

# actionLine

MARYLAND STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION • NEA

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 6

## Educators Reach Out

**In their chaotic lives, homeless students look to schools for stability**



# QUESTIONS

HOW DO I PLAN  
FOR THE CARE OF MY  
AGING PARENTS?

HOW DO I  
PROTECT HER  
FUTURE?

WHERE CAN I GET  
HELP TO MANAGE  
MY BUDGET?

# ANSWERED.

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## 8 Educators Reach Out

Last year, 8,456 Maryland students had no place to call home. They lived in motels, hotels, and campgrounds, or doubled-up with another family. Their schoolhouse and their educators often provide the only security they can count on.



## 12 General Assembly 2008

This year, MSTA members and lobbyists pushed hard on serious issues surrounding funding, your pension, bullying, and an education employees' labor relations board. Member-lobbyists (many first-timers) came to Annapolis to share their opinions with their legislators at MSTA's weekly lobby night event.

"I lobbied against the proposed tax credit for donations to private schools. I think it would do nothing but negatively affect funding public schools."

Luisella Garrity, Anne Arundel  
Magothy River MS *First-time lobbyist*

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## To meet students' needs, we must take on the toughest challenges



We do everything we can to help these students be successful. But frequently, the depth of their disadvantages and unrelenting pressures from rigid mandates overwhelm our best intentions.

AS EDUCATORS, WE PLAY VITAL MULTIPLE ROLES IN THE lives of our students. These responsibilities go well beyond our official job titles to encompass roles such as mentor, confidant, community liaison, and, in too many cases, parental substitute.

For students who are homeless or live in other transitory circumstances, we often go further. More than 8,000 students across Maryland don't have a permanent home, and they are much more likely to have academic difficulties, health problems and emotional distress, or be victims of abuse and neglect.

We can't solve every problem, but it is our duty to make sure that these children enjoy a caring and supportive school environment, receive tutoring and counseling, and get connected to the community services they and their families can use.

The homeless student population is just one of the disadvantaged groups public schools are asked to serve. Educators are now required to bring up to high academic standards growing numbers of low-income students, students with physical and cognitive disabilities, English-language learners, and students who live with one or neither of their parents.

We do everything we can to help these students be successful. But frequently, the depth of their disadvantages and unrelenting pressures from rigid mandates overwhelm our best intentions.

To help these children and provide them with the skills they need and deserve requires adequate funding from local, state and federal sources. Yet just when we are seeing clear signs of rising academic achievement, the economic horizon is darkening on all fronts.

Receiving less aid to meet these needs and demands is unimaginable. MSTAs leaders and lobbyists have advocated—and will continue to push for—solutions that would generate the long-term revenue needed to give every child access to great public schools.

But at this moment, there is only one new major revenue alternative that we've been offered that can make a difference in the near future for public schools: the slots referendum in November. Your MSTAs Board of Directors analyzed all the data carefully and considered alternatives. Finally, the Board voted last month to support MSTAs involvement in passage of this referendum (see pp. 20-21 for more details).

This is a tough challenge for our Association. Many of us have reservations about slots, as educators and individuals, and would prefer other solutions, if any existed.

Yet we need a major source of funding right now to continue tackling the much tougher challenges we face every day, and to make sure that all children benefit from the progress we are making in Maryland.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Write Clara:

MSTA, 140 Main Street,  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
cfloyd@mstanea.org



### Showcase your knowledge and talents at MSTAs Convention

If you aren't an RA delegate but want to be a part of the Convention, MSTAs has two great ways for you to participate!

#### Apple-a-Day Health Fair

Experts/exhibitors on wellness issues, such as nutrition, fitness, smoking cessation, indoor air quality, stress reduction or diabetes prevention, needed for the Apple-a-Day Health Fair, sponsored by the Women's Concerns Committee.

**Interested?** Priority consideration for proposals received by April 22.

*Note: Hotel, meals and travel expenses paid for by MSTAs.*

#### Wanted: Member Trade Show Exhibitors

Showcase your interests, skills, hobbies and wares! Reserve your booth by June 15 and receive the Early Bird registration fee of \$75!

Visit *MSTAs OnLine* [www.mstanea.org](http://www.mstanea.org), to learn more or contact Wendy Busse, 800/448-MSTAs x3637, [wbusse@mstanea.org](mailto:wbusse@mstanea.org).

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!

## *Have security and terrorism concerns changed the way you approach your work?*



**HILARY ROSENBERG**  
Teacher *Fifth grade*  
Arrowhead ES  
Member for 3 years  
Prince George's County

### **Lessons about terrorism**

Around September 11, we do lessons about terrorism and the war and how it's affected us locally. A lot of the students have family or friends in Iraq or are somehow affected by the war. But it hasn't affected our everyday life at school or how we approach our teaching.

### **Code Red drills**

Our school has become very safe. We have Code Red drills. Code Red means someone is in the area or the building. We lock doors, get students in a small area away from the windows and keep them calm. You have to hear two voices on the intercom to know it's safe. Then it's over. It's clear.



**JENNIFER BERKLEY**  
Teacher *First grade*  
Holly Hall ES  
Member for 4 years  
Cecil County



**JEREMY BAIR**  
Teacher *French*  
Liberty HS  
Member for 7 years  
Carroll County

### **Monthly drills**

On a schoolwide basis, we have different policies we've put in place, and we go through drills monthly. But I would say, in our educational practices, we do the same activities, and we're still able to go outside for certain events, so I don't think there are any problems with it.

### **Aware of environment**

I guess I am more aware of who comes into the building. I believe that our work environment is safe. We don't always know who is going to be approaching our building or for what purpose, but it has made me more aware of people who are entering and what their purpose is.



