

The Advocate:

GET INFORMED

GET INSPIRED

GET INVOLVED

2020 Vision



By Neil Becker, President

If you've seen me read a document or do a presentation, my actual vision is no longer 20/20. But I have a 2020 vision.

In 2020, WCTA leaders and members will continue to advocate for our students and our school system. Too many students in our classrooms are experiencing trauma, hunger, and other adverse childhood experiences. It is the advocacy of members like you that has resulted in more school counselors, social workers, EL teachers, and support personnel this year. But our work is not finished. Continue to advocate for your schools and your students. Use your voice at WCBOE meetings.

In 2020, WCTA members will fill the WCBOE auditorium to advocate for fully-staffed schools and fully-funded budgets. Our students deserve appropriate class sizes, and that can only be achieved by increasing our teacher ranks and our support staff. Our students deserve school counselors in every school, every day. The current budget includes funds for new positions, from support to administrative, salaries, and programs. If members don't speak up for the budget, there could be cuts, and we cannot afford cuts.

In 2020, WCTA members will fill Kepler Auditorium to advocate for a fully-funded budget. The Washington County Commissioners have been labeled "low effort" by the state of Maryland for the fourth year. Are we proud of our students who exhibit "low effort"? Does our professional evaluation negatively reflect a teacher's "low effort"? There are no rewards for low effort. In fact, the state penalizes the Commissioners and forces them to fund public education. Our students deserve better than "low effort," and we must make that clear to the Commissioners.

In 2020, WCTA members will continue the push for Kirwan and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. Watch the WCTA updates, the website, Facebook, and bulletin boards for your chance to take action. One phone call means a lot. We are all busy, but when you are asked to make a call to support the Blueprint legislation, commit the two minutes it takes to be an advocate.

In conclusion, I encourage members to stay involved in the negotiations, election, and budget processes in the coming weeks and months. Teachers and students are powerful when they advocate for strong public schools. Let your voices be heard; pack the WCBOE Budget Hearing on March 3, 2020. Follow that up by packing the BOCC Budget Hearing on May 12, 2020.

Thank you for being a part of my vision and for being education advocates.



Looking for Lead Teachers

Over the past few years we have been meeting with job-specific positions to discuss challenges, solutions, and how we can best advocate

together for you, your position, and your students. On February 18th and on February 26th from 4:15-5:30, we invite ALL Lead Teachers to join us for these important discussions.

Bringing GSA Advisors Together

WCTA has facilitated an informal gathering for advisors and communication of the various Gay-Straight alliances organizations/Pride Clubs from across the county. To get on the list, contact Carlos Mellott, Carol Mowen, or Erin May.



Is retirement on your horizon?

It pays to plan for our eventual retirement from service. To that end, here are some timely reminders from the Maryland State Retirement Agency (MSRA) regarding sick days and personal days:

- ⇒ WCPS reports your sick leave balance to the MSRA at the end of the fiscal year.
- ⇒ When retiring on June 30, your remaining personal leave from the current year WILL NOT be rolled over to sick leave. So, use your personal leave prior to retirement. WCPS will not pay you for those days nor will they report those days as "sick days" to the MSRA. You will forfeit any personal days at retirement. However, please note that for all other employees who return for work from year-to-year, your unused personal days rollover to sick days annually. Therefore, no personal days are "lost" when unused at the end of a school year.
- ⇒ Keep the personal day issue in mind as you approach your final years; rolling over two personal days to have a five day balance could work against you if do not plan to have a five day vacation opportunity.
- ⇒ Refer to Employee Self Service for your leave balance(s). Contact the WCPS benefits office with any questions: 301-766-2810.

Budget Advocacy: Help Wanted

WCPS BUDGET HEARING	03.03.2020 CES 6pm
ADVOCATE.	
COUNTY COMMISSIONER PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING	05.12.2020 HCC -Kepler Theater 6pm

Do you know that the Washington County Commissioners hold the future of our schools in their hands through the annual budget process? And, do you know that the State of Maryland has designated Washington County as "low effort" in terms of school funding because of the lack of local support commensurate with what other counties provide their schools?

