



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Mohammed Choudhury, State Superintendent of Schools
DATE: May 23, 2023
SUBJECT: Recognition of Maryland’s 2023-24 Teachers of the Year

PURPOSE

To recognize Maryland’s newly named 2023-24 local Teachers of the Year.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROGRAM, SPONSORS, AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maryland has fully participated in the National Teacher of the Year Program for 34 years. The National Program is sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers. The objective of the state program is to draw public attention to the teaching profession and the contributions of our outstanding teachers. The 24 educators were selected by their school systems for outstanding commitment to education, equity, and community leadership. The cohort represents grade levels from pre-kindergarten through high school and a variety of subjects including language arts, math, social studies, science, engineering, computer science, and visual arts. From this cohort, the Maryland Teacher of the Year will be selected. The Maryland Teacher of the Year will compete with other state winners across the country for the title of National Teacher of the Year.

The Maryland Teacher of the Year participates in numerous speaking engagements and professional development programs at state conferences, college graduations, ceremonies, and other events. Award recipients are also invited to be part of prestigious panels and education committees.

Local Education Agency	Teachers Name
Allegany Public County Schools	Dr. Joseph Thompson
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	Mary Kay Connerton
Baltimore City Public Schools	Jared Perry
Baltimore County Public Schools	Beverly Folkoff
Calvert County Public Schools	John S. Allen
Caroline County Public Schools	Robert Honer
Carroll County Public Schools	Lauren Stevens
Cecil County Public Schools	Brianne Souder
Charles County Public Schools	Michelle L. Bradshaw
Dorchester County Public Schools	Briana D. Beulah

Frederick County Public Schools	Nicole Rhoades
Garrett County Public Schools	Ali Schilpp
Harford County Public Schools	Michael Brogley
Howard County Public Schools	Dr. Laura Moore
Kent County Public Schools	Mary J. McGee
Montgomery County Public Schools	Shannon H. McKenzie
Prince George's County Public Schools	Mary Truman
Queen Anne's County Public Schools	Andrea M. Schulte
St. Mary's County Public Schools	Alisha Swann
Somerset County Public Schools	Tania L. Cunningham-Raycrow
Talbot County Public Schools	Cindy Rossbach
Washington County Public Schools	Raymond Weber
Wicomico County Public Schools	Tara Martens
Worcester County Public Schools	Jaimie Ridgely

ACTION

The State Superintendent and State Board will recognize each local Teachers of the Year with a State Board of Education Citation. An inscribed portfolio will be presented and a commemorative photo will be taken.

ATTACHMENTS

Teacher of the Year Bios

Allegany County, Dr. Joseph Thompson, Fort Hill School Instrumental Music, Grades 9-12

Dr. Joseph Thompson is an experienced music educator in Allegany County. He holds Doctorate (2020) and Master of Education (2010) degrees from Frostburg State University, and a Bachelor's Degree (2001) from Alderson/Broaddus College. An advocate for the arts and student leadership, Dr. Thompson prioritizes facilitating student-led community initiatives. He serves as the Allegany County Education Association school representative, Department Chair, and on several committees. Dr. Thompson's dissertation examined the effects of a marching band performance illustrating homelessness, "In Plain Sight." Under Dr. Thompson, the Fort Hill instrumental music programs are consistently recognized for achievements and community support.

Anne Arundel County, Mary Kay Connerton, Annapolis High School Physical Education/Wellness, Grades 9-12

Mary Kay Connerton is a fierce advocate for student wellness. Serving as Wellness Coordinator at Annapolis High School, Anne Arundel County named her Teacher of the Year. The wellness program she created assists the school community with living healthfully, leading to a Wellness School of Distinction. She co-leads the Trauma Team and programs that focus on healing and connecting communities. She pioneered the first yoga program and Social Emotional Learning/Wellness curriculum for 25,000 students. She received the 2020 SHAPE Friend Award and earned a Master's in Special Education (2010) and a Bachelor's in Childhood Education (2008) from SUNY Cortland.

Baltimore City, Jared Perry, Booker T. Washington Middle School for the Arts Instrumental Music, Grades 9-12

Jared Perry received his Master of Arts in Teaching (2013) and a Bachelor's Degree in Instrumental Music (2009) from Morgan State University. Currently, he serves as the Band Director, Arts Team Lead, Technology Manager, and Senior Leadership Team member at Booker T. Washington Middle school for the Arts. Jared is also a Brass Teaching Artist, Ensemble Director of the brass band, has led various ensembles, and mentored teachers as he is serving students across multiple schools through the BSO's OrchKids program. He mentors UMBC Music Education majors by opening his classroom for weekly observations and musical collaborations with his students.

