

SEPTEMBER 2025

Official newsletter of Harford County Education Association

## HCEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### President

Chrystie Crawford-Smick  
ccrawford-smick@mseane.org

### ESP Vice-President

Cindy Poper  
Bel Air Middle School

### Certificated Vice President

Colleen Bianco  
George Lisby Elementary School

### Treasurer

Tracy Papinchok  
Patterson Mill High School

### Secretary

Leigh Bondrole  
Edgewood High School

### Certificated ES Director

Crystal Rufenacht  
Hall's Cross Roads Elementary School

### Certificated MS Director

Andrea Weedn-Hughes  
Aberdeen Middle School

### Certificated HS Director

Jason Brooks  
Bel Air High School

### Certificated At-Large

Rob Tucker  
Edgewood High School

### Certificated At-Large

Jason King  
Joppatowne High School

### ESP At-Large

Kindra Stevens  
Harford Academy

### ESP At-Large

Abbie Bennett  
Edgewood High School

## From the President:



Colleagues,

Welcome back, HCEA members! I hope you had a fantastic summer and a wonderful pre-service week preparing for students to return. A new school year always signifies new beginnings and a fresh start for us all. While speaking to many members over the last few weeks, I have noticed there is a lot of positive energy. The last couple of years have been very challenging; here's to a smooth start to the 25-26 school year for us all.

Certificated New Hire Orientation, the New Educator Store and ESP New Hire Orientation kept us very busy recently. The events were a huge success, I thank the volunteers for their time, thank you for giving us part of your summer to support new educators. I also appreciate the local businesses that helped by making donations to the New Educator Store. I am looking forward to expanding this event and developing more partnerships with community organizations to help new educators blossom. If you would like to be part of this work, please let me know.

Thus far, our recruitment efforts are going well. Our membership is continuing to grow, along with our strength. We have made significant progress and have experienced double digit growth during my tenure as HCEA President. Thank you. Everyone benefits from our work. Therefore, everyone should be a member. Please discuss the importance of membership with others in your school, especially those new to HCPS, and encourage them to join HCEA. We are launching a fall recruitment incentive program. You will receive an incentive for EACH member you recruit from now until October 31, 2025.

Thank you for all you do for our students and our profession. Stand Strong with HCEA.

In Solidarity,

*Chrystie Crawford-Smick*



# Contract Spotlight

## Your Right to Representation

In the past several years, HCEA staff has seen an uptick in members in need of representation, either with an in-house issue with their school admin, a CPS investigation, or an internal HCPS investigation.

It is very important that you are aware of your rights and protect them and that you know just being accused of something does not mean you are guilty. You have the right to defend yourself in an investigatory meeting before any discipline is determined and are contractually allowed the right to representation. Should you be called to a meeting with your school based admin without notice and you feel it could turn into a disciplinary issue, please remind the administrator of your rights as outlined below.

However, in the matter of CPS or police investigations, **DO NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS** without representation. For both CPS and police investigations, ask for the case worker or detective's contact information. Write down their number and/or email address and immediately contact your school's assigned UD. We will connect you with our attorney who will contact the investigator and set up an interview where she can represent you.

**YOUR CONTRACT PROTECTS YOUR RIGHTS AS AN EMPLOYEE.**



If administration requests you attend a meeting, ask if the meeting could result in discipline. If the answer is yes or maybe, please state the following:

**"Because this meeting could result in discipline, I respectfully request this meeting be postponed so I may obtain representation as outlined in my contract."**

Both the certificated contract and the ESP contract allow for at least 2 days notice so you may have representation. If administration refuses to postpone the meeting so you can acquire representation, go to the meeting but state:

**"I will ONLY take notes at the meeting and I will answer any questions after I am able to confer with my union representative."**

It is important to go to the meeting so you do not face discipline for insubordination. **IMMEDIATELY CONTACT YOUR HCEA UNISERV DIRECTOR AT 410-838-0800**

**CERTIFICATED STAFF  
ARTICLE 22.1**

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
PLEASE SEE THE CONTRACT  
ARTICLES LISTED

**ESP STAFF  
ARTICLE V**

By being an HCEA member, your dues ensure someone will always have your back in these stressful situations. HCEA staff can help you understand what to expect, can advocate for you, and walk you through the process along with joining you in meetings. In most investigatory cases, people are cleared of any wrong-doing.

