

## Tight Budgets Mean Tough Choices

Across the state these days, the word most often used to describe Maryland's fiscal status is "deficit." We are not alone. California, for instance, faces an estimated \$30 billion shortfall — roughly 30 times greater than ours. And in almost every state suffering budget problems, public education will be among the first funding areas to feel the pain.

Maryland's Bridge to Excellence in Education legislation offers an additional source of funds for school systems. In fact, Frederick County stands to receive \$41 million in Bridge money over the next five years. However, we must spend much of that on mandated new programs such as full-day kindergarten — which alone will cost our county about \$8.5 million — and other daunting requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

The Bridge to Excellence Act assumes that local jurisdictions will continue to fund education at least at levels on par

with 1997-99. It is not yet clear if Frederick County's commissioners will be willing or able to do so. What is clear is that there will be few dollars for extras.

During the past several weeks, the superintendent's budget committee and Board of Education have been working to pare our wish list of enhancements to a far shorter "must have" list. (See *Board Briefs, page 2, for more information.*) By press time, the BOE will have held a public forum on the budget proposal. Before they finalize the proposal at their February 26 public meeting, Board members welcome employee and citizen input via e-mail or letter. The County Commissioners also invite e-mail, letters or comments at their public hearing, Tuesday, May 6, 7 p.m., at Gov. Thomas Johnson High School.

To receive an FCPS budget request summary, call the FCPS Communications Office, 301-696-6900, or e-mail [ann.eyler@fcps.org](mailto:ann.eyler@fcps.org).

## New Strategic Goals

In response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act and the state's new Bridge to Excellence in Education legislation, Maryland is redesigning its accountability system. To comply, our Board of Education recently adopted five new system improvement goals that will form the basis of our comprehensive five-year master plan beginning with the 2003-04 school year.

1. All students will demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to meet graduation standards and achieve their potential.
2. All schools will be safe and inviting, with a climate that fosters learning and character development.
3. All employees will be highly qualified, motivated and effective.
4. All sectors of the community will be engaged in the education of our children.
5. FCPS will advocate for adequate resources to achieve these goals and manage these resources in a publicly accountable and cost-effective manner.

Principal Gael Butcher (below) loves spending time with students at Rock Creek. The school offers academic, social and life skills curricula supplemented by occupational, speech and language therapy.



Lead Custodian Jody Harshman and Assistant Lead Jeff Hite (right) are proud of helping Windsor Knolls MS achieve a superior maintenance rating. See *Accolades* on page 3 for more about this outstanding accomplishment.



Sharla Worley (above, left) enjoys meeting one-on-one with adults at the UpCounty Family Center in Emmitsburg. She helps them achieve success completing Adult Basic Education, External Diploma Program and General Educational Development goals.



**G**iving the  
**B**est to  
**E**ducation

Visit "Giving the Best to Education" online at [www.fcps.org](http://www.fcps.org) for more profiles of outstanding co-worker honorees.

Supervisors wishing to commend an employee who gives the best to education: Please e-mail [dian.nelson@fcps.org](mailto:dian.nelson@fcps.org)

## BOARD BRIEFS

- 13 people applied to fill the remaining two years of Dr. Stephen Crawford's term on the Board of Education, following his December 31 resignation due to schedule conflicts with his new job. The County Commissioners plan to select Dr. Crawford's replacement soon.
- The BOE welcomes Commissioner Mike Cady as our new liaison from the Board of County Commissioners. Commissioner Cady has said he looks forward to attending BOE meetings and helping make sure the Commissioners are aware of FCPS needs and activities.
- The annual operating budget is being developed with a focus on meeting the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind and the Maryland Bridge to Excellence acts. The BOE is equally concerned about providing competitive pay for all employees. The Board welcomes input from the public and FCPS staff on the proposals before finalizing the request to present to the Commissioners.
- We have appealed the state recommendations for the capital school construction budget. Initial recommendations do not include funding for any new projects, including Tuscarora Elementary, the Urbana High addition, Centerville Elementary (in the Urbana area) or Middletown Primary. We also did not receive planning approval for the east county area high school, Brunswick Middle addition, Urbana Middle or Valley Elementary renovation. The BOE encourages citizens to write to the Governor and elected officials to support these projects that we need to reduce overcrowding and renovate outdated facilities.

### BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ronald W. Peppe II, President  
 Jean A. Smith, Vice President  
 Daryl A. Boffman  
 Bonnie M. Borsa  
 Linda S. Naylor  
 Michael E. Schaden  
 Anil K. Nathan, *Student Representative*

For the record: The December 11 anticipated swearing in of newly elected BOE members, referenced in our last issue, was postponed due to inclement weather and was held December 13.

*The Board holds public meetings twice monthly, usually at 115 East Church Street. They are televised on Cable Channel 18. For meeting or other information, call 301/696-6850. Or e-mail [judith.ricketts@fcps.org](mailto:judith.ricketts@fcps.org).*

## Well-Prepared Grads

FCPS Class of 2000 graduates who enrolled in Maryland colleges outperformed their counterparts statewide in their first year. According to the latest Student Outcome and Achievement Report (SOAR), FCPS students at private universities earned a cumulative grade point average of 3.06 as compared to 2.92 for graduates of all Maryland high schools. Our students also surpassed other in-state graduates at Maryland community colleges and public universities in the state.

Over the last four years, FCPS grads have shown a decreasing need for entry-level developmental coursework at FCC. And, regardless of the college they attend, they are less likely than their counterparts from other Maryland schools to require developmental courses.

"We know that students who take rigorous classes in high school are better prepared for college and the workplace. We are actively encouraging students to take the most rigorous courses they can handle in all four years of high school, even if they are not sure college is in their plans," said FCPS Director of Curriculum and Evaluation Steve Hess.

In evaluating the success of seniors, said Mr. Hess, FCPS goes "well beyond the information contained in yearly SOAR reports. When we analyze the performance trends of our graduates, we also consider SAT and Advanced Placement testing data, Maryland's Certificate of Merit statistics, and the number of students meeting the University System of Maryland requirements. By all accounts, we are doing well and are meeting our goal of continuous improvement."

## ASK THE SUPERINTENDENT



**T**his section features questions to and answers from Superintendent Dr. Jack Dale. Please send your questions for future issues to [marita.loose@fcps.org](mailto:marita.loose@fcps.org). Inside FCPS will publish them based on relevance to a wide FCPS audience.

- Q:** At Delmar Elementary in Wicomico County, Maryland, parents may choose what the school calls its "Year Round Education Program." Would you describe that calendar, and explain why you have said that "year-round school" may be a misnomer?
- A:** When many people hear "year-round school" they think students attend more than the 180 days per year that FCPS students do. In fact, Delmar Elementary students also attend 180 days, but their school year has 4 sessions of about 45 days each.
- Q:** When do the students get an extended break?
- A:** Students have 4 breaks on this calendar. Three of the breaks are 3 weeks each: late September to mid-October and extended winter and spring breaks. The 4th break is about 4 weeks from mid-June to mid-July.
- Q:** Why do some parents choose this option?
- A:** Advantages are family vacations at off-peak rates, students showing better retention of what they have learned, and students enjoying enrichment options during breaks. For example, during 4 days of the winter break, students could opt to learn woodcarving, bowl, study nature activities, visit the humane society and museums. Other students receive extra help from current and retired teachers working extra days.
- Q:** How did Wicomico County decide who would participate?
- A:** At Delmar there are students and staff on both calendars. Participation is voluntary. Each Wicomico school can decide whether to offer this calendar, and parents make the decision whether to enroll a child in the program.
- Q:** What if siblings are on different calendars?
- A:** Some parents have chosen the alternative calendar even when they have another child on the standard calendar, finding benefit in having special time with each child. They are still able to vacation as a whole family in the summer and when winter and spring breaks overlap.
- Q:** How is staff scheduled to cover this calendar?
- A:** Staff members choose which calendar they want to work in and apply for opportunities as they become available.
- Q:** Is the FCPS Board of Education considering this calendar?
- A:** The Board wanted to learn more about the school in Wicomico County. There are no proposals at this time, but the Board is willing to discuss such a calendar with interested school communities.

## ☆☆☆ ACCOLADES ☆☆☆

**EXCELLENCE** — Frederick HS biology teacher Shelley Jean Smith is one of two Maryland finalists for a 2002 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching—the nation’s highest commendation in the field. Winners in each state will be named in the spring.