Baltimore County, Beverly Folkoff, Relay Elementary School Special Education, Grades 3-5

Beverly Folkoff, a special education teacher at Relay Elementary School, has taught in BCPS for 15 years. A native of Maryland's Eastern Shore, she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education from Towson University (2007) and her Master's Degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of Virginia (2011). She also earned a certification in educational administration from Notre Dame College of Maryland (2014). Folkoff serves on the Board of Directors for the Teachers Association of Baltimore County. And in her classroom, Folkoff strives to create the "3 L's" -- Life skills, Loving environments, and lots of Laughter!

Calvert County, John Allen, Huntingtown High School English & Journalism, Grades 9-12

John S. Allen received his Bachelor's Degree in English from Dartmouth College, MAT from Wesleyan University, and MA in Radio, TV, and Film from Northwestern. John initially taught English for four years at New Trier High School in Winnetka, IL. He then entered the world of documentary film production with the American Red Cross and established his own documentary and educational film production company, Signature Communications. John now serves full time at Huntingtown High School where he teaches film, journalism, and broadcasting. He is a student mentor, member of the Equity Team and advisor to the school newspaper.

Caroline County, Ron Honer, Colonel Richardson Middle School Science, Grade 6

Rob Honer received his degree in Elementary Education from Towson University, followed by a Graduate degree from Salisbury University. Mr. Honer has taught sixth grade science at Colonel Richardson Middle School for 24 years, and established the First Lego League Team for students which is now a part of the school's STEM philosophy and Gifted and Talented Program fulfillment. He is also a musician who partnered with other agencies in 2011 to create the Young Musicians Summer Academy, which to date has served over 500 students, and the Courthouse Community Band which features former and current students.

Carroll County, Lauren Stevens, Manchester Valley High School Biology & Human Anatomy, Grades 10-12

Lauren Stevens' versatility within the curriculum enables her to excel in teaching the most challenged learners to the most gifted students. She holds a Bachelor's Degree from Washington College (2004) and a Master's Degree from McDaniel College (2010). Lauren teaches Biology and Human Anatomy in grades 10 -12. She has led efforts to establish a Green School, developed a portion of the state recognized American Chestnut curriculum and collaborated on MSDE's Literacy Framework Update. Lauren also provides professional development for her colleagues and serves as an outstanding mentor for interns and student teachers.

Cecil County, Brianne Souder, Rising Sun High School Fine Arts, Grades 9-12

Brianne Souder is a visual arts educator with 17 years of experience. She received her Bachelor's Degree from Penn State University where she also completed studies and an internship in art therapy and holds a Master's Degree from Montclair State University. She is a committed advocate for arts education and has presented at the county, state, and national level. Brianne is passionate about teaching students about the world through the visual arts and the mental health benefits of creative making. She provides engaging, diverse, and enriching experiences to guide students in discovering their potential while addressing their social emotional needs.

Charles County, Michelle Bradshaw, Maurice J. McDonough High School Special Education, Grades 9-12

Michelle Bradshaw received her advanced professional certificate in Special Education from Trinity University (2001) and a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature from the State University of New York at Oswego (1994). Currently, a special education teacher, she coordinates the Best Buddies Program, and mentors students in the Teachers Academy of Maryland Program. She facilitates the inclusion of her students at school, partnering with staff to provide them with meaningful worksites on campus. In addition, her students have run the school coffee shop for the past fifteen years. She was named the ARC of Southern Maryland's Educator of the Year in 2011.

Dorchester County, Briana Beulah, Sandy Hill Elementary School General Studies, Grade 5

Briana Beulah received her Bachelor's Degree in Education with a minor in Psychology from Salisbury University (2015) and will be completing her Master's Degree in Education/Administration and Supervision from University of Phoenix (2023). Currently, as a 5th grade teacher, she leads a team of inspiring teachers that has successfully implemented the Ron Clarke's House Academy program at Sandy Hill Elementary. In 2021, she received the first Emily's Excellence in Education recognition. Briana is currently serving as one of Dorchester County's Buddy Teachers, is a mentor to a Salisbury University intern, and a youth leader at Kingdom Builders Ministries.