It is important to recognize though that if someone is not a member at the time of the accused incident, they are not entitled to representation from HCEA UniServ Directors or MSEA legal counsel so keep your membership up to date!

# BUILDING REP CORNER

All building reps should have received updated membership lists. If there are inaccuracies, please send them to **Lisa Cover, HCEA Office Manager**, at [LCover@MSEANea.org](mailto:LCover@MSEANea.org).



The purpose of the FAC is to provide meaningful teacher input into the operation of our school system at the grass roots level. The FAC should be viewed by the administrators and teachers alike as a creative opportunity to foster teacher involvement and to solve problems in a constructive fashion.

## ARTICLE 23.1

A FAC composed of teachers shall be established in each school.

## ARTICLE 23.2

The committee will consist of not less than three (3) members or more than fifteen (15) members.

## ARTICLE 23.2

Members of the committee shall be elected in each school by the teachers during the month of September and shall serve through June 30. In case an elected member cannot serve, a special election shall be conducted to choose a successor.

## ARTICLE 23.4

The purpose of the FAC will be to advise the principal with reference to procedures for the operation of the school. The principal shall meet with the Faculty Advisory Committee at mutually agreeable times upon the call of either the Faculty Advisory Committee or the principal, but not later than ten (10) school days from the date of request. The principal shall respond to the committee within ten (10) school days after a meeting between the parties. The principal shall consider the advice of the committee and may submit topics to the FAC for their study and advice.

## DO NOT USE THE FAC TO ADDRESS A CONTRACTUAL GRIEVANCE!

If the contract is not being upheld (for example, teachers are not getting a planning period), you should **IMMEDIATELY** contact your UniServ Director (Liz or Allison). The grievance procedure must be used to resolve any misunderstandings concerning the Negotiated Agreement.



# GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- The FAC should select a chairperson. Note: Teachers are the members of the FAC. The principal and assistant principals are NOT members and CANNOT be the chairperson.
- The FAC should decide how often to meet to discuss issues brought forward.
- The FAC should make a concerted effort to ascertain the needs of teachers. A best practice is to send out an anonymous survey to all staff in the building or to have a standing form online or printed in the mailroom so staff can bring forward concerns anonymously.
- The FAC should consider any and all suggestions and feedback. No idea should be rejected initially. The FAC then decides on items to be submitted to the principal along with suggestions for achieving change.
- The FAC reports the topics to be presented prior to the session with the principal.
- Meet monthly with the principal.
- Hold a follow-up meeting of the FAC after the session with the principal. Discuss what happened, the progress, and your continued plan for implementing change.
- **REPORT BACK TO THE TEACHERS AFTER EACH SESSION WITH THE PRINCIPAL.**
- The principal **SHOULD** respond to the FAC with feedback within 10 school days after a meeting with the FAC.

## CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE FOR CHANGE WITH THE PRINCIPAL

- Go to the meeting as a team.
- Keep the confidentiality of the staff who brought to the FAC.
- Prepare for the meeting with your principal. Select a spokesperson and a recorder.
- Remember, your goal is to foster creative teacher input and to solve problems.
- An informal and friendly atmosphere is good. In a FAC meeting with the principal, you are their equal.
- Approach the session as a positive, problem solving opportunity.
- DO NOT allow sessions to turn into a verbal slugfest.
- Do not approach the session from a "demanding, bang-on-the-table" approach.
- Keep on topic. Don't be sidetracked into extraneous argument or discussions. Stick to your objective.
- Do not lose your temper.
- If you feel your administration is targeting you for being a part of the FAC, contact your UniServ Director immediately. Retaliation is not acceptable or allowed.







*members*

IN (in)ACTION

Harford County Education Association



Whether you taught ESY, traveled the world, or relaxed poolside, we hope you had a great summer!