**DEANNA BOSTON**  
Administrative secretary  
Choptank ES  
Member for 10 years  
Dorchester County



**BETTY ROCHESTER**  
Security guard/Custodian  
Queen Anne's County HS  
Member for 29 years  
Queen Anne's County

### **Crisis action plan**

We do have a crisis action plan at our school, and I was very involved in working that up. We've taken precautions as well. For example, my building has been damaged, so they're repairing it, and I'm walking the halls a lot and checking doors. Some outsiders have come in before, but I got them before they got too far.

# StartingLine

NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW

## NEA: Relentless on NCLB

As MSTA members know, NEA has been a relentless presence in Washington, D.C., dogging legislators and the courts in pursuit of a new, better version of the *No Child Left Behind* law that is pro-student, pro-educator, and pro-public school. But the Association is far from alone in trying to get the bill fixed.

Aiding NEA's efforts is the powerhouse Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA), a coalition of more than 140 organizations representing 50 million members of education, labor, civil rights, religious, children's, citizens, disability, and other groups. In a recent letter to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP)—the committee scheduled to hear the bill this spring—NEA and fellow FEA members asked the committee to allow two weeks for public review of the bill's language so that the final reauthorization "results in as few unintended effects as possible." In short: Don't make the same mistake twice. Let us at it!



Source: The Carlos M. Castañeda Educational Foundation, Inc

**“Self-importance is our greatest enemy. Think about it—what weakens us is feeling offended by the deeds and misdeeds of our fellow men. Our self-importance requires that we spend most of our lives offended by someone.”**

CARLOS CASTAÑEDA (1925-1998)

NEA's ESEA Strategy Team continues to have conversations with members of Congress to explore different ways to address the problems in NCLB. Weakened by protests around the country and increased bipartisan recognition of its flaws, the law is more vulnerable than ever to the changes and improvements NEA, state and local affiliates, and members have long advocated.

## Don't miss NEA's new NCLB page!

The new and improved site, [www.nea.org/esea](http://www.nea.org/esea), includes easy ways to email Congress, sign a petition, and learn more about NEA's NCLB agenda. NEA's website also includes a list of more than 130 bipartisan NCLB-related bills supported by NEA. Log on! Take action!

## NEA Member Benefits Giveaway

**Just in time for a spring getaway!**

Register now on the NEA Member Benefits website for a chance to win a \$100 Hertz Car Rental Certificate plus a \$500 American Express Gift Card, just in time for an impromptu spring break or well-planned summer vacation! Deadline for contest entry: 11:59:59 p.m., April 30. No purchase necessary to enter. Visit [www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com) and look for the Free Giveaways button.

## Countdown to summer!

Don't forget MSTA's ACCESS discount program when you're planning your summer vacation. You'll find money-saving discounts on hotels, car rentals, activities, shopping and more! Visit *MSTA OnLine*, [www.mstanea.org](http://www.mstanea.org), click "ACCESS Savings!" and enter.

Never used ACCESS? It's easy; use the member ID number on the front of your membership card to log in, then follow the simple instructions on the ACCESS page.



## Read Across America Legislators tip their hats to The Cat



When The Cat visited the busy halls of the State House to celebrate Read Across America last month, legislators from across the state hustled for a snapshot with the famous feline. The pols, taking a break from the stress of a particularly difficult budget debate, made the day official by issuing a RAA Day proclamation while a mischievous Cat did his very best to stay out of trouble! For more about Read Across America, see *Teaching & Learning* p. 19.

## HELP WANTED: Washington, D.C. NEA Representative Assembly

See and hear the presidential candidate(s) make their pitch to NEA's 10,000 delegates! Witness your Association make major policy decisions! Meet colleagues from across the country! You can do all those things, plus get behind-the-scenes experience in the largest democratic assembly in the world, just by joining MSTAs NEA RA host volunteer crew, July 2-6! You'll receive \$40/day, lunch, snacks and reimbursement for parking and tolls.

MSTA is responsible for staffing the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education booth and the RA floor microphones—that's nearly 100 people each day, says LeeAnn Kaye, Host Committee chair. "It's great fun. The floor is really where the action is, and volunteers there are right in the thick of things—it's exciting and extremely informative."

Visit *MSTA OnLine* for more information and to download a volunteer form. To receive a form by mail or fax, contact Debra Nixon, MSTAs NEA RA coordinator, 800/448-MSTA x3658; [dnixon@mstanea.org](mailto:dnixon@mstanea.org), or Kaye, 301/598-5480; [lakayeneaconvention@comcast.net](mailto:lakayeneaconvention@comcast.net).

## by the numbers

### It's Tax Time!

According to the Internal Revenue Service, more than 130,000,000 people filed an individual tax return for 2006. Other interesting tax statistics...

**8 billion** The number of pages (forms and instructions) the IRS sends out each year

**300,000** The number of trees cut down to provide paper for the above

**28** The number of times the pages sent by the IRS each year, laid end-to-end, would go around the earth

**7.8 million** The number of words in the complete Internal Revenue Code

**114,000** The number of people employed by the Internal Revenue Service

Source: *NetScientia Web Development Corporation*, [www.netscientia.com/tax-taxes.html](http://www.netscientia.com/tax-taxes.html)

## on the web [www.mstanea.org](http://www.mstanea.org)

➔ **Welcome Springtime**  
Spring cleaning for your body,  
mind and home!

### **Spring Cleaning Tips and Techniques with Martha Stewart**

"Spring Cleaning 101" features downloadable checklists, articles, photos and video.  
[www.marthastewart.com/spring-cleaning](http://www.marthastewart.com/spring-cleaning)

### **Mayo Clinic: Stress Center**

"Find out how stress is harmful, recognize stress symptoms, and explore practical tips on stress relief and stress management."  
[www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress/SR99999](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress/SR99999)

### **WebMD: Eating Healthy**

Articles, tips and quizzes to stay on track with healthy eating at home and while dining out.  
[www.webmd.com/diet/guide/health-and-diet-eating-healthy](http://www.webmd.com/diet/guide/health-and-diet-eating-healthy)

### **Time Management from Mind Tools**

Articles on personal time management, prioritizing to do lists, scheduling and other ways to achieve more, manage stress and beat work overload.  
[www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN\\_HTE.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm)



# Educators Reach Out

## **In their chaotic lives, homeless students look to schools for stability**

You wouldn't know Shauna\* is homeless at first. She has a warm winter coat, decent clothes, school supplies and a caring mom. But in truth, she has no bed of her own, no cozy sofa to cuddle up on and no place to call home. At school, her teachers see a bright and cheerful child, but one often anxious and forgetful. For Shauna, the schoolhouse has become the place she can count on.