Frederick County, Nicole Rhoades, Windsor Knolls Middle School Science, Grade 7

Nicole Rhoades is in her 13th year of teaching seventh grade science at Windsor Knolls Middle School, where she organized the first school-wide science fair, STEM Career Day and educational opportunities at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. She earned National Board Certification in Early Adolescent Science in 2013 and coaches other teachers pursuing this certification. She earned a BS in biology from Salisbury University in 2003 and has previously conducted biomedical research at Johns Hopkins Medical Institute. She was an Excellence in Gifted & Talented Education Award winner and was a Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching nominee.

Garrett County, Ali Schilpp, Northern Middle School, Literacy Enrichment/Technology Education, Grades 7-8

Ali Schilpp is a National Board-Certified Teacher and has been a library media specialist for 21 years. Her work experience includes libraries in Baltimore and Garrett County, Maryland. Ali strives to make the school library the heart of the school. A place to engage every learner and foster multiple literacies. She was the School Library Journal's 2018 School Librarian of the Year, received the 2019 Advocate Award from Frostburg's Children's Literature Centre, and is a LEGO® Education Ambassador. Ali earned a Master's Degree in Instructional Technology with K-12 certification from Towson University (2005) and a Bachelor's Degree from Stevenson University (2000).

Harford County, Michael Brogley, C. Milton Wright High School Social Studies, Grades 9-12

Michael Brogley received his Master's Degrees in Instruction, Curriculum, and Assessment from Walden University (2013) and a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education with a concentration in History from Towson University (2008). He currently serves as a Social Sciences teacher and is the adviser of his school's chapter of the National Honor Society. He additionally is a member of the School Performance and Achievement Team and serves as the Coordinator of the HCPS Student Page Program. He was also the founder of the successful Stand Up for Autism program and serves as an adjunct professor in History at Harford Community College.

Howard County, Dr. Laura Moore, Waverly Elementary School General Studies, Grade 2

Dr. Laura Moore creates a culturally responsive learning environment of inclusivity and collaboration by engaging students, staff, and families as valuable educational partners. She has the reputation as an instructional leader, and caring individual by all who have the pleasure of interacting with her. As a National Board Certified teacher, she is a life-long learner who strives for excellence not only for herself, but also for everyone she serves. Dr. Moore's belief in fostering meaningful relationships serves as the foundation for everything she does, and her highly effective teaching and leadership style continues to influence teacher leaders throughout the district.

Kent County, Mary McGee, Galena Elementary School General Studies, Grade 2

Jessie McGee earned a Bachelor's Degree in Viola Performance from the University of Colorado and a Master's Degree in Viola Performance from the Peabody Conservatory. She completed her Early Childhood certification through the Baltimore City Teaching Residency in 2009. From 2020-2022 McGee was part of MSDE's Lead Teacher Team which developed and supported Elementary Social Studies curriculum. Currently as a second-grade teacher, McGee chairs the Environmental Committee and leads the Student Green Team where she implemented a schoolwide composting program. She also received a MSRPA grant for a "Watch Me Grow" project that provides materials for classrooms to hatch chicks.

Montgomery County, Shannon McKenzie, Clarksburg High School, Child Development, Grades 9-12

Shannon McKenzie holds a Bachelor's Degree in early childhood education from Towson University, and a Master's Degree in mental health and wellness from Grand Canyon University. As the current Child Development teacher at Clarksburg High School (CHS), she is also the Coyote Pup Preschool Director, Education Intern Coordinator, and CHS Chapter Educators Rising Teacher Leader. She is very proud to also have served MCPS as an educator with the Preschool Education Program (Preschool SPED) from 2016 to 2021. Mrs. McKenzie is also very active serving children and families in Frederick County, as the owner of a private preschool since 2000.

Prince George's County, Mary Truman, Kenmoor Early Childhood Center Early Childhood Special Education, Grades Pre-Kindergarten – 4

Mary Truman received her Master's Degree in Special Education (2004) and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Hearing and Speech Sciences from the University of Maryland (2000). Mary has been teaching preschoolers with autism since 2000. Mary serves as team leader, school representative for the Core Vocabulary initiative, and a mentor for new teachers. Mary is a member of the RDI teacher certification program and is currently receiving mentorship from Kennedy Krieger Institute as a member of a cohort. Mary has been recognized by the City of Bowie as both Teacher of the Month and Teacher of the Year. In 2017, Mary and her team Biked to the Beach, raising \$12,000 for Autism Speaks.