## LEADERSHIP TRACK OF CAREER LADDER

### DEFINED IN STATUTE

- Teacher defined as “certified public school employee who is primarily responsible and accountable for teaching students in the class”
  - The law excludes curriculum specialists, psychologists, social workers, individual with certification for career professionals from receiving NBC salary increase
- Level 4 of Career Ladder is “Teacher Leadership Track” or “Administrator Track”

### LEVEL 4: LEADERSHIP TRACK

To be on the Leadership Track, a **teacher must have National Board Certification**, OR if NBC doesn't exist for their content area, the teacher must have a master's degree in the subject area

- **Tier 1: Lead Teacher**
  - Teaches 50% of day
  - Rest of time spent mentoring newer and struggling teachers and teachers pursuing NBC, leading workshops and demonstrations at the school level
  - Becoming Lead Teacher adds \$5,000 to salary
- **Tier 2: Distinguished Teacher**
  - Teaches 40% of day
  - Mentors lead teachers
  - Leads workshops at school and district level
  - Promotes school culture in which students are expected to achieve at high levels
  - Becoming Distinguished teacher adds \$10,000 to salary
- **Tier 3: Professor Distinguished Teacher**
  - Teaches 20% of day
  - Must be based at institution of higher learning and serves as a senior faculty member or clinical professor at professional development school or university/college
  - Serves as a mentor and instructor of teachers in training
  - Mentors new teachers at induction
  - Designs and leads professional development across state
  - Cannot be more than 1% of teachers
  - Becoming Professor Distinguished Teacher adds \$15,000 to salary
- **Teacher on the Admin Track**
  - Licensed Principal
  - Distinguished Principal

We don't negotiate  
the Admin Track

You might think that because we negotiated our cost of living allowance (COLA) and our language items already that the negotiations team is finished. But that isn't the case. We still have to negotiate some of the Blueprint mandates that impact our certificated/licensed unit.

In the next several weeks, we will go back to the table to negotiate what positions are to be included in Level 4 of the Career Ladder, also known as the Teacher Leadership Track.

This level of the Career Ladder has 3 tiers. We've made a infographic for you to help explain the specific mandates for each tier based on the statute/law's language.

## MONEY MATTERS: WHERE DO YOUR DUES GO?

BY TRACY PAPINCHOCK, HCEA TREASURER

Every year, members contribute dues to support our union. That number can feel large—so it's fair to ask: where does that money actually go?

### Here's the breakdown:

- 45% stays local.
- This is the money that fuels our day-to-day work right here in our schools. Local dues cover everything from bargaining our contracts to protecting planning time, and representing members in grievances. They also fund our local trainings, community outreach, and member events.
- 45% goes to MSEA (Maryland State Education Association).
- At the state level, MSEA advocates for policies and funding that affect every educator in Maryland. Your dues help pay for lobbying in Annapolis, legal services, professional development, and statewide campaigns that defend pensions, secure school funding, and fight for legislation that improves our working conditions and our students' learning conditions.



Proud supporter of the  
Harford County Education Association

Since you do everything possible to help them grow,  
let us do all we can to help you succeed!

Discover our U Educate Member Rewards Program,  
designed exclusively for education professionals.

We're for .

[apgfcu.com/UEducate](https://apgfcu.com/UEducate)  
Serving Harford County, Cecil County,  
Baltimore County & Baltimore City

Federally insured by NCUA  
Membership eligibility applies

  
achieve. prosper. grow.®

- 10% goes to NEA (National Education Association).
- NEA amplifies our collective voice nationwide. It provides \$1 million in professional liability insurance for every member, as well as legal resources, leadership development, and powerful advocacy in Washington, D.C. Through NEA, members also access a wide array of discounts on travel, insurance, shopping, and even home financing—benefits that can quickly add up to more than the cost of dues.

### Why it matters

Think of dues as an investment in protection, advocacy, and progress. On our own, no single teacher could bargain a fair contract, lobby for better school funding, or afford legal representation in a workplace dispute. Together, we pool our resources to make those things possible—and to ensure educators have a strong voice at the table, locally, statewide, and nationally.





# Education in Session

## Why Your PAC Contribution Matters Now More Than Ever

Over the past 12 years, Harford County Public Schools have been underfunded by more than \$250 million. That staggering number has real consequences: larger class sizes, fewer resources, and longer teaching times than nearly anywhere else in Maryland. Our schools are running on a skeleton crew, and educators are being asked to do the impossible. Meanwhile, politicians continue to make decisions that impact every classroom, every student, and every one of us.

