PGCPS Honors Record Number of National Board Certified Teachers

With nearly 60 teachers achieving National Board Certification this past year, Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) now ranks third in the state for its number of National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs). The total number is currently at 133 – behind only Montgomery County (479) and Anne Arundel County (159) – according to data released by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

“National Board Certification is the most prestigious credential a teacher can earn, and it can play a significant role in changing the culture of our school district,” said Dr. William Hite, Jr., Interim Superintendent of Schools. “It puts the most highly-effective teachers in classrooms where they can use their skills to impact student achievement, and creates a network of outstanding teachers who share their experiences and skills with colleagues and encourages them to seek National Board Certification.”

On December 15, 56 PGCPS National Board Certified teachers in the Class of 2008 were recognized during a Pinning Ceremony at the Newton White Mansion in Mitchellville hosted by the PGCPS National Board Certified Teacher Leadership Development Office. Members of the Board of Education, Dr. Hite, Prince George’s County Educators’ Association (PGCEA) President Donald Briscoe, administrators, families, and friends joined together to congratulate the group and celebrate their achievements. Suitland HS junior Jordan Hamilton honored the NBCTs with an outstanding classical cello performance, and Maryland Teacher of the Year William Thomas from Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr. HS shared anecdotes from his certification process, as well as his experiences this year.

Seven teachers, who were not “pinned” last year, were recognized for achieving National Board Certification in 2007, including Hubert Willoughby of Eleanor Roosevelt HS, the first African-American male in the school system to earn National Board Certification. The first three teachers in the school system to renew their National Board Certification were presented with special plaques.

Prince George’s County is the only public school district in Maryland that has created an office specifically to assist teachers in achieving National Board Certification. The National Board Certified Teacher Leadership Development Office staff prepares teachers for the process by providing practice exercises, simulations, portfolio assistance, one-on-one mentors, and candidate visits.

Currently, 349 PGCPS teachers participating in the National Board Certified Teacher program will submit their applications in Spring 2009. Approximately 166 teachers are participating through the TakeOne! program, and 183 teachers have applied for full National Board Certification. Candidates receive tuition waivers and funding assistance through partnerships with George Washington University, the NBPTS, and the Maryland State Department of Education. PGCPS teachers who achieve National Board Certification can receive a pay increase totaling $70,000 over the course of 10 years.
Board of Education Begins Superintendent Search With Community Meetings

The Prince George’s County Board of Education launched a massive effort this month to obtain public input in the process of selecting a new superintendent for Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) – America’s 18th largest school district.

Four town-hall meetings were held at four locations on January 13 and 14 to ask the public to weigh-in on the traits and characteristics they want in a new superintendent. Additional meetings were held for the Prince George’s Regional Association of Student Governments (PGRASG), teachers, administrators, staff, elected officials, and community leaders.

“It is vitally important that we reach out to our community and get their advice on what kinds of traits and characteristics the new superintendent should have,” Board Chair Jacobs said. “The school board needs that advice and involvement from the entire community as we work to find the right person to lead our school district. This is a critically important decision for the future of our children.”

The meetings were arranged and conducted by MABE, which was hired by PGCPS to assist in the process of selecting a new superintendent. During the meetings, MABE asked the community for thoughts on these three questions: 1) “Tell us about the good things that are happening in the county;” 2) “Tell us the skills, qualities and characteristics you want to see in the next superintendent;” 3) “Tell us about any issues that a new superintendent needs to be aware of to be successful.”

To encourage participation, the school district invited the public to the meetings to share their ideas through personal telephone calls, automated phone messages, emails, letters, and the district’s television station and Web pages.

The Board of Education will meet with MABE officials to review all the recommendations from the public and to establish a final profile of the traits and characteristics the Board will seek in a new superintendent. The Board will then begin considering potential candidates for the job. The Board expects to complete the work on the superintendent profile by the end of January.
Superintendent’s News

New Community Policing Partnership Will Encourage Attendance

The Prince George’s County Board of Education and the Prince George’s County Police Department, along with Prince George’s County Public Schools, joined together for a press conference on January 12 to announce a new partnership. The “Community Policing Partnership” will encourage student attendance in all County public schools, particularly on testing days.