*Shelly Smith*

**SUPERIOR** — Windsor Knolls Middle was one of only 5% in last year’s Maryland schools maintenance survey to achieve the high standard of a “superior” rating. Congratulations to the WKMS custodial and maintenance staffs: Lead Custodian Jody Harshman, Assistant Lead Jeff Hite and Jason Brown, Teddy Burke, Gary Deener, Larry Naugle and Kathy Sellers; Maintenance Cluster Lead Larry Rough, general mechanics Rich Barnard, Les Dorsey and Eric Sentz, HVAC mechanics Don Curtiss and George Garvis, Electrician Billy Rippeon and Plumber Rob Johnson.

**KINDNESS** — Because so many at FCPS care, our donations to this year’s Combined Charities campaign surpassed last year’s and exceeded \$72,000. Many thanks to Doreen Neff for coordinating the campaign, to those who assisted in each of our buildings, and to everyone who gave so generously.

**POWERHOUSE** — The Gov. Thomas Johnson HS debate team won the tournament sweepstakes award in the Calvert Conclave Invitational. Coach Bob Dacey, who teaches technology at West Frederick MS, said “TJ students won against 20 of the biggest debate powerhouse schools from the Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Baltimore areas, including prestigious private schools.” This was the first time since 1994 that a TJ debate team finished first overall. Kudos to Bob and TJHS debate class teacher Richard McDonough.

**\$\$\$** — FCPS Minority Achievement Coordinator Maria Whittemore teamed with Frederick County Teachers Association President Nancy Dietz to write Maryland’s only award-winning National Education Association \$5,000 grant to engage teachers in school improvement for minority students. Hillcrest art teacher Norvis Long-Parker assisted. With funding from the NEA’s Urban Grants Program, awarded for an “exemplary program designed to improve the quality of education,” FCPS and FCTA will conduct a series of focus groups to better understand barriers to achievement. Participating schools are Frederick High, West Frederick MS, Hillcrest, Parkway, South Frederick and Waverley.

**AWARD** — The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation presented an excellence in teaching award to Ballenger Creek Elementary teacher Melissa Moore.

## Employee Hotline for Closings

Since January 2, FCPS has piloted a hotline that employees can call to find out if school is closed or delayed because of weather or other emergency conditions. The phone line, 301-644-5111, is for FCPS employees only. *Please do NOT announce it to the public*, as the system is not capable of handling a high volume of calls.

If our Transportation Department decides weather or other conditions necessitate a closing or delay, the announcement will be posted by about 5:30 a.m. that day. We will announce early dismissals, whenever possible, by 11:30 a.m. Very rarely will decisions about closing or delaying school be made the day before, so checking the hotline then typically won’t be helpful. A default greeting will state, “There is no change in the normal operating schedule to report at this time.”

There are no guarantees the hotline will be the first to announce; it is simply another way to get the news and is especially geared for employees who do not get cable channel 18 and don’t have computer access to [www.schools-out.com](http://www.schools-out.com). The hotline also provides employee work status

information that we cannot always rely on the media to provide. If you have used the hotline and wish to provide feedback, e-mail [marita.loose@fcps.org](mailto:marita.loose@fcps.org).

The determination to close or delay school is a complex one that involves assessment of a variety of factors from several sources in a compressed time period. The primary factor is always the safety of students and bus drivers. The next most important consideration is the impact on instructional time. Transportation makes a decision to close or delay after traveling the roads, consulting with local agencies and tracking forecasts. They call regional radio and TV stations promptly thereafter and at the same time inform the FCPS staff person who posts the announcement to channel 18, [schools-out.com](http://schools-out.com) and the hotline. Years of experience, in which there have been occasions when forecasts the night before predicted far worse conditions than actually materialized the next morning, have proven it is most prudent to make the decision in the morning.



## NEWS TO USE

**Call for Presenters** Share your expertise with co-workers across the system at this year's August 12-14 FCPS Summer Institute, returning to the Frederick Community College campus. Proposal forms, due March 18, are in the "employee connections" section of [www.fcps.org](http://www.fcps.org). For more info, contact **Ann Hummer**, 301-644-5128.

**School Report** Mailed in January to every Frederick County residence and to employees who reside outside of Frederick County, *School Report 2002* highlights our teachers and contains useful information from across the school system. If you haven't read it, there are copies in every school building, or request one by contacting Ann Eyler, 301-696-6900. **José Rosapepe** designed the report, researched and written by **Marita Loose** and **Dian Nelson**.

