

HSAs: State Board Decision Due Soon

Should Maryland join the other 22 states that require high school exit exams? If so, are the HSAs the right tool? And finally, is 2009 a realistic deadline? These are the questions with which the State Board of Education, as well as all stakeholders, continue to wrestle.

Statewide, 68% to 77% of the Class of 2009 have passed one or more of the four tests. In some jurisdictions like Montgomery County, the pass rate is much higher, while in others the rate is much lower. Proposed alternatives include dumping the HSAs, to postponing them, to reducing the 'high stakes' (i.e. graduation) dependent on them.

While there is no statewide consensus in the education community, there is one widely held concern: the large numbers of students who might not graduate as a result of the tests.

Earlier this month, State Superintendent of Education Nancy Grasmick recommended that this problem be resolved by requiring that other data be considered for students to allow students who had failed the tests three times to graduate. This remedy raises questions about the credibility of the standards and the overall rationale for the graduation requirement.

President Cullison testified before the State Board in favor of postponing indefinitely the graduation requirement until a more useful set of measures of learning could be developed. She recommended taking a look at the Nebraska "School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System (STARS); her full testimony can be found on the MCEA website (www.mcea.nea.org) and on the MCEA Forum on Outlook.

Do not be a bystander. MCEA members are encouraged to contribute via the MCEA Forum on Outlook, or by contacting the State Board of Education at stateboard@msde.state.md.us.

SHORT TAKES

Health Plan Open Enrollment Season to Begin

Interested in changing your health benefits? Want to know more about Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) to lower your taxable income? The open enrollment period will begin Oct. 29 and remain open for changes until Nov. 16 for all MCPS employees, including new hires. All changes are effective as of Jan. 1, 2008.

Three **Health Fairs** will be held where your questions can be answered: Thursday, **Nov. 1** at Julius West MS, Wednesday, **Nov. 7** at Seneca Valley HS and Tuesday, **Nov. 13** at Blake HS. Vendors and ERSC staff will be available from 3 -5:00 pm. at each to answer your questions.

Additional POS Health Plan Now Available

As a result of last spring's contract negotiations, there will be two "Point-Of-Service" health plans available to MCPS employees. United Health Care will now be joined by Care-First, a Blue-Cross company. Information should be arriving soon explaining the choices. HMO options will continue to be available as well. Details can be found in the "Open Season Booklet" that is being distributed to all employees.

Free Financial Education Workshops at MCEA

Two workshops have been scheduled for later this month: one, '**Understanding Your Credit**' and two, '**Investing in Your Future.**' Presented in cooperation with the MCT Credit Union, they will be held Thursday, Oct. 25 from 4:30 – 6:30 pm. Both will be held at the MCEA Conference Center. To RSVP, contact jthompson@mcea.nea.org.

TEACHER TIP

Helpful Halloween Hint

Spider on the Floor

(grades k - 4)

Usually around Halloween, at least one grade level is studying about spiders. Consider reading the book, *Spider on the Floor* from Raffi's Songs to Read, to your students. Then, teach the corresponding song. You can then distribute inexpensive spider rings to each child that they can keep. You can have your class sing the song and place the spider on the floor, on a leg, etc. You can also give the children an opportunity to make up their own verses. They'll have a great time putting the spider in their hair, on their back and so forth. This lesson also can be used to teach spatial relationships and prepositional phrases.

These tips were gathered from "Works4me" an NEA on-line program. For additional tips, e-mail to lyris@list.nea.org. Then in the message block, type: subscribe Works4me (with no punctuation)

ON THE JOB

Grading/Planning and Parent Conference Days

Wednesday, Nov. 1 is **the full day at the end of the first quarter set aside solely for planning and/or grading purposes.** (Art. 16, Sec.L1.) **No meetings may be scheduled during this duty day and teachers may not be required to "turn in grades until the end of the workday on the final day allotted for the completion of grades."**

Conferences for parents of children in grades K-8 are scheduled for the afternoons of Nov. 9 and 12. How those days are utilized will be determined by leadership teams at each local school after receiving input from teachers and parents and may include flexible combinations. (Art. 16, Sec M)

Parent-Teacher Meetings

Providing a successful instructional experience to students is only part of a teacher's task. Sharing that student's successes and problems with the child's parents is also important. Unfortunately, it's not always easy.

Some strategies for successful parent meetings include: starting with some discussion about shared interests (e.g. helping improve the student's performance); listening carefully to the concerns expressed by the parent; bringing documentation of a student's performance and

work product; sharing some of the student's strengths with the parent; pointing out constructive ways to improve the student's performance; and deciding what steps will be taken and by whom (especially the responsibility of the student).