*\*Not her real name*

## A safe haven

“I had a third-grade student, Shauna, who was new to the school. She and her family were living in a hotel with a number of other people,” said Cynthia Hunt, a 13-year teacher at Gaithersburg ES in Montgomery County. “She had trouble with her memory, but it wasn’t a learning disability, it was from her situation. She had to remember so many little things, processing new information all the time about her living situation: ‘What bed do I sleep in?’ ‘When is my mom coming back?’ ‘Where’s my book, my pencil?’ ‘It’s too noisy!’”

“For her, something as easy as homework was a challenge. So, I just didn’t push it. She still had to do her work and take her tests, but we studied in creative ways. She wanted to do her work; it was part of the normalcy she craved. She was eager to please and succeed and *wanted us* to hold those high expectations for her. It gave her something to look forward to.

“It’s not that you change your expectations for a student living with that challenge, you just have to work around them so you’re not punishing the child for their social condition.”

At Gaithersburg ES, there are about 10 homeless families with children enrolled this year, the most they’ve ever had. It’s a school with a large disadvantaged minority student population, and the staff is always alert for signs of need. When a homeless student confides that they haven’t eaten for two days, or a mother or grandmother calls the school for help, Rosa Baxter, the school’s administrative assistant, says she immediately sends out a confidential alert to school staff. Without fail, “bags and bags of groceries arrive the next day.” Sometimes she delivers them herself.

There were 8,456\*\* homeless students like Shauna in Maryland’s public schools last year, one percent of the enrolled total. In the U.S., according to the Institute on Children and Poverty, 1.35 million children are likely to experience homelessness over the course of a year, representing two percent of all children in the nation.

Most of the students identified as homeless are in grades K-5; pre-K and older homeless children often slip through the cracks. The U.S. Department of Education reports that only 16 percent of homeless preschoolers are enrolled in a public school program, a result of inadequate funding, which hinders efforts to locate, engage, recruit, enroll and retain students. “If homeless families had better and easier access to high-quality preschool programs, as they move from place to place in a county or the state,” said Phyllis Parks Robinson, a veteran early childhood teacher in Montgomery County and MSTA treasurer, “the child would have consistent exposure to

quality learning time and get connected to the services many of them need.”

For older “unaccompanied youth”—those under 18 who are not cared for by a parent, foster family or institution—education is even more difficult to address. Many leave home after years of sexual or physical abuse, poor relationships, addiction and neglect. Finding them and getting them back into school is difficult, but provisions in the McKinney-Vento Act (*see below*) that eliminate barriers such as guardianship issues and residency requirements are in place to help.

For these children not “in the system”, health issues such as anxiety, depression, poor nutrition and low self-esteem make finding them and getting them in school even harder.

## Congress gets involved

In the mid-1980s, Congress noticed that just 57 percent of homeless children were enrolled in school; by 1987, it had established the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Act, which morphed into the McKinney-Vento Homeless Edu-

## What if you were a homeless child?

If you were one of the 8,456 homeless students enrolled in Maryland public schools last year, you would probably spend the night:

- At the home of someone else due to loss of housing or economic hardship (called “doubled-up”);
- In a motel, hotel, trailer park, or camping ground due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; or
- In an emergency or transitional shelter.

If you and your family couldn’t find shelter at any of those places, your primary nighttime residence might even be a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, such as a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, or bus or train station.

How would you brush your teeth or take a bath? How would you do your homework?



*"It's not that you change your expectations, you just have to work around them so you're not punishing the child for their social condition," said Montgomery County member Cynthia Hunt about working with homeless students.*

Education Assistance Act when it was reauthorized under the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001. Now it is known as the Homeless Education Improvement Act of 2007, and again due for reauthorization under NCLB. NEA and MSTA support the provisions of the bill.

"Homeless children and youth should have access to education and other services to promote school stability, readiness and success," said Maryland U.S. Congressman John Sarbanes (D-3rd/MD), a sponsor of the bill. "This legislation will ensure that these children and youth will have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state student academic achievement standards to which all students are held."

McKinney-Vento is designed to address the problems that homeless children and youth have faced in enrolling, attending and succeeding in school. The law requires each state to ensure that each homeless child and youth has equal access to the same pre-K-12 free public education as other students. The law also requires each state to provide a state coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth to carry out the state's McKinney-Vento plan, and a local district liaison to identify and assist homeless students and work with other departments and agencies. The goal is to keep

homeless students in their school of origin with full benefit of education, transportation, dental, health and mental health care services, and, as resources allow, eliminate any additional barriers to school attendance.

These outreach opportunities the law provides make it possible to track and provide educational opportunities to Maryland's homeless school-age children and youth. Federal McKinney-Vento grants provide states with funds; in turn, local districts may vie for program grants.

Last year, the 13 Maryland school districts that received grants enrolled 6,860 of the 8,456 students enrolled. That left almost 20 percent of homeless students without the services McKinney-Vento funding could provide.

## Offering hope on the Shore

In Wicomico County, the Village of Hope offers housing in the form of small apartments for the county's growing homeless population, many of whom are young women with school-age children. Sister Margaret, a longtime homeless advocate, says the biggest anxiety she sees in the children at the Village is their lack of access to some of the activities they see their friends at school enjoying. "When they

can't do something or go somewhere with their classmates, they know it's because there's no money. That's when you see them struggle." Older students worry about clothes or even getting a decent shower.