**School Talk** Catch this lively new program in which channel 18 follows Superintendent **Dr. Jack Dale** as he chats with staff, parents and students about topics of interest to local school communities and FCPS as a whole. Featured so far are **Thurmont Middle, Elementary** and **Primary** schools and **Middletown High**. The show airs Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. and Saturdays at 2:30 p.m. Find out how your school can participate by calling **Tim Dean**, 301-644-5016.

**Reading Rally** 405 students have read this year's Reading Rally books, and 88 will compete in the finals. Support reading, and watch the fun as teams get 30 minutes to grab their props and devise skits to perform in about 3 minutes on March 1 at the Walkersville HS auditorium, 9-noon.

**All-USA** The National Association of Secondary School Principals, USA TODAY and the National Education Association seek 20 high school students for the All-USA Academic Team. Nomination forms, due February 22, are at [allstars.usatoday.com](http://allstars.usatoday.com).

**Got Milk?** High school seniors can win \$7,500 through the Scholar Athlete Milk Mustache of the Year (SAMMY) campaign. To nominate a student or view the rules and application, visit [www.whymilk.com](http://www.whymilk.com). Deadline: March 7.

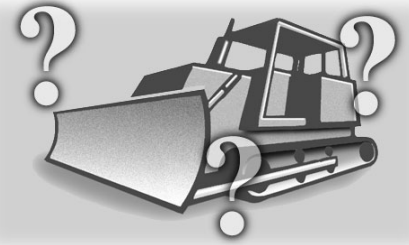
**Coupons** Through MSDE's "Take 15 for the Family" program, families may get a discount card for Papa John's Pizza, Maryland Science Center, Cartoon Cuts, Pearle Vision, Prime Outlets and Port Discovery. Download the card at [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org) or call 888-246-0016.

**Performing Arts** Support the Frederick County Music Scholarship Fund by attending the Howard Burns and His All-Star Big Band concert at TJ High, April 5 at 7 p.m. Created to help local students go forward at all stages in their academic careers—elementary, middle, high school or college, the fund is for all the performing arts—not just music. For details, call 301-695-7660 or visit [info@cffredco.org](mailto:info@cffredco.org).

**Spaceship Earth Fund** 250 people, 16 businesses and 5 school-based projects have raised \$71,000 toward the Earth & Space Science Lab's \$200,000 renovation goal. Donations are tax deductible. To learn how you can help, call 240-236-2694 or visit [www.fwp.net/FCPSESSL](http://www.fwp.net/FCPSESSL).

**Good News** FCPS' *14th Progress Report on Continuous Improvement* is available in all schools. Volume 1 has locally reported school profile data, Volume 2 has state-reported data on local schools and evaluates individual school improvement, and Volume 3 is a comprehensive summary of FCPS progress in meeting strategic goals.

**Reading Rally & Youth Art Show Opening: March 1**  
**Maryland State Assessments: March 3 – 6**  
**Parent-Teacher Conferences: March 13 – 14**  
**Kindergarten/Pre-K Registration: March 13 – 14**  
**Conversations with the Superintendent:**  
**Frederick – March 18; Catocin – April 10**  
**Science & Engineering Fair: March 21 – 22**



### FCPS FACTOID

Can you name the new elementary school slated for construction in the Urbana area?

A: Centerville Elementary—scheduled to open in 2005



#### Tune to channel 18 for FCPS news:

**School Talk** – Tuesdays 7:30 PM  
Saturdays 2:30 PM

**Newsbreak** – 10:30 AM  
12:30, 5:30 & 9:30 PM

**Inside Look** – 2 & 7 PM

**PTA Perspective** – 10 AM & 8 PM

**BOE Meetings** – Wednesdays: 6 PM (live)  
*Calendar Handbook* lists meeting dates  
Re-broadcast the following evening

**Bulletin Board** – Menus, closing info, etc.  
To submit news, fax: 301-696-6958 or  
e-mail [dian.nelson@fcps.org](mailto:dian.nelson@fcps.org).

**Classic Arts** – Midnight to 5 AM

**Health Matters**—Coming soon!

*Schedules are subject to change*

**Inside FCPS** is produced by the  
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Your news, ideas and suggestions are welcome.  
Please fax 301-696-6958. Call 301-696-6900.  
E-mail [dian.nelson@fcps.org](mailto:dian.nelson@fcps.org). Or courier to the  
Communications Office, 115 E. Church Street.



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