But here's the good news: we're not alone in this fight. HCEA has built a powerful coalition of nearly 20 community organizations who are standing shoulder to shoulder with us to demand the schools our students deserve. Together, we are stronger, and together, we can hold elected officials accountable. With every county politician on the ballot in 2026, we have a real opportunity to shape the future of Harford County's schools.

That opportunity is closer than you think. We have two contracts opening in the next two years, and the outcomes of those negotiations will directly affect our pay, our working conditions, and our students' learning conditions. To win at the bargaining table, we must also win at the ballot box. But here's the catch: our dues cannot be used for political action. The only funds we can legally use to support pro-education candidates and inform the public come through our Political Action Committee (PAC). If we don't step up now, we risk being outspent, out-messed, and out-organized by those who would continue to underfund our schools.

This is where you come in. By donating—even a few dollars per paycheck—to HCEA's PAC, you are investing directly in the fight for better schools, fair contracts, and a stronger voice for educators. Every contribution, no matter the size, helps us build the political power we need to win.

We've carried the weight of underfunding for far too long. Now it's time to shift the balance. Together, through our PAC, we can demand better—for ourselves, for our students, and for the future of public education in Harford County.

➔ **Sign up today to contribute to HCEA's PAC and be part of the change.**



# UPCOMING EVENTS

September 1: Labor Day

September 2: First Day of School

September 5: Back to School Social

September 8: HCPS BoE Meeting

September 11: HCEA Representative Assembly

September 22: HCPS BoE Meeting

September 23: Orioles Educator Appreciation Night



For more information  
about ACE, please contact  
[morgan.meadows@ace.edu](mailto:morgan.meadows@ace.edu).

**TEACHERS**

## Builders of Bright Futures

**Your tremendous  
impact extends  
into tomorrow  
and beyond.**

**Enter for a chance to win a  
\$25 Amazon gift card.**

Scan the QR code to fill out the drawing  
form and enter for a chance to win!  
Contest runs from May 5 to May 16.  
Winners will be notified around May 23.

For complete contest rules, see  
[ace.edu/contest-rules](http://ace.edu/contest-rules)





# THANK YOU EDUCATORS!

Harford County school employees are eligible for Freedom's **Golden Apple Program**.

- ★ \$100 BONUS for joining
- ★ Earn 3.00% APY\* with our Empower Checking
- ★ Earn 2.50% APY\* with our Educator Savings Program



Federally Insured by NCUA



## HCEA Harford County Education Association PROTECT YOURSELF! IF YOU ARE INJURED AT WORK:

1. Report it to your supervisor.
2. Document the injury completely.
3. Seek medical attention from the doctor of your choice.
4. Call BSG Law at 800-827-2667 to discuss your legal rights.

**SOLELY REPORTING THE ACCIDENT TO THE COUNTY WILL NOT PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS!**

Protect your rights by filing a workers' compensation claim with the State of Maryland.

Contact BSG Law at 800-827-2667 to protect your rights!



NATIONAL  
EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION

NEA Approved!

BSGLAW.COM | 800-827- 2667

**BSG**  
BERMAN | SOBIN | GROSS LLP

## HCEA Sponsored Long-term Care Insurance

- Offering long-term care insurance to HCEA members and their families
- Helping members protect their hard-earned assets
- Giving members a way to remain in control of their healthcare choices
- Providing members with peace-of-mind

