

TESTING BILLS  
MOMENTUM

STRONG ESP  
STRONG SCHOOLS

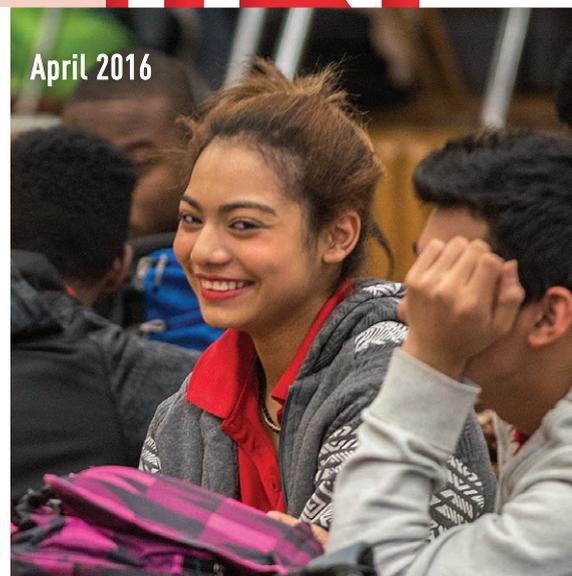
ABOUT EQUITY  
LITERACY

# ACTIONLINE

The Magazine of the Maryland State Education Association

Volume 16 Issue 4

April 2016



Helping English Language Learners Thrive  
Innovation and collaboration in one Prince George's County school

Visit [marylandeducators.org](http://marylandeducators.org) for MSEA's Board of Directors and local affiliates directory.

## SPECIAL FEATURE ► **HELPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS THRIVE**

The 100 students at the International School at Langley Park are part of a new initiative in Prince George's County—an innovative start-up high school dedicated solely to English language learners. They are the first class, ninth graders helping to create a new model for improving the educational outcomes of immigrant students.



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**Learn more!** Read the digital edition of ActionLine at [marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL](http://marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL) for premium content, links, videos, and more.



## IN THE LAST ISSUE,

you read about the work of Montgomery County fair share activist Jennifer Bado-Aleman and her concern about how the Friedrichs vs. California Teachers Association case before the Supreme Court could “make it more difficult for unions like ours to do all of the things that help set our students on paths to brighter futures.”



Jennifer is right. Every educator should be able to make ends meet, have a say about their working conditions and their students’ learning conditions, and have the right to negotiate together for better wages and benefits that can sustain their family. The outcome of the Friedrichs case, and many others, is in flux following Justice Scalia’s passing and the uncertainty around who the next justice will be and when they will join the Court.

In the meantime, we’ll continue to focus on empowering members like you to make a difference in your professional life—and your students’ lives. Whether that’s through our statewide campaign to reduce over-testing; the many local campaigns to improve salaries, working conditions, or the support you get from boards of education; or high-quality professional development, MSEA is here to support you.

A couple of weeks after you receive this issue, delegates from around the state will meet in Annapolis to pass our next two-year budget. It’s critical for us to pass a thoughtful budget that puts you, our members, in the driver’s seat of strong local associations ready to score wins at the negotiating table, the ballot box, and with community partners working together to build and fund great public schools. I hope that we’ll pass a budget that prioritizes organizing and support for every one of our members—first-year educators and retirees, teachers and ESP, members of our largest locals and our smallest. Look for details on the budget in the next issue of *ActionLine*.

  
MSEA PRESIDENT

Watch Betty’s video at [marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL](http://marylandeducators.org/DigitalAL)  
Contact Betty at [bweller@mseane.org](mailto:bweller@mseane.org)

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## LESS TESTING MORE LEARNING

*“My students’ fondest memories of school won’t be their standardized test scores. It will be an engaging lesson, project, or performance that helped them see the world in a new way. It will be that teacher who encouraged their curiosity.”*

—Teacher Rachel McCusker (Carroll County) with educators, parents, and legislators at MSEA’s press conference urging passage of legislation to reduce standardized testing in Maryland schools.

## THORNTON II OK'D VOUCHER SCHEMES

If you’ve been around awhile, you know that the Bridge to Excellence Act—also known as Thornton—created a funding formula in 2002 that provided equitable funding for students in Maryland’s widely disparate economic regions. It was hailed as a national model and served the state well for years. But times—and student demographics—have changed, straining the formula’s ability to meet the needs of all students. Child poverty is growing and where two districts had a majority low-income student population in 2001, nine do in 2016 (Allegany, Baltimore City, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Prince George’s, Somerset, Washington, and Wicomico). Educators know that helping high poverty students succeed requires more services, staffing, and funding.

The formula’s calculations

have also meant that some districts face school closures as a result of declining enrollments while others suffer overcrowding as enrollment grows. The initial Thornton plan has outlived its full effectiveness.

The House and Senate unanimously passed a bill to create a Thornton II commission to study and make recommendations to update the state’s education finance formulas, the expansion and funding of pre-K, and much more. There are minor differences in the House and Senate versions of the bill that will need to be reconciled before heading to the governor. The commission will include a representative from MSEA, making sure that educators have a seat at the table for these critical decisions. *See page 11 for background on the Thornton formula.*

MSEA and pro-public education legislators have helped lead the opposition against tax credit voucher programs for the last decade. These schemes are proven failures in states like Arizona, Georgia, Florida, and Pennsylvania where private school tuitions are subsidized by public tax dollars with little to no effect on increasing enrollment, let alone increased access to private school for low-income students as was originally advertised.