But, here again, the schoolhouse comes into the picture as the one stable and permanent fixture in the homeless child's life. At Bennett MS, the staff goes beyond the call of duty to be sure students who need extra help for things as basic as washing clothes can count on their school family to help out. A shower after gym class, a fresh towel and a clean T-shirt and pair of jeans can turn an already angst-ridden adolescent's day from bad to bearable.

Gary Hammer, the school's band director and Association rep, said he's seeing more students and families struggling and taking advantage of school services. "If we know a homeless or needy child needs food or clothes, we tell them to stop by our school's Cares Office and bring their book bag. They slip what they need into their bag and no one knows. The recession is hitting the families hard. I see more stu-

For homeless students, the schoolhouse is a place where things stay the same—where they are just like everyone else.

dents unable to get a band instrument because they don't have an address."

Fast-growing Salisbury is Wicomico's largest urban area. Complicating the servicing of transient students, many of whom are Latino children of migrant workers, is the lack of Spanish-language interpreters. None are currently on staff with the county's school system. And with shortages of ESOL teachers everywhere, providing the services mandated by McKinney-Vento to some of the neediest families is next to impossible.

Inevitably, the recession and the mortgage foreclosure crisis bode poorly for many families. "Homelessness is a broad term," said William Cohee, MSDE Coordinator, Homeless Education, Neglected/Delinquent Education. "The current fiscal situation doesn't necessarily mean that there will be more children in shelters, but the possibility of more families doubled-up, living in crowded homes with little space to themselves and the confusion that goes with it, is very real."

For those students like Shauna, the little girl in Cynthia Hunt's class, school becomes the place where things are always the same, where caring and concerned teachers and support staff quietly look after them, and where they can at least pretend they are like everyone else.

"We did anything we could to help alleviate Shauna's stress," said Hunt. "When she was at school I wanted her to feel like she was in a small, but perfect, 'Cosby Show' kind of world. She had to go home to a situation a whole lot less than perfect. She needed to have a kind of normalcy in her life; providing her the most peaceful environment we could, making her feel happy and good about herself throughout the day, was our goal."

*\*\*According to MSDE, Division of Student, Family and School Support, Homeless Education, Neglected/Delinquent Education.*



## Children and Homelessness

### Families with children are among the fastest growing segment of the homeless population

Approximately 87% of school-age homeless children are enrolled in school. Of those, only about 77% attend regularly.

37% of homeless children receive the services that help them with enrollment, attendance and success at school.

75% of homeless children perform below grade level in reading.

Homeless children go hungry twice as often as other children and 25% of them report eating less after becoming homeless.

97% of homeless children move, many up to three times in one year.

22% are separated from their families to be put in foster care or live with relatives.

25% have witnessed acts of violence within their family.

More than 20% of homeless preschoolers have emotional problems serious enough to require professional care.

47% of homeless school-age children have anxiety, depression or withdrawal, compared to 18% of other children.

#### Homeless children have:

- Twice as many ear infections
- Four times as many asthma attacks
- Five times more stomach problems
- Six times as many speech problems

#### Homeless children are:

- Four times as likely to have developmental delays
- Twice as likely to have learning disabilities
- Twice as likely to repeat a grade, most often due to frequent absences and moves to new schools

*Source: The National Center for Family Homelessness*

## **GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2008**

# **MSTA members and lobbyists push hard on serious issues**

**No rallies, no big campaigns – just research, strategy and perseverance**

Years ago, lobbying was a little more glamorous. Deals were made in smoky restaurants after a few drinks, a slap on the back and a handshake. Now things are less smoky and more formal (at least most of the time), thanks to the lobbying reform laws that provide some essential boundaries.

But basically, it's still the same. Know the issues, know the players, be relentlessly true to the cause, and know when to give and when to take. Sometimes the issues are big and capture the attention and imagination of more than analysts and policy wonks. Sometimes they're small and matter only to a few passionate people. But when it's done right, lobbying for a cause can be an overwhelmingly satisfying and gratifying job.

This year, MSTA has its finger on the pulse of a number of very interesting bills. Nothing as high-profile as pension improvement or collective bargaining reform. No big campaigns. No marches. No rallies. Just relentless monitoring of 140 bills, any of which could improve your school environment, add to your workload, or help you close the achievement gaps.

MSTA is also on the lookout for bills that deal with privatization, curriculum mandates, standards and accountability, salaries, pensions and other benefits, bullying, and other issues important to educators.

And, of course, we're very closely monitoring the state's ongoing budget crisis and the potential for another series of cuts that could hurt public education, children and families. The economic outlook for Maryland and the country is going from bad to worse, and education will surely suffer.

On the next pages, you can read MSTA testimony about some of these issues and see your colleagues listening to and sharing their opinions with their senators and delegates. Remember: MSTA's power lies in the strength and volume of MSTA's collective voice. When hundreds, even thousands, of educators are carrying the same message from their schools and Locals, legislators hear the message loud and clear.

## School Funding

### House Bill 812/Senate Bill 373

#### Building Opportunities for All Students and Teachers "BOAST"

*MSTA opposes* This legislation establishes a publicly funded voucher program for private schools that diverts state tax

**"I lobbied against the proposed tax credit for donations to private schools. I think it would do nothing but negatively affect funding public schools."**

Luisella Garrity, Anne Arundel  
Magothy River MS *First-time lobbyist*



Dawn Pipkin (left), St. Mary's, and Liz Brown, vice president, Charles, listen as District 28 lawmakers Sen. Middleton and Del. Murphy explain the state's dire fiscal situation.

