete schedule of the ESP Professional Development Conference in upcoming issues of *FrontLine**, the January/February issue of *ActionLine*, and on MSTANet OnLine, www.mstanea.org.

*See the back cover for information on how to receive *FrontLine*, MSTANet's weekly e-newsletter.

A Delicate Echo of Thunder

T. Scott Miller, Washington County UniServ director, was a German teacher in Hillsboro, Oregon, when Kip Kinkel murdered his parents and two fellow students at Thurston HS in nearby Springfield. Read Miller's reflections on the event on MSTANet OnLine, www.mstanea.org.

Education support professionals (ESP)! *OnTheJob* covers the issues, successes, and challenges ESP face every day. Submit your suggestions for future stories! Contact *ActionLine*, 800/448-MSTANet, x131; cnewton@mstanea.org

Michelle Hammond, Maryland's Teacher of the Year

"It's my life's work to make kids excited about reading!"

Worcester County middle school teacher Michelle Hammond took top honors at the 2006-2007 Teacher of the Year Gala, held earlier this month to celebrate all 24 of the state's honorees (See *LocalLine*, page 16). "This kind of public acknowledgement of our very public work can only help attract even more quality teachers to our schools," said Clara Floyd, MSTA president. "Congratulations to Michelle and all of the teachers! I'm so proud that every county winner is a member of their Local Association."

Hammond, a 12-year member of her Local, Worcester County Education Association (WCEA) and MSTA, took time out from a busier-than-usual schedule to talk with *ActionLine* about her language arts teaching practice at Stephen Decatur MS, and what it means to be a member of WCEA and MSTA.

ActionLine: What inspired you to become a teacher?

Michelle Hammond: I have always treasured books and knew I had to spend my life with them. It is my life's work to make kids excited about reading. If you can read, you'll never be alone or lonely.

AL: What drew you to middle school?

MH: As middle schoolers teeter between their childhood and adult lives, a lot of changes happen. I keep a photo of myself from my middle school days in my classroom. It reminds me of how I felt back then—insecure, hyper, fearful, frustrated, shy.

AL: How do you instill a passion for reading in your students?

MH: I employ any strategy I can to achieve 100 percent student involvement in books and literature. My favorite strategy is to make a piece of literature pop up in living three dimension.

We read a rather dry piece on the geometry of Stonehenge once. I cut a giant scale model of the stones from black background paper to hang around the room. We read the selection from inside the stones. Another time we created a Victorian museum in the classroom with interactive exhibits.

AL: What is your favorite assignment to bring out the "inner author" in your students?

MH: Every year we create a team poetry anthology and print 100 copies. Each student creates a page in the anthology where they pour out their teen angst, passion and joys. They take so much care to create masterpieces because they know it will be going into 100 homes!

AL: Why did you join WCEA and MSTA?

MH: I joined because I wanted representation for my own interests as an educator, and because I sleep better knowing

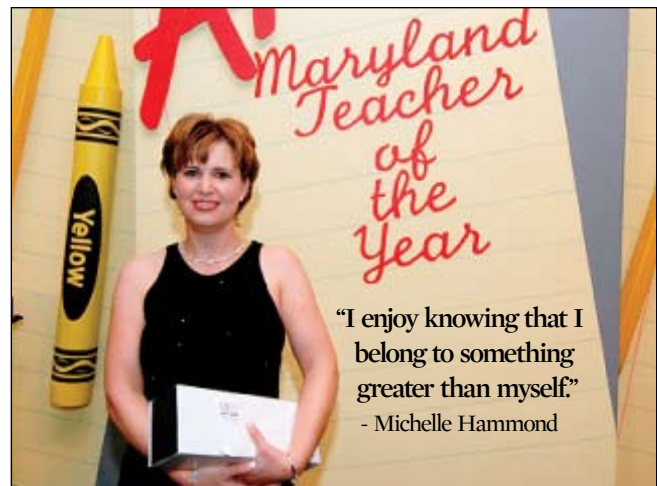
that I have legal representation should the unthinkable happen. I also enjoy knowing that I belong to something greater than myself.

AL: Why do you think it's important for teachers to have a union or professional association?

MH: The Association ensures that teachers are given the power, time and resources to do their jobs to the very best of their abilities. It also helps to create effective schools and classrooms because it puts students first by enabling educators to be effective.

AL: How has the Association—WCEA or MSTA—contributed to your success as a teacher?

MH: I get lots of fantastic ideas each year when I attend the Convention in Ocean City. By reading *ActionLine* and *Front-Line*, I learn strategies and get great ideas that I can use in my language arts classroom. In addition, I know that I have a representative I can go to with my concerns.



MyDay



Blair Todd

6th grade reading, science and social studies teacher
Carrollton Elementary School Prince George's County
This is Blair's eighth year as a teacher and his seventh year at Carrollton ES. He and his wife Nikol have a new son, Blair Todd II. Blair served as a delegate to the MSTA Representative Assembly this year.



7:40 a.m. Welcoming my students to my classroom.

6:07 a.m. My usual morning routine: reading my Bible and eating breakfast, a Danish and milk.



9:42 a.m. One of my reading groups and I are working on a lesson in the computer lab.



They're learning how to search for information regarding immigration through Ellis Island.

12:28 p.m.

Lunch time with some co-workers. Taco Day!