This is why we need your voice to advocate for full funding. Find out what's in Dr. Michael's proposed budget that directly affects your school, then make plans to lobby for the funding needed by attending these meetings and contacting both the Board of Education members and the County Commissioners via phone, email, or text to share your reasons why. Here are the dates for your calendars:

- WCPS Budget Hearing at CES: March 3, 2020 at 6 PM
- Washington County Commissioners Hearing: May 12, 2020 at 6 PM

WCPS Proposed Budget Highlights

The following additional staff positions are currently in the proposed WCPS Budget for FY2021, but these positions will only be available for staffing if the Washington County commissioners provide roughly \$5 million dollars in allocation over the required "Maintenance of Effort" funding required by law.

- 7 secondary teachers
- 2 counselors/social workers
- 3 speech language pathologists
- 1 elementary assistant principal
- 2 middle school assistant principals
- 7 special needs teachers
- 15 paraprofessionals
- 5 counselors/social workers
- 1 board certified behavior analyst
- 5 contingency teachers

WCTA Members Get MSEA Grants

So far this year, WCTA members have filed for three MSEA grants that will go directly to assisting WCPS students. The grants provide \$500 to each organization to advance projects related to promoting cultural diversity, understanding, tolerance, and representation inspired the Black Lives Matter movement.



- The first grant was applied for by WCTA Member Beckie Higgins-Arey at North High on behalf of the Black Student Union (B.S.U.). The B.S.U. will be using the money to pay for a field trip to the African American History Museum.
- Terri Moore-Porter and Carol Mowen contributed to a joint grant with the local Hagerstown Hopes organization on behalf of the Tech High Pride Club and all WCPS GSA groups. The grant provides funding for one day conference tentatively titled "Shattering Stereotypes: Standing Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia in Washington County" for the Washington County community—specifically for students, parents, educators, and community leaders. (Tentative date: May 16, 2020).
- WCTA members Elizabeth Phillipson and Sonia Vanegas applied for grant funds in order to host a "EL Night: Celebration of Learning" for the Williamsport HS cluster English Learner (EL) students and their families. The focus will be on spotlight of student work and parent outreach and capacity building. This event is currently being planned for the Spring of 2020.

Congratulations to these teachers and their students. All of the grants were MSEA "Black Lives Matter; Week of Action" grants.

If you are interested in learning about available MSEA grants, contact Carlos Mellott.

Staff and Student Safety Update

Across the county, we are seeing more and more incidents of student and staff injury as well as lost instruction due to increasing student behaviors. As we work to address this issue together, we are collecting info/data via an online survey (see the QR code at right) that will help us in this endeavor. Your name is optional, but helpful to have in case we need to follow up with you about data you have collected or possible solutions you may have.

Focus Group Gathering:

On February 27, from 4:30-5:30, we will meet together to talk about discipline, the myths, the law, and what can be done to get a handle on student behaviors. Space is limited! RSVP with Jamie Barrett at jbarrett@mseane.org.



WCTA Scholarship Applications Now Available

WCTA Scholarship information and forms are now available in the WCPS counseling offices and the WCTA website (mywcta.org).

As noted in this WCTA Scholarship Guidelines and Forms materials, all applications are due by April 7, 2020.

2020-2021 WCTA Elections Now Underway

The nomination process and election of the WCTA Board of Directors and MSEA and NEA Convention Delegates take place January 15 through March 11, 2020. Nominees are members in good standing of WCTA, MSEA, and NEA and must have been a member of the Washington County Teachers Association for the (2) two consecutive school years preceding nomination and election. Open seats on the WCTA Board are Secretary-Treasurer, 2 Elementary Members at Large, 1 Middle School Member at Large, and 1 High School Member at Large. The ballot also includes up to 9 NEA Convention Delegates and 27 MSEA Convention Delegates. Delegates must fulfill all requirements included in the WCTA By-Laws. Please watch for your "paper" ballots and participate in electing your representatives to these offices.



Toffee Bars

- 1/2 C butter, room temp.
- 3/4 C packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 C all-purpose flour
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 3/4 C semisweet chocolate pieces
- 1/3 C chopped walnuts or pecans toasted
- 1/3 C toffee pieces

We love our WCTA members, and we've heard that some of our WCTA members love to see recipes in our Advocate newsletter. So, from our hearts to yours, here's a sweet treat to try, from the recipe file of our own Jamie Barrett.