**"Lobbying is all about research. You've just got to know the issues inside and out to be effective. It's also about building and cultivating relationships and that takes time and lots of patience."**

Bob Rankin, MSTA lobbyist

dollars away from public schools and public programs, and creates an income tax credit for 75% of contributions made to eligible nonprofit educational organizations for qualifying students or teachers to receive scholarships at nonpublic K-12 schools. The research on tuition tax credits in the four states where the program exists is extensive and conclusive. Tuition tax credit programs primarily benefit middle- and upper-income families, often with students already enrolled in private schools, are very costly to the state, and do little to improve public schools.

### SB 388 *Income Tax Credit—Nonpublic School Teachers*

*MSTA opposes* If enacted, this legislation would allow tax credits for private school teachers who pay tuition for graduate-level courses.

We have consistently been on record as opposing public money going to private schools whatever the vehicle—vouchers, textbooks or tax credits.

## Your Pension

### HB 720/SB 564 *Reemployment of Retirees*

*MSTA supports* HB 720 would require local school systems to reimburse the retirement agency for benefit offsets that result from late- or non-reporting of reemployed who are exempt from the offset.



Del. Manno (Dist. 19) and Mavis Ellis, a pupil personnel worker in Montgomery County and member of the Local's board of directors.

The bill corrects an oversight in the law that could hold a member liable for reimbursement for an offset to which they were rightfully entitled because of failure to submit the proper paperwork in a timely fashion. This bill recognizes that the member would be penalized for an error on the part of the school system. The bill addresses the issue by holding the member harmless and making the school system liable.

### **SB 214/HB 371 *Divestiture from Iran***

*MSTA opposes* MSTa opposes legislation that mandates investment strategy because it generally violates the fiduciary responsibilities of the board's trustees and restricts fund managers' investment opportunities. MSTa recognizes the intent of this bill as laudable, but also recognizes that this effort may not be the best vehicle for addressing foreign policy objectives.

**"I wanted the legislators to hear our concerns about reimbursement for unused sick leave, and our concerns about attracting quality teachers to Harford County."**

Colleen Carroll, Harford  
North Harford MS *First-time lobbyist*

**"I've been a rep for several years, but I've never actually been on the rolling Rep Assembly [traveling to Annapolis by bus]. I figure it's about time I did this."**

Daniel Brady, Charles  
McDonough HS *First-time lobbyist*

### **Student Safety**

#### **HB 199, 206, 546, and 732 *Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation***

*MSTA supports* While these bills differ somewhat in the solutions offered, we support the General Assembly's efforts to find solutions to the very serious problem of bullying, harassment and intimidation in schools.

### **Curriculum and Student Life**

#### **SB 582/HB 139 *Multiple Suspensions***

*MSTA supports* Excessive absenteeism due to multiple suspensions erodes any chance a student has for academic advancement and usually is a manifestation of other problems in a student's personal, family or academic life that warrants attention and/or intervention. If left unaddressed, these problems almost always continue to worsen and can lead to even worse behavior, resulting in dropping out of school, expulsion, and, ultimately, a criminal record.

#### **HB 285/SB 96 *Positive Behavioral Interventions***

*MSTA supports* MSTa supports benchmarks for requiring that a school take positive steps to curb truancy in elementary schools. For a program to be effective, staff must buy into the program and be thoroughly trained in it. Secondly, strong oversight is critical so that the existence of a program does not camouflage the problem.

#### **SB 824 *Alcohol and Drug Testing for Pupils***

*MSTA supports* This bill expands the current statute regarding searches of students suspected to be in possession of drugs and/or alcohol to include testing of high school students reasonably suspected to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. As educators and

**"This is my first year as a school rep, so really I feel like I have a lot to learn. I think funding is one of the major things that got us out here tonight."**

Deanna Kuhn, Charles  
Eva Turner ES *First-time lobbyist*

administrators continue working to make schools a safe environment for students, the tools required to accomplish such a task must be expanded.

### **HB 1271/SB 714 Financial Literacy Curriculum**

*MSTA opposes* This bill would require the MSDE to develop curriculum content in financial literacy. MSTAs have long opposed bills that legislatively mandate curriculum requirements and criteria on to local boards of education. We also understand that financial literacy is already incorporated into the curriculum in many instances, either as a graduation requirement, elective course offerings, or embedded into the content standards of economic instruction.

### **SB 447/HB 1421 GED Options Program**

*MSTA supports* This bill and the sponsor recognizes that student dropout rates in Maryland remain at unacceptable levels and that students who do not complete high school face harsher life circumstances with fewer options than if they complete high school.

In today's competitive and global economy, an education is an essential tool in becoming a productive citizen and competing in the marketplace. Students who do not graduate from high school are at a significant disadvantage and face diminished prospects for their futures at great cost to themselves and their communities.

### **Public Employees Relations Board**

#### **HB 1518/SB 850 Public Employees Relations Board**

*MSTA supports* This legislation provides an impartial body to resolve labor disputes between boards of education and local associations. It establishes a five-member board and members to supervise elections, interpret

which subjects are mandatory, illegal or permissive subjects of bargaining, and determine issues of bad faith bargaining.

The bill also lays out a process with timelines for resolving contract differences (process includes mediation, fact finding and arbitration), requires local boards to negotiate a process with ESP for challenging cases of discipline and discharge, and makes the arbitrator's decision binding on both parties.

Visit MSTAs OnLine, [www.mstane.org](http://www.mstane.org), to read more testimony from MSTAs leaders and staff on education issues that may affect you and your colleagues.

**"I really wanted to go out there and see what I could do to make a difference. I'm recently National Board Certified, and I feel like that puts a little more 'oomph' into my lobbying effort."**

Jennifer Delorge McKeown, Montgomery  
New Hampshire Estates ES  
*First time-lobbyist*



Left to right: Montgomery County members Christa Geraci, Amy Watkins, Abby Hendrix and John Hendrix with Del. Heather Mizeur (Dist.20).

# LocalLine

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MSTA LOCALS

## MSTA's RA Spring '08

**Don't miss it! May 17, 2008**

**Were you elected as an MSTA delegate for the 2007-08 year?**

If you plan to attend, contact your Local president!