“To continue making progress in student achievement, we must do everything we can to ensure that students are in class and ready to learn,” said Dr. William R. Hite, Jr., Interim Superintendent of Schools. “This new partnership will encourage attendance and support the anti-truancy campaign initiated by the Board of Education this fall.”

County Police will have an increased presence around public schools and will work in conjunction with school personnel to return students to school if they are found to be truant.

“The police department is proud to fully support the school system in encouraging school attendance, especially during High School Assessment testing. We know that students who apply themselves in their studies and attain their high school diploma are much more likely to become productive citizens and not engage in illegal activity,” said Roberto L. Hylton, Acting Chief, Prince George’s County Police Department.

Prince George’s County public high school students began taking the current administration of the High School Assessments (HSAs) January 12 and continued through the week. Beginning this year with the class of 2009, all students are required to sit for and pass the HSAs with a combined score of 1602 as a graduation requirement.

PGCPS has experienced a significant increase in average daily attendance in high schools, following the Board of Education’s anti-truancy campaign last year. The average daily attendance for the first quarter of the 2008-09 school year was 91.15 percent compared to 79.64 percent for the same time period during the 2007-08 school year. The Board of Education launched a public awareness campaign against truancy last year and worked with county police to encourage the public to report students seen in the community during the school day. The Board also held community meetings in all five school districts last year and will schedule additional meetings this spring.

Citizens and business owners are encouraged to call the county police non-emergency hotline, 301-333-4000, to report truant children, so they can be assisted with returning safely to school.

Celebrate National Mentoring Month!

Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) is recognizing January as National Mentoring Month. As part of their mentoring initiative, the Board of Education is looking for male mentors to be assigned to freshmen in high school. For information on the Board’s mentoring program, call 301-952-6333.

Students, staff, and the community are encouraged to participate in “Thank Your Mentor Day” on January 22. Join Americans across the nation in taking a moment to reach out to thank or honor those individuals who provided encouragement and guidance, and made a lasting impact on your life.

MSDE Directory of Public Education

Due to budget reductions, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will no longer print and distribute the annual Directory of Public Education.

An electronic version of the 2008-09 Directory will be available online at MdEdDirectory.org. It can also easily be found on the MSDE home page at www.MarylandPublicSchools.org by clicking on “Directory” on the right side of the page.
**New BSU Program Will Train Education Leaders**

Congressman Steny H. Hoyer, Bowie State University (BSU) President Mickey L. Burnim, and Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. William Hite, Jr. held a press conference on December 15 to announce a new federally-funded Principals' Institute at BSU to train and certify Prince George's County educators who want to become administrators and to enhance the skills of those already in leadership positions. Congressman Hoyer secured $192,000 in federal funding for the program, which was established in cooperation with BSU, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), and the Maryland State Department of Education.

“Prince George’s County public school students will benefit from Congressman Hoyer’s continuing support and our strong partnership with Bowie State University to train and develop instructional leaders for our schools,” said Dr. Hite. “We look forward to offering an opportunity for outstanding educators to grow in their field and become future school leaders.”

The Bowie State Principals’ Institute is an 18-month program that will prepare educators for principal certification in elementary, middle, and high schools in Prince George's County, as well as provide leadership training and advanced professional development. Fifteen “student educators” have already been selected to participate in the program. For more information, visit the BSU Web site at [www.bowiestate.edu](http://www.bowiestate.edu).

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**Elected Officials Bring Government to Class**

For the third year in a row, elected officials visited ESOL and government classes at Parkdale HS to “put a face to government” and share their knowledge and experiences with students. Teacher Tom Vogeley and ESOL department head George Avlonitis developed and coordinate the program, which began in ESOL classes and then expanded to government classes.