Preheat oven to 375°. Beat butter with an electric mixer med/high speed for 30 seconds. Add brown sugar, egg and vanilla. Beat until combined, scraping sides of bowl. Add flour and salt, mix until combined.

Spread dough evenly in an ungreased 13x9x2 baking pan. Bake about 15 minutes or until edges begin to brown and surface is dry. Remove from oven and immediately sprinkle with chocolate pieces. Let stand about 2 minutes or until chocolate is softened; spread chocolate evenly. Sprinkle with nuts and toffee pieces. Let cool in pan on wire rack 30 minutes. Cut into bars. Makes about 36 bars.

To toast nuts: Place on cookie sheet, bake in 350° oven for 8 - 10 minutes til lightly browned and fragrant. WATCH CLOSELY. Remove from oven, cool on wire rack, then chop.

Happy Valentine's Day! From WCTA



WCTA Member Spotlight: Marshall Street's Chanda Thompson

Since 2006, Chanda Thompson has worked at Marshall Street School, and she couldn't be happier with her choice to come to WCPS and become part of the WCTA community.

"I had just graduated with my Master's in Special Education from Frostburg State University and was looking for a position working with students with developmental disabilities in a special education setting in Western Maryland and Marshall Street School was the perfect fit!"

Mrs. Thompson's undergrad degrees are in Social Work and Foreign Languages. Before becoming a teacher, she worked as a Vocational Instructor for adults with developmental disabilities, and she still utilizes many of the skills learned in that position today. Mrs. Thompson enjoys building a connection with her students and watching them gain independence, even at an incremental rate.

"Marshall Street School is a very special place to teach. Our teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff are truly dedicated to enabling all students, regardless of disability, to become engaged learners, by providing them with the supports and accommodations they need to work towards independence." But, it's not always easy. "The best way to deal with frustration at school or in the county is to get involved. Join SIT or another committee in your school where you can have some input into the culture of your school. Get more involved in WCTA and bring with you the issues that are important to you!"

Mrs. Thompson joined WCTA when she began teaching. "I wanted to show solidarity with my fellow teachers and be part of an organization that would stand with me if I ever needed their help."

More recently, she has become interested in being more active in social justice issues, especially related to education, racial, gender and disability discrimination and realized that she was already a member of an organization that was working towards solutions for those same issues. That's when she decided to be a more active member of WCTA. She regularly attends Rep Council and has attended Peace Circle trainings and other WCTA events. Through this involvement, WCTA leaders got to know her, and recently nominated her to represent WCTA at an NEA conference focused on those issues.

"In January, I attended the *NEA Minority and Women's Leadership Training Conference* in Orlando," she said. "It was a wonderful opportunity to meet educators from all around the country and learn more about promoting racial and gender equity across the educational system." While there, she learned about the history of racial and gender inequality in the U.S. and learned about specific strategies to share with local educators on how to work together towards an equitable educational system for all.

To nominate a teacher for this occasional WCTA Member Spotlight feature, send an email to Neil Becker, Carol Mowen, or any WCTA Board member.



Dues Tax Deduction Info

For the 2019 tax year, please note that full time employees paid \$654.70 in dues, and part time employees paid \$569.31. Dues are tax deductible, and WCTA handles sending the applicable dues amounts to both MSEA and NEA. WCTA accepts new members at any time during the year. If you have saved receipts for classroom supplies and materials that were not reimbursed by the school, you can also itemize these. As an FYI, if interested in helping recruit members for WCTA, call Carlos or Neil.

WCTA

18047 Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740
301-797-7682 FAX 301-714-0450

Board of Directors

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UniServ Directors: Carlos Mellott
cmellott@mseane.org
Sean McKillop
smckillop@mseane.org

Office Manager: Jamie Barrett
jbarrett@mseane.org

The Blueprint for Maryland's Schools: We need YOUR Voice!

During February and March, WCTA building reps and leaders will hold 10 minute meetings to share information about the Kirwan recommendations now known as "The Blueprint" bill that the MD legislators are now considering. **Please attend these meetings** to find out the facts and to find out how to make the calls that will impact the decisions of Maryland's elected representatives.