At press time, legislators in the House of Delegates were considering versions of a Maryland Education Credit (MEC) and the new BOOST program that, if passed, would

divert \$15, \$35, or \$50 million in taxpayer dollars that could go to public schools. The Senate has already narrowly passed its favored version of vouchers, MEC.

We already know how similar voucher schemes have played out in other states: costs will grow exponentially as time goes on. Pennsylvania’s program started with a \$30 million annual cap in 2001 and has ballooned to \$75 million a year. Florida’s tax credit voucher program started in 2001 with an annual cap of \$50 million; by 2015, the cap had grown to \$358 million. And on it goes, siphoning away more funding that could go to public schools.

**ACTION UPDATE**—2,000 MSEA members have called and 1,500 have emailed their legislators to stop the tax credit voucher programs from diverting tax dollars to private schools.

# RED RECAP



**YOU DID THIS! Members grabbed #lesstesting and ran with it—check out these stats:**



1,000,000+ views on **FB & Twitter** #lesstesting posts



13,000+ **emails** to legislators



4,000+ members attended the **Seeing Red Teletown Halls**



1,500+ **phone calls** to legislators



200 visits to state legislators in Annapolis



1,000s of members across MD **wore red** for #lesstesting

Numbers reflect MSEA member action from January–March of the 2016 General Assembly session.

MSEA members have been fighting for months to end the culture of over-testing in our schools. Our Less Testing, More Learning campaign has reached millions of Marylanders—educators, students, parents, legislators, the public, and the press. MSEA members, who said over-testing was taking away from critical instructional time, let legislators know that they were seeing red over the time, stress, and redundancy of federal, state, and county-mandated tests.

It's made a difference. Here's where we stand at press time:

- **On March 21, our bill to set a 2% cap on how much instruction time can be used for mandated standardized testing unanimously passed the House of Delegates.** This could mean a significant reduction in testing in grade levels

across the state. It now needs to be passed by the Senate before session ends on April 11.

- **On March 18, our bill to greatly reduce the months-long disruption caused by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment by turning it into a sampling test unanimously passed both the House and Senate.** Slight differences in amendments will need to be resolved by both houses before heading to the governor to sign.

- **On March 19, 20, and 21, the House and Senate passed three bills to create more transparency by regularly reporting to parents each school district's mandated standardized tests.** Each bill requires further action from the opposite chamber before the governor can sign them into law.

# SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS FIND THEIR VOICE



Howard County sign language interpreter Catherine Willett is a member of the new organizing cadre.

With new standards being implemented around the nation, including college degrees and/or certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, a statewide group of educational sign language interpreters is using a \$3,500 MSEA Innovative Engagement and Organizing (IEO) Grant to connect and mobilize their colleagues.

According to the U.S. Department of Education,\* some 85% of all deaf and hard-of-hearing students attend public school programs. Forty-three percent of those students spend most of their school day in general education classrooms with an educational sign lan-

guage interpreter to guide them through their teachers' lessons.

In Maryland approximately 250 sign language interpreters are in schools assisting nearly 600 students in pre-school through 12th grade. Until now, their small numbers have made it difficult to connect on professional concerns.

### Finding a voice

Last year, a group of eight members representing Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, and St. Mary's counties worked together to create a year-long program based in part on survey data and something else they were keenly

aware of: MSDE had recently discontinued a grant that supported interpreter workshops, and it was immediately obvious that individual counties could not produce or provide high-quality professional development targeted to interpreters' needs for such a small group. Many interpreters were already grouped with special education assistants in training that simply didn't relate to their work.

"We found through surveys and conversation that many of us were struggling to find our professional voice and that would only worsen with fewer opportunities to be together," said Catherine Willett, a Howard County interpreter. "Add to that the inability of our county boards to produce the high-quality training we need for so few employees. We realized we would soon be desperate for skill-building and collegiality. That's why we turned to MSEA."

With the grant, the group planned a year-long schedule of trainings that so far has included a September kick-off focused on advocacy and training on contract language and teen slang in American Sign Language and a two-day professional development event held in Ocean City at MSEA's annual convention in October. Their next event is a webinar on supporting deaf culture in public schools, followed by another full-day statewide event this spring with three tracks of workshops—Effective Team Interpreting, Conceptualizing Interpreta-

tions, and Song Performance. MSEA's grant funds honoraria for presenters, supplies, and food.

"Our goal," Willett continued, "is to have at least one interpreter trained on organizing and advocacy in each local association to grow our membership and increase our presence by 10% or more. With that, we feel we can better advocate for improved language specific to our needs in negotiated agreements."

"We are so pleased to see a specific group of educators leveraging the reach and influence of the union," said President Betty Weller. "This is exactly why MSEA exists—to support educators with resources and expertise to be their own best advocates for high-quality professional development, for strong contracts, and in their workplace."

