

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools

DATE: June 24, 2025

SUBJECT: Recognition of the MAESP and MASSP Principals of the Year



Purpose

The State Board of Education, along with State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carey M. Wright, will recognize the statewide Principals and Assistant Principals of the Year as selected by the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) and Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP).

Background

MAESP and MASSP in collaboration with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) selects principals and assistant principals of the year to represent Maryland.

Executive Summary

Dr. Ryan Daniel, Fort Foote Elementary School, Prince George's County Public Schools MAESP National Distinguished Principal

Dr. Ryan Daniel has transformed the culture at Fort Foote Elementary with her warm personality, strong rapport with staff, students, and the broader community, and visionary leadership. Her commitment to fostering connections extends beyond the classroom through events such as Popcorn with the Principal, Donuts with Dads, Thanksgiving baskets, and the inaugural Parent Academy — Homework without Tears. These events not only engage the students but also create opportunities for families and the community to connect in a positive and inclusive environment. One of Dr. Daniel's most admirable qualities is her hands-on leadership style. Each day, she greets every student at the start and end of the school day, ensuring they feel seen and valued. She consistently visits classrooms to engage with students and provide support to teachers. Dr. Daniel is a past president of MAESP and currently serves on the NAESP Board of Directors.

Kelly McVey, Southern Middle School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools MASSP/NASSP Principal of the Year

Kelly McVey began her journey as a social studies teacher in Howard County before transitioning into administrative roles. More than a decade ago, she stepped into leadership as an assistant principal at North County High School, then Old Mill Middle School South, before taking on the role of principal at Southern Middle School in the 2021-2022 school year. Her dedication and ability to foster a collaborative and inclusive school culture have earned her recognition. She has been praised for her leadership in guiding a mission focused on student performance and creating an environment where every voice is valued.

Kris Hemstetter, Kent County High School, Kent County Public Schools

MASSP/NAASP Principal of the Year

Kris Hemstetter is an accomplished educator and respected school leader with more than 20 years of service to Maryland public schools and nine years as a principal. Her career spans every grade level, starting as a middle school English teacher, serving as an elementary principal, and now leading as Kent County High School Principal since 2021. A former school Teacher of the Year and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Master Teacher, Hemstetter is a recognized expert in math instruction and fluency, having led major math initiatives in her district and conducted numerous professional development sessions across the state to improve math achievement. Under her leadership, Kent County High School has realized transformational gains. The school boasts a 94.2% graduation rate—placing it among the top five high schools in Maryland—and student performance on the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) has surpassed state averages. She currently serves as President of the MASSP and as an active member of the MSDE Principal Advisory Council, where she lends her voice to shaping statewide policy and practice.

Dr. Sonia Matthew, Mary B. Neal Elementary, Charles County Public Schools

MAESP/NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal

Dr. Sonia Matthew is known for her success in establishing, fostering, and sustaining strong community partnerships. She has galvanized the Mary B. Neal Elementary School community by creating collaborative programs that improved culture throughout the building. Dr. Matthew has the “heart of a learner,” which enables her to effectively mentor teachers and staff. A National Board Certified Teacher, she has worked with the Maryland State Educators Association to increase the number of National Board Certified Teachers across Maryland. Dr. Matthew serves on the MAESP executive board and co-chairs the DEI Committee.

Anna Ory, Marley Middle School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS)

MASSP Middle School Assistant Principal of the Year

Anna M. Ory currently serves as Assistant Principal at Marley Middle School, where she has been an integral part of the leadership team since 2020, driving data-informed instructional practices and fostering a positive, inclusive school climate. A committed and accomplished educational leader, she previously held multiple roles at Brooklyn Park Middle School for two years, where she served as the Science Department Chair, School Test Coordinator, and PBIS Coach, supporting both teacher growth and student success through instructional leadership and schoolwide systems development. Ory’s leadership journey over two decades of experience in public education includes serving at Meade Evening High School from 2015 to 2020. Her career with Anne Arundel County Public Schools began at MacArthur Middle School. Her accomplishments include the Science Teaching Tools Award from the Armed Forces Communications & Electronics Association and serving on the AACPS Middle School Workforce Committee.

Dr. La Faye Howard, Winston Churchill High School, Montgomery County Public Schools
MASSP High School Assistant Principal of the Year
NASSP Assistant Principal of the Year Finalist

Dr. La Faye Howard is concluding her ninth year as an assistant principal at Winston Churchill High School. With over 20 years of experience as an English teacher, English department chair, Staff Development teacher, and as an administrator, she is committed to providing the best educational experience for students that leads to desirable academic, social, and emotional outcomes in school and beyond. As an instructional leader, Dr. Howard recognizes and facilitates discussions around good first instruction, as well as coaching and feedback to promote reflection and continuous improvement. She coaches new assistant principals in Montgomery County, and she is currently enrolled to participate this fall in the Harvard Graduate School of Education: *School Leaders of Color Organizational Development Collaborative*. Her core values are excellence in learning through successful instructional practices, equity in access and supports, and building positive relationships with all stakeholders. She has spearheaded work around race and equity; promoting awareness, inclusivity and support through No Place for Hate campaigns, Learning for Justice resources, and school wide student and staff learning on the Winston Churchill High School culture playbook.

Action

The State Superintendent and State Board of Education will recognize each honoree with Superintendent and State Board of Education Citations. A commemorative photo will be taken.

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT

Principals of the Year

June 24, 2025

Presented By | Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools



Dr. Ryan Daniel

Fort Foote Elementary School

MAESP National Distinguished Principal

Prince George's County Public Schools





Kris Hemstetter

Kent County High School

MASSP/NASSP Principal of the Year

Kent County Public Schools





Kelly McVey

Southern Middle School

MASSP/NASSP Principal of the Year

Anne Arundel County Public Schools



ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Dr. Sonia Matthew

Mary B. Neal Elementary School

MAESP/NAESP Outstanding Assistant Principal

Charles County Public Schools





Anna Ory

Marley Middle School

**MASSP Middle School Assistant Principal of
the Year**

Anne Arundel County Public Schools



ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



La Faye Howard

Winston Churchill High School

**MASSP High School Assistant Principal of the Year
NASSP Assistant Principal of the Year Finalist**

Montgomery County Public Schools





Congratulations to the award recipients!