The agenda includes approval of MSTA's two-year budget, a special election to fill an NEA Director board seat and more! *The Marriott Inn & Conference Center, University of Maryland University College, College Park*

### **MSTA Special Election**

The recent resignation of Evan West from MSTA's Board of Directors means delegates to the May 17 Spring RA will elect a new member to fill his three-year term as NEA Director, which began May 19, 2007, and ends August 31, 2010. Members do not have to be a delegate to the Spring RA to run for the NEA Director seat, but should definitely plan to attend to announce their candidacy and make a short campaign presentation to the delegates before the vote.

**Interested?** Use the form on page 17, or visit *MSTA OnLine*, [www.mstanea.org](http://www.mstanea.org), *MembersOnly*, to download. To receive a form by fax or mail, contact Charlene Conrad, MSTA Center for Legal Issues, [cconrad@mstanea.org](mailto:cconrad@mstanea.org), 410/263-6600 or 800/448 MSTA, x3668.

### **MSTA Election 2008 Results**

Visit *MSTA OnLine*, [www.mstanea.org](http://www.mstanea.org), *MembersOnly*, for complete results of this year's election.

## **MSTA member honored at NEA Gala**



Cheers to Michelle Hammond, a Worcester County member and former Maryland Teacher of the Year, who was honored yet again at the NEA Foundation's annual Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington, D.C.

Hammond, a language arts teacher at Stephen Decatur MS, won an I CAN Learn® Award for Teaching Excellence. MSTA leaders joined more than 900 education, corporate and government officials to honor Hammond and her colleagues, as well as football great Tiki Barber. Barber won the NEA Foundation Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education.

## **A word from your ... MSTA Retired Advisory Council**

Planning to retire this year? You can keep up-to-date on the education and career issues you care about as a member of your professional retired association, MSTA/NEA-Retired.

You may retire, but will you stop caring about children and education?

How about the future of your pension?

Where will you get reliable news and up-to-date information about health care, social security, and savings on medicine and other purchases? MSTA/NEA-Retired members know the answers to all these questions and more because they continue to hear from their Association, just as they did when they were active members. Don't let the opportunity to join while you are still working slip by.

For more information about MSTA's Pre-Retired Program, contact MSTA's Membership Department, 800/448-MSTA.

## **Congratulations! Howard County member receives NEA grant for teacher mentoring program**



*Howard County member Maleeta Kitchen wrote the grant that received a \$5,000 award from NEA. The funds will support an Association-based new teacher mentoring program.*

Maleeta Kitchen's recent grant application for a Local-based teacher mentoring program captured the eye of NEA's National Council of Urban Education Associations. Kitchen, and colleagues Kristina John-Gabriel and Michaeline Van Reenan, received the \$5,000 grant

to implement the one-to-one program at an elementary school with a large population of disadvantaged students and a high turnover of teachers who have less than two years of experience.

“When I became IPD committee chair, my personal goal was to have a mentoring program for the school system and have HCEA support it,” said Kitchen. “Kristina, Michaeline and I put our heads together and really made

it happen. We’re grateful to both HCEA and our building administrator.”

*Twenty-five \$5,000 Urban Grants are awarded annually to help Locals develop programs for public school educators.*

*Learn more about NCUEA and the grants program at [www.nea.org/ncueahome/urbangrants.html](http://www.nea.org/ncueahome/urbangrants.html)*

### NOMINATING FORM FOR UNEXPIRED TERM OF NEA DIRECTOR TO BE ELECTED ON MAY 17, 2008, AT THE SPRING RA

For the office of: **Unexpired term of NEA Director (5/17/2008-8/31/2010)**

*This election vacancy is due to the resignation of Evan West*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Educational position (*teacher or support personnel*) \_\_\_\_\_

Active Member

Retired Member

Local Association \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic Group \_\_\_\_\_

#### Letter of Intent

I hereby state my willingness to run as a candidate for the position marked above. I agree to abide by the MST/NEA policies and bylaws and to adhere to the Code of Ethics as adopted by the Association.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Nominee \_\_\_\_\_

Mail or deliver to: MST/NEA Nominations and Credentials Committee, c/o Trish Bandler/Tyrone Holmes/Susan W. Russell, 140 Main Street, Annapolis, MD, 21401. The form must be received at the above address by 5:00 p.m., Friday, May 9, 2008, or hand delivered at the Spring RA before candidates speak on May 17, 2008.

## datebook

### APRIL 2008

- Passover 19–26  
*Begins at sunset*
- 12** Membership Organizing Workshop
- 18-19** MST/NEA Board of Directors Meeting
- 18-19** MST/NEA Emerging Leaders Academy, Part II
- 28-29** NEA Executive Committee Meeting

### MAY 2008

- Teacher Appreciation Week 4–10
- Cinco de Mayo 5
- Reading is Fun Week 6–12
- National Teachers’ Day 6
- National School Nurses’ Day 7
- Mothers’ Day 11
- Naval Academy Commencement 23
- Memorial Day 26  
*MST/NEA Office Closed*
- 2-3** NEA Board of Directors Meeting
- 8** MST/NEA Urban Coordinated Bargaining Council
- 12** MST/NEA West Coordinated Bargaining Council
- 13** MST/NEA East Coordinated Bargaining Council
- 16** MST/NEA Board of Directors Meeting
- 17** 2008 MST/NEA Spring Representative Assembly
- 20** MST/NEA Southern Coordinated Bargaining Council

## MSTA and NEA professional development boosts ESP power



More than 100 enthusiastic, curious and highly motivated education support professionals attended MSTAs second day-long ESP Professional Development Day this year. The schedule was packed with informative, interactive and skill-building sessions on topics vital to ESP success in the workplace.

“You are steadily increasing in membership and in the ranks of MSTAs activists and leaders and, by doing so, gaining public recognition and political clout,” said MSTAs President Clara Floyd. “I thank you for your dedication to MSTAs. I also thank you for making it possible for every one of us to focus on our common goal: providing a great public school in every community for every child.”