Members of the educational interpreters organizing group include: Thor Halverson (St. Mary's), Latisha Kama (Montgomery), Elizabeth Ann Monn (Frederick), Samantha Morgan (Frederick), Wanda Newman (Prince George's), Kathlyn Stevenson (Frederick), Laurie Stiles (Montgomery), and Catherine Willett (Howard).

*\*U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, & Office of Special Education Programs, 2004*

# WASHINGTON COUNTY TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Last year, the Washington County Teachers Association's (WCTA) five-member membership committee used an MSEA Innovative Engagement and Organizing (IEO) Grant to take the pulse of their membership. They sent membership committee members to work with school building reps to practice one-on-one meetings with rank and file members to find out what was connecting members with their union.

What WCTA discovered, and what they're using their new follow-up IEO grant to support, is the need for broad, continued member outreach. As members visited schools last year, they discovered the inherent power of those one-on-one meetings, but realized that to engage more members, the five-person committee team needed to expand.

This year's grant supports more training of more members on organizing, advocacy, and why a unified voice makes a difference. The goal? To broaden outreach and connect with more members in the county's 46 schools.

## Timing is everything

WCTA's three days of training made clear the need for a unified voice on issues like the association's current negotiations. For the first time in Maryland's history, Washington County teachers are being asked by the board of education to extend their workday at no extra pay. With the member-led bargaining team currently in open negotiations with the school board, it's the perfect time for members to see and hear their colleagues fight for a better contract.

It's a sea change in ownership of the association's mission and

message. What was formerly done almost solely by the local's UniServ staff is now done by members making direct connections with their colleagues, improving not only the ownership of the message, but the relevance of it. With this better connectedness among members, there is more collegiality, respect, recognition, support, and power and an increasing number of engaged members.

"We used our 2015-2016 grant to encourage teacher unity, organizing, and collaboration in schools we don't get to work with on a regular basis," said Josh Cramer, a high school science teacher and member of the organizing committee. "In the past we haven't been the best at getting to our teachers because of how busy we all are on a day-to-day basis.

"Using grant money, we can pay for substitutes to cover classrooms as trained WCTA representatives visit teachers in other schools for those one-on-one meetings to discover areas of concern—both job- and WCTA-related—and start working together to improve our craft and our union."

"The response has been encouraging. With members who really understand what WCTA is and can meet with their fellow teachers, we've been able to recruit new members and get better participation in the work we do for all of us—like negotiating our contracts and improving our workday and our students' learning environment."

WCTA's outreach team includes Jessica Barthman, Josh Cramer, James Knodle, Emily Pinkham, Lora Walburn, Eric Young, Sarah Young, and WCTA President Neil Becker.



## STRONG ESP

Are you an education support professional looking for ways to make an impact on your job and workplace? Did you attend MSEA's ESP Professional Development Day on March 19? If you did, you went back to work ready to:

- \* **Assert** yourself while still respecting the **rights** of others
- \* **Respond** with insight to **diversity** challenges
- \* **Dig in** to Microsoft Office Suite with **new skills**
- \* **Improve** your promotion prospects with better resume writing and **interviewing skills**
- \* **Advocate** better for your **legal rights**
- \* **Organize** for a stronger **voice** in the workplace
- \* **Speak up** with new **public speaking** skills
- \* **Strengthen** your para-teacher **relationship**
- \* **Manage the stress** of your **demanding** workplace

Dorchester County paraprofessional Omar Bolden said the Assertiveness and Communications Skills training was a highlight. "I learned when and how to assert myself in ways that empower me but also show respect to the other person," Bolden said.

"It was important to be there. The event underlined for me the importance of the union as a safe haven for employees when it comes to our jobs and our success. I'll be letting people know how important I feel it is to have a union."

*Pictured above:* Gabby McFadden (St. Mary's), Mary Beth Cuddy (Baltimore County), Omar Bolden (Dorchester), Marcy Peterson (Howard), and Scharrence Richardson (Baltimore County) at MSEA's ESP Professional Development Day in Annapolis on March 19.

# MEMBERS RECOMMEND BETTER NEW TEACHER INDUCTION



For the past six months, MSEA has been supporting the VIVA Project Online MSEA Idea Exchange, a collaborative effort focused on the challenges of new teacher induction. It started with an online forum open to all Maryland educators and asked, “How would you design an early career training program? What skills and training do educators need before entering a school? What kinds of training are most helpful? What are the biggest challenges to offering these supports?”

It was the task of seven participating educators—members of MSEA’s VIVA Writing Collaborative—to integrate the input of their peers into a realistic, workable plan for improving the experience and value of teacher induction programs. “New teachers face significant chal-

lenges each and every day but the energy and enthusiasm they bring to schools is invaluable,” said Josh Halpern, a member of the Writing Collaborative.

“Their success safeguards the health of our profession and the union. Our recommendations are designed to help our new teachers survive and thrive as educators and as people.”

Members of the Writing Collaborative presented their findings and recommendations to the MSEA Board of Directors at its February meeting, leading to an in-depth discussion on how MSEA and local associations can better support new teachers.