At the conclusion of the conference, review the decisions and tasks that were agreed upon. It might also be worthwhile to set a timeline to reconnect (via email or phone) to see if agreed upon steps were taken and progress was being made.

Parent contact – and frequency of contact – comes throughout the year, as well. Any time a parent contacts a teacher about the progress of a child, it's the teacher's responsibility to respond. **What happens when the parent requests reach such frequency that it interferes with your teaching responsibility?** Request an in-person meeting with the parent and a member of the administration or guidance department to work out a *reasonable and mutual* resolution to the frequency and manner of communication.

If you anticipate in advance that the meeting might be a contentious one, request that an administrator facilitate it. If the parent becomes verbally abusive or physically threatening, request the administrator take control. If this doesn't happen, politely excuse yourself from the meeting. Knowing how to differentiate between a concerned parent who has reasonable questions and suggestions and a parent who crosses over that line and knowing what to do in the latter case, is no easy task. The best solution? Use good judgment.

Tradewinds Submission Policies

Ads may only be submitted by MCEA MEMBERS or Representation Fee Payers, and must be noncommercial in nature. Service ads will only be run for services provided by MCEA members. Ads may be faxed (301-309-9563) or e-mailed to tradewinds@mcea.nea.org, and must contain your name, home phone number, and school/worksites.

MCEA reserves the right to reject any ads or edit or delay any ads submitted due to space limitations. Tradewinds can also be found online at www.mcea.nea.org.

Inclusion of any services, programs or goods in the *Tradewinds* does not imply endorsement by MCEA nor does MCEA assume any liability for any item included in the *Tradewinds*. For information or questions, call MCEA at 301-294-6232.

DEADLINE to submit ads for the next issue: OCTOBER 22nd.

FOR SALE

05 Honda Accord V-6: Fully loaded 42K miles, asking \$16500 call 443-253-3313.

00 Honda Civic EX: Silver 80K miles, org owner, man drive, \$7200 call Jessica @ 301-829-5971.

00 Mustang GT: Red Conv 60K miles, man trans asking \$13K call David @ 301-668-5198.

99 Honda Civic: Manual trans, 135K miles asking \$4500 OBO call Jack @ 301-467-5069.

95 Dodge Caravan: Green, 99K, MD Insp., orig owner, reliable asking \$2200 call George @ 301-495-0355 even & wkend.

94 Honda Accord EX: 4 dr, asking \$2K, call 301-570-4208.

94 T-Top Chevy Camaro: 41K miles, mint cond, a/c, powr win/locks, auto, V-6 asking \$6900 call 301-748-5746.

Dirt Bikes: (2) **98** Kawasaki KX250 \$1900; **02** KX125 \$1850, many extras, firm price. Both bikes for \$3500 call Brenda @ 301-717-9571

Dishes: Chinese rice pattern in blue/white. Svc for 12; incl dinner/salad plates, lge/sm bowls, swing platters/bowls, teapot, cups/saucers \$125 OBO call evenings 301-493-5802.

Furn: Girls 6 drawer dresser, ivory color w/pink/blue flowers on top & drawers \$100 OBO call Julie @ 301-502-5552.

Furn: Child's canopy br set. Antique white, dresser, ns, mirror, bedposts/frame \$300 call 301-294-8996.

Golf Clubs: *Tour Selection* right-handed irons 2-PW \$70 OBO; *Tommy Armour* 845 V-25 EVO right-handed irons 3-P \$100 OBO, and Ping G2i Craz-

E putter w/cover \$50 OBO call 301-865-8806.

Guitar: Vintage '77 Guild D-35, has hard shell case \$700 firm, call Terry @ 301-588-1341.

Condo: 2br/2ba in Germantown. All new kit app, paint, carpet. Will sell for \$215K to MCPS employee call 301-529-6231.

Misc: Refrig \$75; Contemporary Forged Iron Rocking Chair \$125 *Proforma 45 Treadmill* \$125, various Lamps \$25 each call 301-587-0250.

Misc: bathroom fixtures; *Emerson Casablanca ceiling fans*, 52" \$50 ea; sleeper sofa, light blue floral \$150; *Singer sewing maching cabinet* \$25 and more call 301-570-4208.

House: Ashton rambler 3br/2ba completely remodeled, partially fin bas asking \$450K call 240-723-6055.

House: Sgle family in Olney, 5br/4.5ba, in-law ste, office, close to school priced at \$819K call 301-461-9377.

House: Martinsburg, 3br/2.5ba sgle family home, corner lot, close to MARC, shopping and dntwn. Many amenities priced at \$255K call 304-267-1499.