Queen Anne's County, Andrea Schulte, Kent Island High School Visual Arts, Grades 9-12

Andrea Schulte is a passionate master teacher, championing student-centered approaches to teaching the whole child through student choice/voice and social emotional learning in and out of the classroom. Her career began in 2001 as a Science teacher before becoming a Visual Arts teacher at middle and high school levels; then Art Department Chair, Statewide Presenter, National Art Honor Society Sponsor, National Honor Society Advisor, and 2023 QACPS Teacher of the Year. Schulte has a B.S. in Art Education (1996 - 2000), and a M.A. in Art Education (2009 - 2011) with a concentration in Art Therapy from Edinboro University.

St. Mary's County, Alisha Swann, Esperanza Middle School English/Language Arts, Grade 8

Alisha Swann received her Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction (2020) from McDaniel College and her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Adolescent Education and English Literature (2015) from Elmira College. As an 8th Grade English Language Arts teacher and the Equity School Site Leader, she creates equitable multicultural resources for staff to educate students. She is the ELA Department Chair and tutors students after school. Alisha has spoken at various church events and collaborates with the Teacher Academy of Maryland Program. Also, she has volunteered with the NAACP Back to School Events and has been recognized by Blacks in Government.

Somerset County, Tania Cunningham-Raycrow, Somerset Intermediate School, Comprehensive Special Education, Grades 6 & 7

Tania Cunningham-Raycrow received her Master's Degree in ESOL from Salisbury University (2016) and a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (1998). She began her career with SCPS as a substitute teacher in 1998 and is currently a special education comprehensive classroom teacher providing hands-on support to students with significant cognitive delays in all core content areas as well as Life Skills; she provides personalized instruction through the SCPS Home and Hospital program and serves as the county's Alt-assessment facilitator. Tania serves her community through faith-based mentoring programs including college prep initiatives.

Talbot County, Cindy Rossbach, Easton Elementary School Special Education, Grades 2 & 3

Cindy Rossbach received her Master's Degree in Science of Education from Walden University (2019) and her Bachelor's Degree in Special Education from Liberty University (2015). She is a special education teacher. Cindy supports her students by applying Grading for Equity and Conscious Discipline components, which she presented the systemic pieces during her county's Equity Summit. Cindy is a Culturally Relevant Teaching Committee member sharing elements during professional development, is actively involved in her youth group, and is an adult Sunday School teacher. Also, Talbot County Special Education Citizen's Advisory Committee just acknowledged her positive impact on students this school year.

Washington County, Raymond Weber, Salem Avenue Elementary School, English/Language Arts, Grade 8

Raymond Weber, a 13-year fifth-grade teacher at a Title I school, empowers students to realize their potential and develops their knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in and beyond the classroom. Weber earned his Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education at Shepherd University (2009) and Master of Arts in Instructional Design and Technology at West Virginia University (2016). He is a team leader, curriculum writer, and a coach and mentor in Destination Imagination and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Weber achieved the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and is a Fulbright Teacher for Global Classrooms.

Wicomico County, Tara Martens, West Salisbury Elementary School Math Intervention, Grades 1& 2

Tara Martens, an 11-year teacher in Wicomico County, holds a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Salisbury University and a Master's Degree in Special Education from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Mrs. Martens is the Math Intervention Teacher at West Salisbury Elementary, where she re-writes contemporary songs connecting music with math for her students. She co-chairs both the Instructional Leadership Team and the Family Engagement Committee. Mrs. Martens initiated a Grade 1-2 Title 1 Summer Tutoring Program, worked for Home Hospital, and tutored students experiencing homelessness under a district initiative. She was honored with the McEducator Award of Excellence.

Worcester County, Jaimie Ridgely, Stephen Decatur Middle School Literacy Enrichment & Technology Education, Grades 7-8

National Board Certified Teacher Jaimie Ridgely is a literacy aficionado who prioritizes writerly identity exploration, joy, and agency in her Literacy Enrichment and Technology Education classes at Stephen Decatur Middle School. Community, voice, choice, and reflection are cornerstones of her student-centered classroom where students share their creative voices within and beyond the classroom walls. Jaimie earned her Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees from Salisbury University. She is a 21-year veteran teacher and serves as an adjunct professor, school improvement team member, Worcester LEAD teacher, peer mentor, professional development facilitator, and afterschool sponsor for Book Club, Tutoring, and Dungeons & Dragons.