The VIVA group’s recommendations focused on a range of issues, including focus on improving mentoring programs, union-led professional develop-

ment and online resources for new teachers, advocating for high-quality new teacher support, and more. These recommendations were food for thought as the board worked on developing a FY17–18 budget that reflects and supports MSEA members at all stages of their careers. The budget will be considered and voted on by delegates at MSEA’s April 16 Spring Representative Assembly.

Many of the proposed solutions, of course, require the support of fellow educators, schools boards, and policymakers. “We believe it is time for labor and management to work together as equals to support new educators,” Halpern said. “It is fundamental to the interests of both, and in the very best interests of the students, families, and communities.”

**The MSEA VIVA Writing Collaborative:** Robin Beers (Anne Arundel), Josh Halpern (Montgomery), Anita Misra (Montgomery), Carrie Noel–Nosbaum (Howard), Maysa Omar (Montgomery), Josh Rubin (Montgomery), Bessie Taylor (Somerset, retired).

Learn more about the VIVA Project and join nationwide conversations on professional practice and education policy at [vivateachers.org](http://vivateachers.org).

See page 12 for more on new teacher induction and mentoring.

## CALENDAR

### May 3 Teacher Appreciation Day

Don’t miss the annual celebration for all MSEA members! Gather at MSEA headquarters for a welcome and tour. Find exclusive members-only discounts and specials at Annapolis shops and restaurants on Main, Market, and West streets, and on charming Maryland Avenue. Learn more at [marylandeducators.org/2016TeacherAppreciation](http://marylandeducators.org/2016TeacherAppreciation).

### May 7 2016 IPD Conference

Restorative practices, classroom management, and social media tips for educators are just three of the workshops planned for MSEA’s Instruction and Professional Development Conference. Visit [marylandeducators.org/2016IPDConference](http://marylandeducators.org/2016IPDConference) for a complete schedule and registration. DoubleTree Hotel, Annapolis.

### May 14 Orioles Night with

**MSEA** Everyone wins (we hope!) with \$13, \$15, and \$25 tickets to Camden Yards to see the Birds play the Detroit Tigers. Join the fun—last year more than 1,300 MSEA educators and their families got a shout out from the announcer’s booth! Get your tix today at [orioles.com/tix/mdstateeducation](http://orioles.com/tix/mdstateeducation).



# Equity Literacy

BY GENESIS CHAVEZ

To achieve equity literacy, we must establish a safe environment for students by showing vulnerability—by relating to them or admitting that we may not have shared the same experiences.

Students bring with them beliefs, attitudes, values, and perspectives that influence the way they view and respond to the world and the content we intend to deliver. As our classrooms continue to diversify, we can no longer ignore the variety of cultures that enter our doors.

As educators we need to be sure that we go beyond simply being competent in providing a culturally responsive environment for our students. We should strive for equity literacy—skills that allow us to “recognize, respond to, and redress conditions” that give some students access to a quality education while denying others. This means we dig deeper to identify the biases in our curriculum, materials, and own teaching.

### Who do we serve?

In order for any educator to achieve equity literacy, they must first get to know the population they serve. We must establish a safe environment for students to feel completely comfortable to share about themselves. This means we show vulnerability in either relating to our students or admitting that we may not have shared the same experiences.

For example, as a former



ESOL and FARMs student, it is quite easy for me to relate to the population I serve at a Title I school and for them to feel comfortable sharing their experiences, questions, and fears. However, for a teacher with a different background, it will require him or her to admit their limitations while committing to empathizing with students’ experiences. This sense of authenticity creates an environment for students to feel safe in presenting their genuine selves. It is as simple as saying “I don’t know much about that. Can you help me understand?”

### Literature

When considering the literature for our classrooms, we must chose a rich selection of narratives. Our classroom libraries should include books that have main characters of color in a variety of settings. These characters should be multidimensional and we should steer away from stories that tell only stereotypical narratives. For example, we should branch out from stories that describe a black character in a rural tribe in the continent of Africa. Our black students most likely cannot relate to this and they deserve more than this single perspective. If we want our

students of color to be readers, we must provide material that they can relate to.

### Our teaching

In order to engage our learners, we need to provide culturally relevant instruction and practices. For example, if I know that most of my students use public transportation, they will most likely relate better to a math word problem about buses versus boats. This is a small change that can seem insignificant, however it communicates to my students that I value their daily experiences. This doesn’t mean reinvent all your worksheets to mirror the demographic you teach, but it does mean that we should be mindful that most of the materials we use probably do not mirror all our students. Carlos deserves to see his name in a word problem just as much as Billy does.

To reach our secondary students in a deeper way, we must move from culturally relevant instruction to anti-racist instruction. This means we are asking our students to think critically about world problems and injustices and what they can do to impact these issues while meeting the standards and indicators. For example, the standard may

require students to conduct an inquiry-based science project to solve a problem, so we may consider presenting the recent issue of lead-contaminated water in Flint, Michigan. We may ask students to think critically about how and why this issue occurred in Flint, how they can use science to engineer possible solutions, and how they can advocate for this issue. Anti-racist instruction empowers students to become advocates.

Advocating for our students is something we have all done at some point in our journey as educators. It is now time for the next step. We must help our students to find their voices and the issues that tug at their hearts and empower them to advocate for themselves.