This year, speakers included Douglas Gansler, Attorney General for Maryland; Prince George’s County Executive Jack B. Johnson; Vernon Archer, Riverdale Park Mayor; and Chuck Conners, Federal Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. On January 7, Jack Johnson visited with Peter Herz’ ESOL class, talked with students about the legislative process, and explained how a law is passed. He then went on to visit with students in Chris Rizzutti’s political issues class, where he discussed such issues as eco-friendly construction and global warming.
Healthy Schools Program Comes to PGCPS

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation – a joint venture between the William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association combating childhood obesity in the United States – will expand the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program to Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) through a four-year, $1 million grant from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. The Healthy Schools Program helps schools develop and implement policies and practices that promote healthy eating and increased physical activity for students and staff.

"In Prince George's County Public Schools, our first core belief is that children ARE our business – and THEY come first," said Verjeana M. Jacobs, Esq., Chair, Prince George's County Board of Education. "The opportunity to implement this program district-wide reinforces this belief and provides the support we need to establish and promote healthier school environments for all of our students."

The Alliance will hire local staff to provide support and resources to every school in the district; build the capacity of the Prince George's County Public Schools to maintain the Healthy Schools Program after the four-year grant period; evaluate the program’s impact on affecting tangible changes in the school environment (such as increased time for health education or improved quality of school meals); and disseminate lessons learned and best practices for creating healthier school environments, locally and nationally.

The program launches this month in approximately 70 schools. Additional schools will be added during the next two years.

Dr. Florence Foreman Chosen for NASP Government and Professional Relations Committee Certificate of Appreciation

Dr. Florence Foreman, Supervisor of Psychological Services, received the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Government and Professional Relations "Certificate of Appreciation." This award is given to individual NASP members who help to improve education and mental health services for children, youth, and their families.

Dr. Foreman has served children in the schools for over 40 years, first as an elementary school teacher, then as a school psychologist. She started working for Prince George's County Public Schools in 1970, and in 1995 became the Assistant Supervisor of Psychological Services. In 1998, she took over as Acting Supervisor, and in 2000 as Supervisor of Psychological Services.

Dr. Foreman is held in the highest regard by her staff for her tireless work on behalf of children and for her unconditional support of every member of her staff. Dr. Foreman will receive her award at the NASP national convention in Boston in February.
Every Thursday, a group of Calverton ES students in grades 3 through 5 meet after school to try to save the world, one thoughtful action at a time. Through special projects and initiatives, the group shares information with their classmates, families, and community about global warming, ecology, endangered species, animal rights, recycling, and pollution. The club regularly sponsors cleanups of school grounds, and is also in charge of collecting paper from classrooms for recycling through the county's Litter Free Schools initiative.

Started in 2006 by third-grade teacher Katharine Swanson and her students, the Save the World club has become a popular club with students. Swanson, an environmental attorney who made a career change to teaching, is passionate about her cause. “I believe I can make a greater impact on the environment by teaching children to care about the environment,” said Swanson. “Students share what they’ve learned in the club with family, friends, and community, and students can also influence future environmental policies.”

Students join the Save the World club for a variety of reasons, but all are very concerned about global warming and the negative impact people have on the environment through pollution and habitat destruction of endangered species.

“Things we throw in the trash can go into the ocean and hurt the sea animals,” said fifth-grader Leah Moreno, one of the first students to join the club. “I joined the club to help stop global warming,” said Victor Okonmah, “And because there are too many landfills.”

The club is currently gathering signatures for a petition to Maryland legislators requesting them to enact a law to ensure minimum mobility standards are used when raising farm animals in Maryland. Upcoming projects for the club also include creating a book about how to save the world for the county Write-A-Book contest, and working with the fourth grade to create oyster ball habitats for the Chesapeake Bay. Students will also enter the National Humane Education Society annual essay contest.

Students in the club suggest the following tips to help save the world: start a Save the World club at your school; stop polluting and littering; recycle to reduce landfill waste; stop cutting down trees; and help save the world by teaching others to care about the Earth.
School News

Samuel Ogle MS Students Honored at Pentagon

Since September 11, 2001, the students of Samuel Ogle MS have collected treats and personal comfort items for U.S. military personnel stationed overseas, including soldiers, sailors, Marines, air crews, and contractors with the Department of State.