1:30 p.m. In my social studies classes, we've been studying how humans affect the environment. Here, we're taking a trip to the recycling bin in our school parking lot, where we recycle all types of paper.



4 p.m.

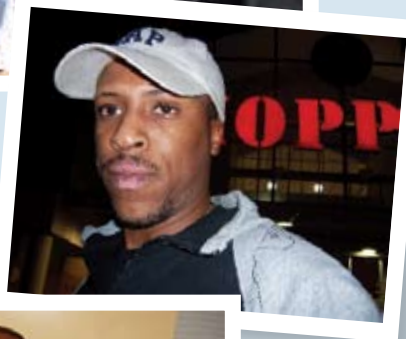
Here I am with my after school chess club.



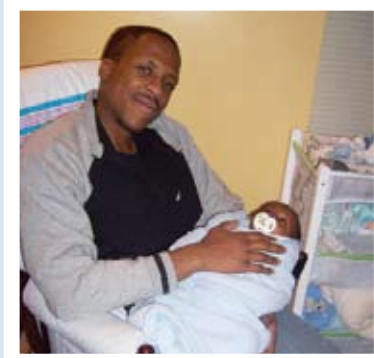
8 p.m. Shifting gears getting home from school—a video game and a snack before dinner.



6:14 p.m. I have to stop at Shoppers before I get home!



9:15 p.m. Here I am helping my newborn son B.J. get to sleep after a bedtime story.



When you need help or have a suggestion, contact your Association Representative at school or:

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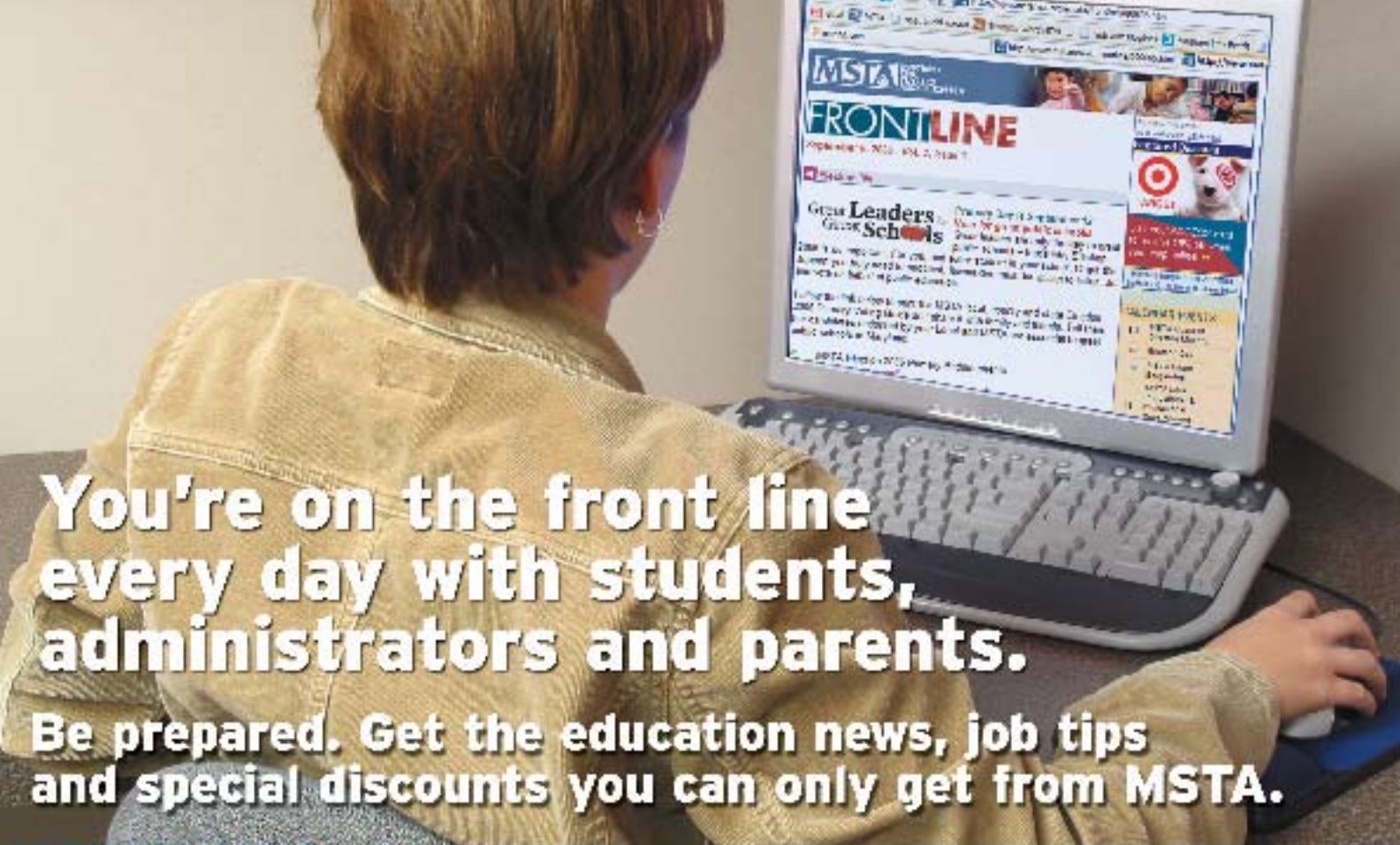
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