*“Imagining Equity Literacy,” Paul Gorski, tolerance.org*

*Genesis Chavez is a first-grade teacher in Montgomery County. She holds a graduate certificate in Equity and Excellence in Education (a partnership of the Montgomery County Public Schools and the Montgomery County Education Association) from McDaniel College in designing cultural competency training curriculum.*

Culturally  
Relevant  
Instruction

## One Team's Toolkit



*Our goal is to build healthy, functional bodies that support all of the physical activities young people might like to explore, so we focus on activities that safely develop strength and endurance for all of our students.*

- The **agility ladder** develops footwork, balance, and functional mobility.
- Activities with the **medicine ball** increase core strength.
- The **jump box** builds leg strength.
- **Heavy slam ropes** strengthen the core and upper body endurance.
- **Jump ropes** develop foot speed and is a great cardio exercise.
- The **overspeed cord** helps to build speed.

**Kareem Otey • Jacob Coleman • Dan Dobronz**

Physical Education Teacher Team | Cambridge-South Dorchester High School | Dorchester County

## INSIDE MSEA WITH DAVID HELFMAN



**In 1999, the state created the** commission on Education Finance, Equity, and Excellence. Chaired by Dr. Alvin Thornton, this commission spent three years examining education quality and finance issues, ultimately recom-

mending a major infusion of state funds into Maryland's public schools.

In its 2002 report, the Thornton Commission submitted its recommendations. The legislature then crafted the Bridge to Excellence Act, phasing in \$1.1 billion in additional state support to enable all schools to provide a quality education. Experts told the commission that it was much more expensive to educate children living in poverty, with special needs, or with limited English proficiency. But due to affordability concerns, the size of the supplemental grants was scaled back considerably.

The commission envisioned that local governments would increase funding over time. But many counties have not provided these increases and instead froze their per-pupil funding levels.

The commission also anticipated that funding would increase to offset inflation. But these inflationary adjustments have been uneven because of intermittent capping or elimination of the inflation offset.

Our public schools have changed much in the 17 years since the Thornton Commission began its work. With poverty increasing among schoolchildren and their families, is the poverty supplement enough? Is there adequate funding for the sharp increases in English language learners and students receiving special education services? What is the impact of additional federal mandates adopted since the commission completed its work?

These questions deserve comprehensive answers. That's why it's exciting that the General Assembly is moving legislation that would empanel a Thornton II Commission. MSEA will have a seat at the table on the commission, making sure that educators' voices are heard. As of this writing, the bill has passed the Senate and House with minor differences to be reconciled. It's time to repave the Bridge to Excellence, and we look forward to working with legislators to make sure that the needs of students and educators are met through that process.

## A WORD FROM MSEA'S LEGAL TEAM

### **A great victory for Maryland ESPs**

Maryland education support professionals (ESPs) recently scored a huge victory from the Court of Appeals. In December, the Court ruled that the termination of a non-certificated employee is a proper subject of binding arbitration in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement.

In other words, all discipline of a non-certificated employee is now subject to binding arbitration assuming that the local ESP association's contract contains a just cause provision.

No longer will non-certificated employees be subject to the whims of a principal or superintendent. This is a big win for ESPs—and for fairness. In counties where a contract lacks just cause or arbitration, locals should take a firm position in negotiations and insist on the inclusion of such language. Contact your local association to learn more about your contract and just cause provisions.

### **Arbitration for the suspension and termination of teachers**

MSEA is working toward obtaining similar rights for certificated employees, which requires a statutory change by the General Assembly.

House Bill 1228/Senate Bill 832 allow a certificated employee who is facing suspension or termination the right to choose a hearing before the local board's hearing officer, who is charged with making a recommendation, or an arbitrator, who makes a final and binding decision based upon the law. The goal is to provide teachers with a fair and objective hearing process that comports with their due process rights.

### **What is binding arbitration?**

Binding arbitration is a way to resolve a dispute outside of a courtroom. Decisions made in binding arbitration are final and may be appealed to court under very limited circumstances.

**What is scope of bargaining?** It involves determining whether certain topics must be addressed, may be addressed, or are illegal topics in negotiations between parties.

**What is just cause?** Just cause means that an employer must conduct a thorough and fair investigation before disciplining or terminating an employee.

# Teacher Induction and Mentoring

Fresh off the presses, the New Teacher Center's (NTC) "Support From the Start" report gets straight to the heart of new educator induction and mentoring. According to their research of programs in 50 states, induction and mentoring initiatives are still not getting the dedicated policy, funding, time, or evaluation they deserve.

That's a shame. Based on research of early educators developed by MSEA members and the VIVA Project (see page 8), Maryland's early-career teachers are hungry for a better practical introduction to their profession—a profession with unmatched demands, responsibilities, and expectations.

It's safe to assume that even though Maryland is cited in the NTC report as among the states with strong state policy—one that requires a three-year induction—for beginning teachers, implementation left largely to districts varies widely in quality and resources. As the report says, "Too many states with a mentoring mandate do so in the absence of key policy elements such as funding, strong program standards, program oversight, or mentor selection and training requirements."