To date, students have sent more than one ton of comfort items and hundreds of pounds of medical supplies for U.S. medics in Iraqi civilian hospitals. In addition, students collaborated with Whitehall ES kindergarten students and St. Pius ES to make prayer flags for combat hospitals in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On January 9, a representative team of 25 Samuel Ogle students received a free tour of the White House, compliments of the White House Public Affairs Office. The students then had lunch at the Pentagon, compliments of Capt. Lang Reese (USN), and were decorated with an American flag lapel pin in the Pentagon’s Hall of Heroes by Rear Admiral Covell (USN) for actions becoming of an American patriot.

Good News

Board Member Appointed to Statewide Task Force

Prince George’s County Board of Education member R. Owen Johnson, Jr. has been appointed to serve on the statewide Principals’ Task Force. The goal of the task force is to provide Maryland State Governor Martin O’Malley with recommendations that will assist in recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining outstanding principals throughout the state of Maryland.

Berkshire ES Receives $2K from JCPenney for School Uniforms

Back in August, Berkshire ES parent liaison Jacqueline Peters wrote a letter to JCPenney to see if they would donate some uniforms to her school. Working with her local JCPenney store manager, Mr. Blanks, she was able to obtain a $2,000 donation from the store’s corporate office in December. The funds will be used to purchase school uniforms for students in need.

Green Valley ES Hosts ‘Ladies in Waiting’ Conference

On December 19, female students and staff at Green Valley ES dressed in professional attire as part of the school’s first annual “Ladies in Waiting” Conference. The conference opened with an inspirational composition by student vocalist Katie Richardson, and featured presentations by local businesses and agencies on healthy behaviors, empowerment, and social skills. Students were treated to a guest appearance by local poet and author Alisa “LaLa” Jones, who thrilled them with her lyrical “spoken words.” The event was coordinated by parent liaison Sandra Butler under the direction of principal Gordon Libby.

Gazette Makes Donation to James Harrison ES

Vanessa Harrington, editor, and Linda Phelps, calendar/religious editor of the Gazette and The Star newspapers, recently donated scarves, hats, and gloves to James Harrison ES students to weather the winter cold. Harrington and Phelps presented the items to Patricia H. Belgrave, Principal; Nicole Scott, Assistant Principal; and Victor Butler, Professional School Counselor, to distribute to students in need of the items.
The Prince George's County Board of Education is partnering with other county leaders to invite students, parents, community members, and service organizations to help with school beautification work in support of President-elect Barack Obama's call for a national day of service in remembrance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. Volunteers will improve the learning environments at each site by painting and completing outdoor landscaping projects; register by calling the Zone Office of the site of your choice.

**Board of Education Mentor Orientation Meeting**

January 21 • 6 p.m. • INFO: 501-982-6333

Sasscer Administration Building • Board Meeting Room 14201 School Lane • Upper Marlboro

The Board of Education will host an orientation meeting for new mentors. While continuing to build a comprehensive mentoring program for Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), the Board of Education will also recognize January as National Mentoring Month, and January 22 as “Thank Your Mentor Day.”

**Buck Lodge MS Open House**

January 21 • 6:30-8:30 p.m. • INFO: 301-451-6290

Buck Lodge MS

2611 Buck Lodge Road • Adelphi

Buck Lodge MS will host an Open House for families and the community featuring academic displays, demonstrations, and a presentation on the Summer Space Camp. The school’s Science Fair will be on display, and representatives from each high school special program will be on hand to share information and provide applications. A special ceremony will recognize students who have read 25 books this year, and the chorus will give a performance.

**FY2010 Budget Work Sessions**

January 27 • February 2 • February 9 • 6 p.m.

INFO: 301-952-6333

Sasscer Administration Building

Board Meeting Room 14201 School Lane • Upper Marlboro

The Board of Education will host three Budget Work Sessions to give the community an opportunity to share their input on the FY2010 Operating Budget. To register to speak, call 301-952-6333 by 4:30 p.m. the day of the work session.