For a no obligation consult and quote, contact

Michael Markowitz- 410-455-0680  
Mike.Markowitz@acsiapartners.com



**ACSIA**  
PARTNERS



**If you need assistance, please contact  
your HCEA UniServe Director.**

**Liz Jones: 410-353-9692**

**[ejones@mseane.org](mailto:ejones@mseane.org)**

**Allison Heintz: 410-816-5025**

**[aheintz@mseane.org](mailto:aheintz@mseane.org)**

**NEED HELP ?**

## HCEA School Split 2024-2025

<b>Allison Heintz</b> <a href="mailto:aheintz@mseane.org">aheintz@mseane.org</a> 410-816-5025	<b>Liz Jones</b> <a href="mailto:ejones@mseane.org">ejones@mseane.org</a> 410-353-9692
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Bel Air High School</b></li> <li>2. Bel Air Elementary School</li> <li>3. Bel Air Middle School</li> <li>4. Emmorton Elementary School</li> <li>5. Homestead/Wakefield Elementary School</li> <li><b>6. Fallston High School</b></li> <li>7. Fallston Middle School</li> <li>8. Forest Hill Elementary School</li> <li>9. Forest Lakes Elementary School</li> <li>10. Hickory Elementary School</li> <li>11. Jarrettsville Elementary School</li> <li>12. Red Pump Elementary School</li> <li>13. Youth's Benefit Elementary School</li> <li><b>14. Joppatowne High School</b></li> <li>15. Joppatowne Elementary School</li> <li>16. Magnolia Elementary School</li> <li>17. Magnolia Middle School</li> <li>18. Riverside Elementary School</li> <li><b>19. North Harford High School</b></li> <li>20. Dublin Elementary</li> <li>21. Norrisville Elementary School</li> <li>22. North Bend Elementary School</li> <li>23. North Harford Elementary School</li> <li>24. North Harford Middle School</li> <li>25. Darlington Elementary School</li> <li><b>26. C Milton Wright High School</b></li> <li>27. Fountain Green Elementary School</li> <li>28. Churchville Elementary School</li> <li>29. Prospect Mill Elementary School</li> <li>30. Southampton Middle School</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Aberdeen High School</b></li> <li>2. Aberdeen Middle School</li> <li>3. Bakerfield Elementary School</li> <li>4. Church Creek Elementary School</li> <li>5. George D. Lisby Elementary</li> <li>6. Halls Cross Roads Elementary School</li> <li>7. Royce-Williams Elementary School</li> <li><b>8. Edgewood High School</b></li> <li>9. Abingdon Elementary School</li> <li>10. Edgewood Elementary School</li> <li>11. Edgewood Middle School</li> <li>12. Deerfield Elementary School</li> <li>13. Old Post Road Elementary School</li> <li><b>14. Patterson Mill High School</b></li> <li>15. Patterson Mill Middle School</li> <li>16. William S. James Elementary School</li> <li>17. Ring Factory Elementary School</li> <li><b>18. Havre de Grace High School</b></li> <li>19. Havre de Grace Middle School</li> <li>20. Meadowvale Elementary School</li> <li>21. Havre de Grace Elementary School</li> <li>22. Harford Academy</li> <li><b>23. Harford Technical High School</b></li> <li><b>24. Central Office</b></li> <li><b>25. Harford Glen</b></li> <li><b>26. Swan Creek</b></li> </ol>

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DISCIPLINE MEETINGS

If you are asked to attend a meeting that may be disciplinary in nature and would like your UniServ Director present, please contact us right away. According to both contracts, you must be given at least 2 business days to get representation.

However, if admin refuses to reschedule, **you must go to the meeting** so you do not face discipline for insubordination.

Just state that you will take notes and write down questions that you will answer after conferring with your rep.





AMERICAN COLLEGE *of* EDUCATION

## ACE Partner Webinar


American College of Education is a low-cost, high-quality online college offering accessible programs to help you advance your career. Join us to learn more about your exclusive partner benefits, including tuition reduction grants. We'll also share program information and answer your questions.



**September 25**  
7 pm ET

Scan the QR code or click the arrow below to register. If you cannot attend live, please register and a recording will be sent after the event.

**REGISTER NOW** →



**Marlena Wiley**  
marlena.wiley@ace.edu  
Partner Engagement Administrator

## Bring Financial Literacy to Life in Your Classroom — Free from APGFCU®!

APGFCU offers free and engaging financial education resources for educators, including in-class lessons and interactive online tools through our partner Banzai. Designed for students from Pre-K to high school, these programs teach essential money skills — such as saving, budgeting, and understanding credit — empowering students to make smart financial decisions for a lifetime.



**LEARN MORE.**  
[apgfcu.com/Educators](https://apgfcu.com/Educators)  
410-272-4000

*Serving Harford County, Cecil County,  
Baltimore County & Baltimore City*



Ranked #1 in Maryland!



Federally insured by NCUA  
Membership eligibility applies.