Sen. Paul Pinsky (D-Prince George's) hopes to change some of that in Maryland with Senate Bill 493\*, which proposes to create the Teacher Induction, Retention, and Advancement Program. If SB 493 passes, first-year teachers who participate in the program would receive at least 20% additional time to take part in proven induction activities like mentoring, peer observation, and planning and prep time, one of NTC's recommendations.

While local control is valued, NTC's established criteria on state induction policy sets standards for a critical area that ultimately affects teacher quality and student achievement. Let's take a brief look at **NTC's nine-point policy criteria** (in bold below) and how Maryland policy holds up:

- 1. Beginning teachers and administrators should receive a minimum of two years of support.** Maryland requires that all new teachers participate in induction activities until they receive tenure (three years); for principals, a one-year program must include ongoing mentoring.
- 2. Policy should support a rigorous mentor selection**

**process that includes training and ongoing support.** Mentors must demonstrate knowledge of adult learning theory and peer coaching techniques and be skilled in evaluating the performance evaluation criteria for each mentee.

- 3. Policy should encourage release time for mentors and provide dedicated mentor/mentee contact time.** School districts must establish a cadre of full- or part-time mentors, and, when possible, provide first-year teachers with a reduction in their schedule and/or non-instructional job responsibilities.

- 4. Policy should address the overall quality of the induction programs.** Each local school district is charged with providing a comprehensive program that supports new teachers' success and longevity in the profession.

- 5. The state should provide program standards.** Maryland does not have formal standards for its induction program. State regulations, adopted in 2010, provide direction for local systems by establishing standards aligned with the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards.

- 6. The state should provide funding or establish a competitive funding program.** When new teacher induction became a regulatory requirement in 2010, local school systems were required to allocate state resources for induction programming.

- 7. Moving to higher-level licensure.** Since all new teachers are required to participate in an induction program, they fulfill the requirement for progressing to standard or advanced licensure.

- 8. Accountability counts.** Maryland requires local districts to evaluate their programs and to use the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Guide as a resource.

- 9. Teaching and learning conditions matter. The state should adopt formal standards, conduct assessments, and make adjustments.** Maryland does not have formal standards for teaching and learning conditions.

*\*The bill also increases the state's matching stipend for National Board Certified teachers working in high-needs schools from \$2,000 to \$5,000.*



HELPING

ENGLISH LANGUAGE



LEARNERS

THRIVE

An innovative new initiative in Prince George's County is addressing the needs of English language learners.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHEN CHERRY



**“THE STUDENTS WHO FIND SUCCESS FIRST ARE THE ONES WHO CAN LEARN FROM THEIR FAILURES AND THEIR STRUGGLES. THEY ARE THE ONES WHO ARE CONSTANTLY SEEKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES.” —DANIEL SASS**

At the International High School in Langley Park (IHSLP) in Prince George’s County, every student has a laptop, a Rosetta Stone account, and a story—often unimaginable—about how they came to America.

Their stories are similar, but different. Often traumatized by things they have seen or done, unsure of their futures, and many times truly alone, they come from 19 countries and speak 13 languages. They are at once children and

adults—with histories as complicated and episodic as any 50-year-old. While their stories are beyond what many of us can comprehend, the successes that follow are astonishing for their advocates.

IHSLP teacher Daniel Sass tells this story: “The other day, I disciplined a student for playing a DragonBall-Z video game in class. He gave me his video game and ultimately submitted the assignment, which focused on personal narrative writing. When I sat down to grade the assignment, which he called, ‘School in My Country,’ I saw that he had written about oversleeping for school one morning only to find out that the two friends with whom he walked to school every day were robbed and killed on their way to school. He is still very much a teenager, but his experiences have been incredibly adult-like.

“Addressing this paradox is my most interesting challenge,” says Sass. “My students have experienced so much loss in their lives. Some have left behind family and friends to come to the United States. Others have witnessed violence in their home countries. The challenges that continue to remind me why I love my job

are those that highlight the dichotomy between childhood and adulthood.”

The 100 students at IHSLP are part of a new initiative in the county—a start-up high school dedicated solely to English language learners (ELLs). They are the first class, ninth graders helping to create a new model for improving the educational outcomes of immigrant students.

As they move to 10th grade, a new class of freshmen will come in and so on, until there is a full 9–12 student body. There is one other school like it in Prince George’s County, the International High School at Largo, and only 22 others in the country.

Carlos Beato, the founding principal, is from the Dominican Republic. He was an ELL student in New York City and understands instinctively and in practice what students need even as he is creating how to get it for them. He designed the school’s program and hand-picked his small staff with a clear picture of his goals in mind—to create an innovative, mastery-based learning environment for ELL students. To get there, he chose applicants who were culturally competent and eager to contribute, engage with students, collaborate with peers, and grow as a team. The education support staff plays a part, too. Each one

has their own immigration story which adds to the inclusive school culture.

In Langley Park, a neighborhood of Bladensburg in Prince George’s County and home to IHSLP, 80% of homes speak a language other than English, 13% of children live without their own parents, most of the adults have a less than a 9th grade education, and 91% of students are FARMS students.