Floyd was joined by MSTAs board members and leadership, including Vice President Betty Weller, Treasurer Phyllis Parks Robinson, and Executive Director David Helfman. NEA Executive Committee member Mark Cebulski welcomed members on behalf of NEA President Reg Weaver.



The Howard County Education Association won the annual award for most attendees. MSTAs President Clara Floyd presented the award to HCEA Vice President Donna Schulze.



ACE-AFSCME Local 2250 member Shirley Adams explains to Towanna Wright how just a \$1 donation to PAC can help the Association elect friends of public education to the General Assembly.



Jeannette Young, Baltimore County Instructional Assistants and Clerical Employees (BACE) treasurer, and colleague Joe Coughlin, BACE board member, work together in the Introduction to Training workshop.

## Know someone who attended the National ESP Conference? Ask them what they learned!

The National NEA ESP Conference held in Baltimore last month provided even more learning opportunities for MSTAs ESP activists. There were leadership seminars for presidents and current and emerging leaders, plus full-day workshops on family-school-community partnerships, health care, and school and workplace diversity.

“We came home with great organizing ideas and new ways to get our members involved in Local activities,” said Debbie Schaefer, president of the Secretaries and Assistants Association of Anne Arundel County. “Once they connect and realize the great progress we’ve made through the Association, they’re hooked.”

MSTAs Veronica Henderson, last year’s ESP of the Year, passed the torch to veteran Wisconsin safety assistant and student advocate Laura Vernon, who was awarded \$10,000. She plans to donate half to charity.



Washington County’s delegation included, left to right, Alicia Harmon, Missy Remsburg and President Janice Tucker.



Harford County ESP members, left to right, Pauline Wolf, Victoria Bridges and Dina Lombardi-Cavallaro attended the national conference in Baltimore.

## The Cat, the hat, the students, and books, books, books

The Cat strutted all over Annapolis last month celebrating Read Across America (RAA) Day with hundreds of students. Add to that local celebrations across the state, and thousands of students got the message that yes, reading is fun!

Here's the shortlist of MSTA's RAA events: A breakfast of very green eggs and ham was served to super-readers from Oakcrest ES (Prince George's) and Annapolis ES; The Cat collected more than 50 children's books from legislators; MSTA received an RAA proclamation from both Houses of the General Assembly; and President Clara Floyd and Governor O'Malley visited a local school; and MSTA hosted 300 students at a culture and literacy event in Baltimore! Visit *MSTA OnLine*, [www.mstanea.org](http://www.mstanea.org), for an RAA photo gallery.



RAA at Annapolis Elementary School



Green eggs and ham for RAA Day!



RAA at Eastport Elementary School with President Floyd and Gov. O'Malley

## MSTA honors new National Board Certified Teachers

Maryland's ranks of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs) rose by 231 this year, bringing the state's total to 1,059—15<sup>th</sup> in the nation. MSTA recently honored the newest NBCTs at a special evening event in Annapolis.

President Clara Floyd added congratulations to those of countless colleagues, friends and family who witnessed the long hours and steady commitment of candidates as they pursued certification. "We are so proud of each of you for embarking on this demanding professional journey," said Floyd. "It is a testament to your profession and the high standards to which you hold it."



Montgomery County had 75 new NBCTs this year. Congratulations!



More than 200 new National Board Certified Teachers and guests attended MSTA's event.

## Why slots? It's about supporting students and schools



Don't expect us to engage in debates over gambling. We're focusing our campaign on our core mission: ensuring we have the resources to provide great public schools for every child.

LAST MONTH, YOUR MSTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS voted to support the November referendum permitting slot machines at up to five locations, with half the income dedicated to an Education Trust Fund.

The Board recognized five facts in the course of its deliberations:

1. The most critical moral issue facing Marylanders is the need to ensure that our public schools have the resources to continue the progress made with the help of Thornton funding.
2. Because the General Assembly just raised \$1.3 billion in new taxes, there is no willingness to add to these increases. Nonetheless, MSTA will continue to support progressive tax strategies that improve the long-term fiscal stability of our state and public schools.
3. Maryland's economic outlook has worsened since the fall. The referendum is necessary, but it will not bring in sufficient revenues to meet our long-term school funding needs. If it fails, however, we face deep cuts.
4. According to a recent MSTA survey, our members' opinions about slots reflect those of the general public: 59% favor the referendum; 33% oppose. Recent public polls average 57% in support. Our members also recognize that many Marylanders already spend their dollars playing slots in other states.
5. MSTA has called on General Assembly leaders many times over the past decade, and they've delivered: the teacher salary incentive fund; \$1.5 billion in Thornton funding increases; expanded collective bargaining rights; and the \$1.67 billion improvement in pensions. Now they've asked for our support to help raise the revenue to continue increasing school funding. It's time for us to deliver.

Over the next six months, critics of slots will be vocal. They have already criticized slots as foot-in-the-door, regressive, immoral, a bad example for our students, and even a threat to national security.

I understand the mixed feelings. But my response to critics is: "What politically viable alternative do you have for raising hundreds of millions more dollars annually? How else can we guarantee that our educators and public schools have the resources they need to provide a quality education to every child in our state?"

MSTA will ask each of you to support the November referendum, and to encourage your family members and friends to do the same. But don't expect us to engage in debates over gambling. We're focusing our campaign on our core mission: ensuring we have the resources to provide great public schools for every child.

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

## Tell us what you think!

Moved by this month's cover story?

Have a beef with MSTA about policy or politics?

Want to share a great story idea?

We know there's always a little more to a story than what we uncover. Maybe you've found a best practice that relates to a recent feature story, or you have a fascinating co-worker you'd like to see in *My Life*.

You're in the schools and classrooms every day teaching and working with colleagues. You see success and outrage, and how far educators will go to nurture and lift up their students. The true impact of state and national trends is so much more vivid from your unique vantage point.