Maryland Teacher of the Year 2023–2024

State Board Recognition
May 23, 2023



Allegany County

Superintendent
Mr. Jeffrey S. Blank

Dr. Joseph Thompson

Fort Hill High School
Instrumental Music, Grades 9–12

Principal – Candy Canan



Anne Arundel County

Superintendent
Dr. Mark T. Bedell

Mary Kay Connerton

Annapolis High School

Physical Education - Wellness, Grades 9–12

Principal – Mr. Patrick Gelinas



Baltimore City

Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Sonja B. Santelises

Jared Perry

Booker T. Washington Middle School
Instrumental Music, Grades 9-12

Principal – Ms. Rashida Ford



Baltimore County

Superintendent
Dr. Darryl L. Williams

Beverly Folkoff

Relay Elementary School
Special Education, Grades 3–5

Principal – Mr. Lisa Grace



Calvert County

Superintendent
Dr. Andraé Townsel

John S. Allen

Huntingtown High School
English & Journalism, Grades 9–12

Principal – Ms. Beth Morton



Caroline County

Superintendent
Dr. Derek L. Simmons

Robert Honer

Colonel Richardson Middle School
Science, Grade 6

Principal – Dr. Yolanda Holloway



Carroll County

Superintendent
Ms. Cynthia McCabe

Lauren Stevens

Manchester Valley High School
Biology & Human Anatomy, Grades 10–12

Principal – Mr. Joseph Guerra



Cecil County

Superintendent
Dr. Jeffrey A. Lawson

Brianne Souder

Rising Sun High School
Fine Arts, Grades 9–12

Principal – Mr. James Miro



Charles County

Superintendent
Dr. Maria V. Navarro

Michelle L. Bradshaw

Maurice J. McDonough
High School

Special Education, Grades 9–12

Principal – Mr. Darnell Lewis-Russell



Dorchester County

Superintendent
Mr. W. David Bromwell, Jr.

Briana D. Beulah

Sandy Hill Elementary School
General, Grade 5

Principal – Ms. Deborah Gibson



Frederick County

Superintendent
Dr. Cheryl L. Dyson

Nicole Rhoades

Windsor Knolls Middle School
Science, Grade 7

Principal – Mr. Brian Vasquenza



Garrett County

Superintendent
Ms. Barbara L. Baker

Ali Schilpp

Northern Middle School
Library Media, Grades 6–8

Principal – Mr. David Yoder



Harford County

Superintendent
Dr. Sean W. Bulson

Michael Brogley

C. Milton Wright High School
Social Studies, Grades 9–12

Principal – Ms. Erica M. Harris



Howard County

Superintendent
Dr. Michael J. Martirano

Dr. Laura Moore

Waverly Elementary School
Grade 2

Principal – Dr. Rachel Edoho-Eket



Kent County

Superintendent
Dr. Karen M. Couch

Mary J. McGee

Galena Elementary School

Math/ELA/Science/Social Studies, Grade 2

Principal – Ms. Becky Yoder



Montgomery County

Superintendent
Dr. Monifa B. McKnight

Shannon H. McKenzie

Clarksburg High School
Child Development, Grades 9-12

Principal – Mr. Edward K. Owusu



Prince George's County

Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Monica E. Goldson

Mary Truman

Kenmoor Early Childhood Center
Early Childhood Special Education,
Grades Pre-Kindergarten – 4

Principal – Ms. Alma Ezell-Lawson



Queen Anne's County

Superintendent
Dr. Patricia W. Saelens

Andrea M. Schulte

Kent Island High School
Visual Arts, Grades 9–12

Principal – Mr. Sean Kenna



St. Mary's County

Superintendent
Dr. James Scott Smith

Alisha Swann

Esperanza Middle School
English/Language Arts, Grade 8

Principal – Ms. Jennifer Consalvo



Somerset County

Superintendent
Dr. John B. Gaddis

Tania Cunningham- Raycrow

Somerset Intermediate School
Comprehensive Special Education
Grades 6 & 7

Principal – Mr. Corey Ballard



Talbot County

Superintendent
Dr. Sharon M. Pepukayi

Cindy Rossbach

Easton Elementary School
Special Education, Grades 1 & 2

Principal – Ms. Lisa Devaric



Washington County

Superintendent
Dr. David T. Sovine

Raymond Weber

Salem Avenue Elementary School
Mathematics & English Language Arts,
Grade 5

Principal – Mr. Thomas Garner



Wicomico County

Superintendent
Dr. Micah C. Stauffer

Tara Martens

West Salisbury Elementary School
Math Intervention, Grades 1 & 2

Principal – Mr. Kimandi Binns



Worcester County

Superintendent
Mr. Louis Taylor

Jaimie Ridgely

Stephen Decatur Middle School

Literacy Enrichment/Technology
Education, Grades 7-8

Principal – Ms. H. Lynn Barton