IHSLP draws students from Langley Park and northern Prince George’s County, which is home to 50% of the ESOL student population in the county. Eight-one percent of the students are from Spanish speaking countries, mostly in Central America. Thirteen students are designated as unaccompanied youth.

There are nearly 60,000 ELL students in Maryland. Montgomery County has the highest number (22,324), followed by Prince George’s (18,654), Baltimore County (4,032), Anne Arundel (3,559), and Baltimore City (3,069). According to the Washington Post, Prince George’s County Public Schools enrolled about 8,000 international students in 2015; 50% of them were new immigrants, including increasing numbers of students from Burma, Senegal, Liberia, and Haiti. The top five home languages of the state’s ELL students are Spanish, French, Chinese, Amharic, and Vietnamese.

Opening a school dedicated entirely to these students is not without controversy. The Prince George’s County NAACP questioned the legality of a school like IHSLP saying it violated *Brown v. Board of Education* by segregating



# STUDENTS SPEAK:

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS FIND THEIR WAY



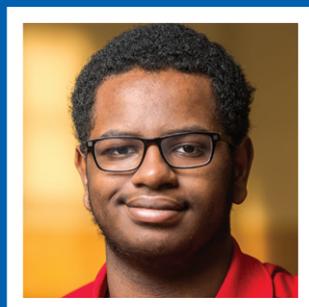
### JHARANA RAI

Age: 15

Birthplace: Nepal

Language: Nepali

I am not sure what I want to do in the future, but I think I want to do something with medicine. I want to work a part-time job to help my family pay for college, and I want to travel to other countries in the world. My teachers have helped me so much, and my friends too. They help me learn English and adjust to life in a new country so that one day I can achieve my dreams.



### MIKIAS BASSA

Age: 16

Birthplace: Ethiopia

Language: Amharic

My greatest challenge was learning how to speak English. When I first came to the U.S., I did not know how to speak English well. One day, my ESOL teacher came up with a solution to help me. She showed me a program called Rosetta Stone, and I practiced every day. After a month, I learned to speak English well and understand teachers, and now I can communicate with everyone in the United States.



### KIMBERLY ORTIZ

Age: 15

Birthplace: Guatemala

Language: Spanish

My school focuses on helping me and the other students learn and perfect our English skills. It is also more technology-oriented than my old school. I have my own computer, so I can keep track of my own assignments, do all of my work, and communicate with my teachers. We have several classes where the teachers teach each topic step-by-step until we understand the material.



### MEINALDO PUENTE

Age: 16

Birthplace: Cuba

Language: Spanish

My passion is art. When I had to leave school in Cuba to come to the United States, it was hard. I made lots of drawings, and that helped me discover my passion. My art taught me that I can do anything on my own, by myself, because I did not have anyone to help me. It helped me adjust to life in the United States.

### WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR AN IMMIGRANT STUDENT TO MAKE IT?

“Persistence. Or maybe the willingness to embrace the struggle. There are immense amounts of stress and frustration that come with learning a new language, adjusting to a new lifestyle, leaving behind friends and family, rediscovering oneself socially, and navigating a new educational system. The students who find success first are the ones who can learn from their failures and their struggles. They are the ones who are constantly seeking new opportunities.” —DANIEL SASS



**IN ENGLISH CLASS, STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT THEIR OFTEN HEARTBREAKING JOURNEY TO AMERICA. HERE'S AN EXCERPT FROM THE MEMOIR OF 14-YEAR-OLD FRANCISCO, A STUDENT ORIGINALLY FROM EL SALVADOR.**

### MY JOURNEY TO AMERICA

Ok! When I was doing 8th grade I had two friends, and the gangs killed them on one day that I didn't go to the school. I think that if that day I been there, I would have gotten killed with them. After that my mom said that I can't still go to the school, because it was very dangerous. After like one month, my mom decided to bring me to United States with my sister. She told me on a Friday night that the men that were going for me will be at my house for me at Sunday the same week in the morning. And I didn't have nothing ready. I didn't have an idea that it was coming so fast. Then that night my mom told me also that she sent money for us, and we have to go to the bank because we're going to need money to come. And also we need to go to the store and buy some clothes. But that night the store was closed.

On Saturday morning, I had my final game of the season with my team, and then I chose to go to the field and play the game and tell my grandma that she needs to come to the field because I will not have time later to go to her home to say goodbye. But she didn't come, so I didn't say bye to her. The same day after the game, the team made me an impromptu farewell party, and after we did, I went to the store to buy clothes to come to America. We did and we finished very late at night, and after my family chose to go to a restaurant eat a last meal there. Then I left forever.

**“SCHOOLS IN SOME COUNTRIES GO ONLY AS FAR AS THE FOURTH GRADE. OUR STUDENTS ARRIVE HERE AND ARE EXPECTED TO BE IN SCHOOL THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL. WE HAVE TO DETERMINE THEIR SKILL LEVELS AND MOVE FORWARD.” —KRISTEN FORD**

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students and taking away resources from others. In an interview with Washington D.C.’s WAMU, Odis Johnson, the former chair of the African American Studies Department at University of Maryland, said, “We’re at a situation where we can continue down a path towards educational isolation, which is something that Latino students feel when they’re in classrooms where they can’t interact or fully engage with the instruction ... that has to be one of the most pernicious forms of segregation where you are actually in the context but totally isolated and unable to benefit from all that’s going around.”

