



Washington County Teachers Association

18047 Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740

To: Washington County Board of Education
From: Carol Mowen, WCTA President
CC: David Sovine, Superintendent of WCPS
Date: August 1, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you tonight.

I ask you to consider – what do these items have in common?

- Dozens of clipboards, some old, some not.
- Almost a hundred organizer bins, some labeled, some not.
- Hundreds of pens, paper clips, binder clips, and notecards.
- Boxes of games for various ages and stages.
- Stacks of graph paper and lined paper.
- Rulers, scissors, algebra tiles, and flash cards.
- Shoe pocket organizers for cell phones.
- Bulletin board borders and window clings.
- Seasonal decorations for fall, winter, and spring.
- A collection of books, bags, backpacks, and other things.

These are just some of the items currently awaiting transport from the WCTA Office to the WCTA Teacher Closet – a designated South Hagerstown High School classroom that will be transformed into a free shopping space for the new educators joining us next week for the Teacher Induction Academy.

Teachers who are new to WCPS are invited to shop for free at the WCTA Teacher Closet on Monday and Wednesday at South High. Leftover items will be available at the WCTA office after August 9. All WCTA and WCESP members can then come by to shop through the remaining items for students, families, and schools. Just call me at the office first to make sure someone is there to “unlock the closet” before coming.

Special thanks to our Membership Committee chairperson Giovanna Grimm for spearheading the event. Thanks also go to WCTA retired teacher Robin Spickler for her work in organizing all the donations, and to all the WCTA members who donated gently used or new items to the closet.

The Teacher Closet is just one way that WCTA provides support to our students and schools. But it takes more than supplies to support student learning. It takes heart, and grit and determination and bravery. It takes the ability to juggle hundreds of decisions each hour of the workday, and the knowledge to know how the hundreds of choices made each day affect each one of our students.

WCTA members appreciated the Board’s effort to provide our unit with increased compensation this year, and we were disappointed that you could not fulfill the contract that we ratified in June. As we enter this new

school year, we will work through another negotiations cycle, this time with the added complexities that implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Schools adds to our plates.

The promises of the Blueprint could transform our schools – and one of these major areas of transformation is in the concept of a teacher workday that would provide more time, within the school day, for teachers to plan and collaborate – grade and reflect on student learning. Imagine if we could upend the status quo so that teachers could leave work at work without the nagging knowledge that to be fully prepared for tomorrow they still have to grade work at home or stay up late to plan the next day's. They could leave work at work and find the work-life balance that so many have missed.

During the Covid closure, the WCTA Board of Directors sought to put a new buzz phrase into the ears of our administrative leaders. You may remember us bringing it to you as well. We said that we should make decisions about school schedules for teachers and students on what the research shows is best for brains and bodies. I hope that as we move forward with the challenges to implement Blueprint legislation, WCTA will be included in the decisions that will enable us to finally reach that goal.

Three years ago, in May of 2020, the WCTA Board of Directors adopted a set of 6 belief statements. They are still posted on our website and remain relevant. I leave you with the first three as a reminder that we still have much work to do to ensure that we provide all the resources (including school supplies) to reach the WCPS vision to “educate and enable all students to fully access opportunities afforded them in a rapidly changing, diverse, global society.”

We believe that ...

1. Free, quality, equitable, and accessible public education is a fundamental civil right that is vital to sustaining and improving democracy.
2. Young people, regardless of who they are, where they are from, what they can do, or what they believe must be educated in the skills and mindsets needed to be responsible, productive, and healthy humans and citizens.
3. Mental, emotional, and physical wellness (including trauma informed care) of students, families, school employees, and the overall Washington County community must be a priority and be fully resourced and implemented in order for meaningful work and learning to occur.

It is the hope of WCTA leadership that through our advocacy, we can help turn the page on past attitudes about school funding and about what it takes to educate our students for the challenges we cannot know or imagine but that we know with certainty the future will bring. We look forward to working with Dr. Sovine, our school communities, and with you, the elected board, to see the WCPS vision become the reality for all our students.

Thank you for your consideration and your support.