Send us an email with your ideas or comments, and we may feature them as a letter to the editor, on *MSTA OnLine*, *Frontline* or in another MSTA publication. Contact: Casey Newton, [cnewton@mstanea.org](mailto:cnewton@mstanea.org).

## State funding for Maryland's schools still in jeopardy MSTA announces support for slots as part of long-term solution

*"O'Malley's Proposed Budget Likely to Get a Multimillion-Dollar Trim," Washington Post, 2/27/08*

Talk about déjà vu. Last fall, MSTAs lobbying efforts fended off severe cuts to public education during a special session of the General Assembly called by the governor to balance the state budget (required by the state's constitution). Instead of the painful cuts feared by many, the package passed by legislators included a combination of tax increases, less severe spending cuts, and a November referendum that would place slot machines in five localities.

But in recent months, the state and national economy have taken a nosedive. Eighty percent of the state's annual budget is generated by income and sales tax collections, and they are running far behind last fall's projections. Experts say it's likely to get worse.

Now lawmakers are looking for up to \$350 million in *additional* cuts to next year's budget. With public education making up about 40 percent of the budget, it is sure to take additional hits, leaving school systems with no resources for salary increases, counties scrambling to absorb pension costs shifted from the state, and teachers and students facing larger classes, outdated facilities and textbooks, and shortages of materials.

Why do Marylanders—like Bill Murray in *Groundhog Day*—keep waking up to the same fiscal nightmare?

Maryland faces a long-term "structural deficit" between its revenues and expenses. Over the last several years, the state has used up almost all of the predictable short-term options—raising taxes, slicing state jobs and spending, drawing down rainy day and trust funds, and issuing bonds for school construction and other capital expenses.

MSTA chief lobbyist Diana Saquella notes that the Association supports other legislative solutions, such as requiring corporations to pay their fair share in taxes and making investments in critical industries that will produce more revenue for the state in the long term. "Unfortunately, there's no money available now to pay for these investments that will produce benefits way down the road," says Saquella, "and there's almost no chance that legislators will raise taxes again before the next election in 2010."

That's why the MSTAs Board of Directors voted to support the slots referendum on the ballot in November. This referendum asks whether the Maryland Constitution should be

*In recent months, the state and national economy have taken a nosedive. Eighty percent of the state's annual budget is generated by income and sales tax collections, and they are running far behind last fall's projections. Experts say it's likely to get worse.*

amended to allow a total of 15,000 slot machines at five locations. The state would receive \$90 million in upfront license fees, and all of that, plus half of the revenue generated by the machines, would be dedicated to an Education Trust Fund.

Within several years, net annual revenues from slots are estimated to reach hundreds of millions of the dollars (see box). This additional source of revenue would help prevent cuts to future budgets and, barring further economic crises, erase the state's structural deficit. Because half of the revenues will be deposited in the Education Trust Fund, passage of the referendum would also help alleviate our annual struggle to win adequate funding for public education.

Even if slots are not the ideal solution, "Right now, it's the only realistic option we have to protect funding for public education," says MSTAs President Clara Floyd.

"Our students shouldn't suffer because of the state's fiscal crisis. Thanks to Thornton funding and our own hard work in classrooms and school buildings, we've made great progress in recent years. It's our job to be sure that progress continues so that every child has the opportunity to attend great public schools in their community."

Here are the year-by-year estimates\* of the net fiscal effect for the State of Maryland if the slots referendum is approved in November:

FY 2010	\$86,557,600
FY 2011	\$61,071,800
FY 2012	\$422,747,000
FY 2013	\$564,665,200

\*Department of Legislative Services, Maryland General Assembly, 2007 Special Session, SB 3 Fiscal and Policy Note

## Dalanda Crawford-Smith

Spanish teacher  
Pikesville MS, Baltimore County

*Dalanda Crawford-Smith is an experienced educator, with 15 years teaching experience in three states, one college, and a foreign country. After seven years in Prince George's County, Dalanda is a three-year Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO) member and active in SPARKS, TABCO's exciting program for new teachers and Association members.*

*Dalanda and husband Stacy have two daughters, Stacey, 11, and Alana, 5, whom she is raising to be bilingual. The family enjoys travel, especially to Mexico.*

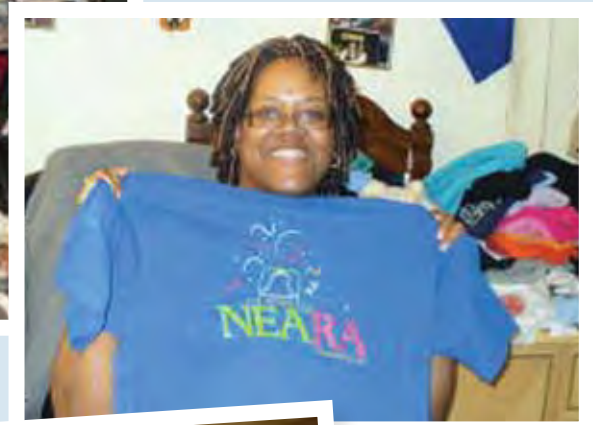


Sonia Lewis, my good friend from church, being taunted by Bloopie, one of our three parakeets.



My Alana checking on Bloopie, after taking a short rest from playing the Wii game. She beats me every game!!

My family over for a visit. Stacy's mother, Anita, and sister, Cynethia Smith, with Alana in her lap. We get together weekly.



I hate doing laundry, but I love to wear my NEA RA shirt!



Media Specialists Charlotte Davis and Bradley Foster assist me with African American-themed novels.



School Resource Officer Craig Smith is a great police officer and friend. We tell the students that we are related by marriage. (They believed us at first!)

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

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**actionLine**

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# FRONTLINE

Maryland State Teachers Association - NEA

**You're on the front line every day with students, administrators and parents.**

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