Storm Windows: DH white 6 alum 32x64 and 3 alum 32x67 all are \$28 ea, call 301-258-0305.

TH: In Burtonsville 2br/1.5ba, deck, fin bas, lots of storage, listed for \$319K will consider all offers, call Stephanie @ 301-704-8319.

TH: Frederick TH 3br/2.5ba partially fin bas w/storage, many comm. amenities asking \$275K, call Beth @ 240-997-7222.

Total Gym 1100: W/ Pilates attachments asking \$500 call Marie @ 240-274-3008 for more info and to see pictures.

Window Sashes: DH wooden 6 panes per sash \$12 ea; 9 sashes 32x32, 9 sashes 32x31; 3 sashes 32x40 and 3 sashes 32x27. Will deliver locally. Call 301-258-0305.

NEEDED: Used musical instruments. Consider donating used musical instruments to Patric Rizzo for an Eagle Scout Project. Patrick is collecting used instruments and cleaning/repairing them to donate to **Cannon Road ES** for student use, call Patric @ 301-802-3691.

FREE: 3 large terrariums; 1 large glass, and 1 smaller plastic, small animal cages. Call Eileen 2 301-469-5856.

VACATION RENTALS

Abruzzo Italy: Villa in small town setting, slps 6, \$600/wk high season. Travel assistance provided, call 301-571-8252.

Ormond Beach FL: 2br/1ba bungalow, 5 minutes North of Daytona Beach. Avail for vacations, bike wks, and speed wks call Rob @ 240-478-5789.

**Paradise Island, Bahamas/
Harborside Resort at Atlantis:** \$2100, Aug 1-8; 1br/1ba, slps 4, mstr ste+ slp sofa, kit, LR, w/d, + full access to everything at Atlantis, call Tim @ 301-788-5248.

SERVICES OFFERED

College Counseling: Priv college counseling: Jrs, Srs & parents interested in college placement options call Christine @ 301-320-7737.

Legal: Reduced fees for fellow MCPS employees. Family matters, wills, living wills, bankruptcy, misc. Judi Bluefeld Amick 301-279-7817.

Legal: Disc fees for MCPS employees by fellow teacher/atty. Estate planning, Inc., Gen Bus Matters, Powers of Atty, Wills/ Name changes, Mike 301-330-5011.

Makeup Artist: Weddings, special occasions, traveling svcs, disc for teachers call Hollie @ 301-468-1745.

Martial Arts: Martial Arts birthday party, Gaithersburg or Olney areas 90 min Sat or Sun, call 301-208-1919.

Mommies Group: Charitable org for mommies looking for fun activities/events for children. For more info call Dan @ 301-598-4621.

Mortgage: Purchase, Ref, home equity lines of Credit. Low closing costs, call Maureen @ 301-651-3257.

Pest Control: Insects, small animals. Ask for MCPS employee disc, call 301-570-3900.

Photography: Prof coverage of weddings, bar/bat mitzvahs & special events. Portrait & comm. work avail call 301-545-0117.

Slideshow: Need a picture or video slideshow call 832-262-0299.

Stationery: Customized invitations, holiday cards, and more! Up to 25% disc, addtl MCPS disc, call 301-806-8568.

Tutor: Spanish I & II, hourly rate \$75, Potomac, Rockville & Bethesda areas call Sharon @ 301-340-0543.

Tutor: Diagnostic Psy/Ed testing and Piano Teacher, Urbana area call 301-663-1051.

FOR RENT

Barn: Brookeville, 4 horses max, lge, ventil, stalls/pastures, auto water, run-ins call 301-570-4208.

Efficiency: In house in Olney priv ent, N/S, N/P \$800/mo incl util., call 301-774-9044.

House: In Olney 5br/4.5ba, finished basement/in-law ste/office \$2800/mo + util call 301-461-9377.

House: 2br/1ba house in Wheaton. Avail Nov 1 \$1195/mo + util call 301-495-2888.

TH: Silver Spring, 3br/3.5ba, \$2000/mo + util call Karen @ 301-814-0068.

TH: In Mtgy Village, S/F, N/S wanted to rent bas apt \$800 incl util call 301-260-9387.

Roommate: Potomac/Rockville, N/S share sgle family home \$700/mo + 1/3 util, call Jenni @ 240-353-0992.

MCEA Member Benefits

Discount Movie Tickets

AMC - \$5.50 Regal - \$6.00 Majestic - \$7.00

For Sale at the MCEA Conference Center
M - F: 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

For MCEA Members Only