The schools in Langley Park and Largo are part of the Internationals Network for Public Schools, which provides guidance, professional development, and other supports to school designers/principals and staff. All of the schools work under the premise that language learning and content mastery can happen together. IHSLP is also partners with CASA de Maryland, which provides essential services and supports to students and families with access to immigration lawyers, classes for parents, housing assistance, and other community services.

Unlike the typically greater homogeneity of more affluent suburban schools, a school like IHSLP is dynamically heterogeneous. Students of the same age may have very different life experiences, different levels of English proficiency, and different—or barely any—experiences in a classroom.

English teacher Sass and ESOL teacher Kristen Ford are co-teachers. Ford taught high school English for three years before becoming certified in ESOL and signing on with IHSLP. “We’re differentiating instruction, but basing it on our students’ different levels of proficiency in language and content. It’s an asynchronous learning model, so as we work on grade-level appropriate content we can

appeal to the needs of different students and their readiness to absorb it,” said Ford.

The goal is for every student to have access to content they can manage and master and to progress naturally to the next level. At IHSLP, every student has a laptop and Google Classroom, and that, says Ford, makes a huge difference in managing a student’s needs. “What’s challenging is those moments when higher level students are moving through tasks at a quicker pace, with more accuracy. They feel that they’re doing more, but it’s a shifting of the mindset that we’re not all on the same page nor do we need to be. We tell them that if they want to excel, we’re here to help. It’s not more work, it’s more learning. And doing well creates more opportunities.”

Former ELL student Arnold Somera teaches math. “In my classes, students are grouped according to their ability in math and their language. So when they collaborate, they get opportunities to use language skills. They talk, they listen, they write.” Somera is using his Rosetta Stone account to increase his Spanish fluency. Other teachers are studying Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia, and Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines, along with English.

Restorative practices are a part of the culture, too. “Our population is often disproportionately targeted for things like suspensions and expulsions in high schools,” says Ford, “so we are helping them to think through ‘What is community and what is my role in it?’ The students are becoming empowered in their decision-making even if they don’t always make the greatest choice. The difference in having ELL-only students is that it strips away the judgment and fear that I noticed some students have in a traditional school. “They don’t feel judged by their accent or lack of words. They really feel supported.

You can feel a lower level of stress among the students,” Ford adds. The staff heaps praise on social worker Lesly Lemus, who meets with students in groups and individually to help process their feelings and emotions.

Sass and Ford are two of only seven teachers in the school. There is one teacher for each subject—math, science, social studies, art, and physical education, plus a guidance counselor, social worker, and school secretary. With Beato, they’ve worked hard since opening in August to establish the culture of engagement, autonomy, collaboration, and acceleration that drives every student and staffer in the portable classrooms that make up the school’s campus. “Every decision we make has implications, but that’s exciting,” says Sass. “And I think the students also feel the sense of importance that comes with opening a school. Year one is only eight months in, and we are already beginning to plan for and envision the future.”

Sass shares another story, this time one of remarkable success: “At IHSLP, I am consistently amazed by Katya. She came to the United States from El Salvador by herself when she was 10 years old. She reunited with her mother, and she immediately sought to learn English and succeed in school. Now, she is active in the school government and the school newspaper, and she serves as the official student translator at IHSLP. In April, Katya will be accompanying me to Harvard’s Latin American Education Forum, where she and I will be speaking about education in light of migration.”

Read more about the Internationals Network for Public Schools and their pedagogical approach to educating English language learners at [internationalsnps.org](http://internationalsnps.org).

## My Turn

# Dwayne Hancock

*Building Services Manager*  
Esperanza Middle School  
St. Mary's County

Studies show that students in a healthy environment score 15 percentage points higher than those in a less healthy environment. I believe that education starts with good educators and a distraction-free environment that's clean, safe, healthy, and attractive. As supporting services, we can make that happen.

I started a lunchtime recycling program at Esperanza and soon after, a group of bright 7th grade students started their own program. Now our building services staff works with 6th and 7th grade students to support their efforts. As they've become stakeholders in the program, they are naturally developing valuable leadership skills and encouraging their friends to join. We see students reap the rewards of hard work and that transfers to the classroom.

I'm a mentor for our PBIS program and teachers and I often discuss the good and bad choices our students are making. Sometimes, if they're doing really well, a group of kids can come out for five minutes at the end of the day and we'll shoot some hoops. Other times, we'll have breakfast meetings and discuss homework and daily goals.

Hearing from a person with a broom and dustpan in their hands is different than hearing from a teacher. Students are interested in how real life experience works. Recently, students could pick someone they wanted to shadow. My two shadows were amazed with everything that goes on in the building and more amazed that I also have work to do on the computer, including reports and emails. Most of the students are fascinated by what we do and how our job affects the way that they learn.

Not everyone can be in a classroom, but we can all be teachers and role models for students. How we carry ourselves and do our jobs makes a huge and lasting impression on our students.



**“Not everyone can be in a classroom, but we can all be teachers and role models for students.”**



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