

FCPS 1 of 2 Maryland Districts to Launch State Scholars



At our State Scholars kickoff, Frederick County Commissioner Jan Gardner, FCPS Superintendent Dr. Jack Dale, Frederick Chamber of Commerce President Joe Lebherz and Delegate Rick Weldon (left to right) applaud West Frederick 8th grade speaker Jasmine Franklin (right).

A new national program that challenges and rewards high school students for mastering a set of rigorous courses kicked off in Frederick County at a recent ceremony at West Frederick Middle School.

Frederick was one of only two counties selected (along with Harford) to pilot the Maryland Scholars program. The national Center for State Scholars, sponsored in part by the U.S. Department of Education, named Maryland as one of the first five states to receive a \$300,000 grant over three years to implement the program.

"The precepts of the State Scholars program are clearly aligned with achievement princi-

ples already in place in Frederick County," says Superintendent **Dr. Jack Dale**. "Beginning with the class of 2006, we have increased the number of credits required for graduation and added a graduation project designed to tap students' skills and talents across multiple disciplines. In addition, we're introducing a new three-tier system to recognize academic excellence — honors, high honors and highest honors."

Because research shows that rigorous high school coursework is the surest predictor of college and workplace success, the Scholars core academic course of study is well grounded in English, math, science, and



Maryland Business Roundtable executive director June Streckfus listens as Sharon Holleman from the Texas-based Center for State Scholars explains why FCPS is chosen to pilot the national program.

Then and Now

- In 1940, barely 1 in 4 Americans completed high school.
- In 1960, 41% earned a high school diploma.
- Today, 84% achieve a high school diploma.
- The FCPS graduation rate is 92.9%, and we have the second lowest dropout rate in Maryland.
- 30 years ago, only 28% of U.S. workers attended a post-secondary school. By 2000, the number rose to 59%.
- More than 70% of FCPS seniors plan to continue their education in colleges, technical schools or the military.

social studies. The program includes at least 4 credits of English, 3 credits of math (algebra I and II and geometry), 3 credits of science (biology, chemistry, and one other lab science – physics preferred), 3.5 credits of social studies, and 2 credits of the same foreign language.

Speakers from the business community will introduce 8th graders to the program this December, several weeks before students make their course selections for high school. A statewide coalition of major Maryland employers, called the Maryland Business Roundtable, is administering the program in partnership with the Maryland Department of Education and Governor Ehrlich's office. The local lead business partner is State Farm Insurance. ★

**Giving the
Best to
Education**

Debbie Wivell Swiderski serves the Urbana area as our newest CASS coordinator. Based at Lewistown, **Patty Stambaugh** is the site assistant with seniority among Food Services staff. **Jim Dorsch** teaches about database structures in the Career & Technology Center's newest program—Oracle Certification Academy.



Visit "Giving the Best to Education" on-line at www.fcps.org for profiles of outstanding employees.

Ambassadors for Education: Standing Up for Schools*



During the holidays many of us will attend social functions during which conversation will turn to public education. Because we work at FCPS, sharing our knowledge can make a difference. Here are some tips for handling those situations:

- Announce your affiliation with public schools, and be willing to listen with an open mind.
- If you hear a negative comment, consider whether it came from personal experience or hearsay. Remember that only 25% of the nation's residents have children in school.
- Empathize with the stated problem, and ask if the person has called the school or department to talk about it.
- Tell your listeners that educators know the schools aren't perfect, but we're working to make them better.
- Ask how many years it's been since they were in a public school. Invite them to visit. Statistics say that people who have been in a public school within the last two years are usually supportive.

- Encourage involvement in a local school—All welcome volunteers.
- Give an example of excellence in your school and others in Frederick county. Share the news:
 - Our students outscore the state and nation on SATs
 - FCPS leads the way with increased graduation standards yet has Maryland's second-lowest dropout rate
 - We promote reading initiatives to give students the tools they need to succeed
 - Our new schools cost less than the state average

There's lots more school news for everyone on channel 18 and at www.fcps.org. Watch for *School Report 2003* this month.

**Adapted from PRincipal Communicator, September 2003, citing the Michigan School Public Relations Association. ★*

ASK THE SUPERINTENDENT

This section features questions to and answers from Superintendent **Dr. Jack Dale**. Please send your questions for future issues to marita.loose@fcps.org. Inside FCPS will publish them based on relevance to a wide FCPS audience.



Q: Why are pay raises distributed in two phases this school year?

A: When it was clear that limited financial resources would not permit a full 4% increase in July, both the Frederick County Teachers Association (FCTA) and the Frederick Association of School Support Employees (FASSE) negotiated agreements calling for step increases and a 2% salary increase in July followed by an additional 2% mid-year salary boost for all eligible FCPS employees. To accomplish this, the Board of Education earmarked nearly 80% of new funding for salary improvements and employee benefits.

Q: When will the second phase of the pay raise go into effect?

A: On February 16, 2004 the remaining 2% pay raises begin for all eligible employees.

Q: When will paychecks start reflecting the new increase?

A: Most staff will begin receiving the increase in their February 28 paychecks. Consistent with our regular payroll procedures, eligible employees who submit time sheets will see the increase in their March 15 paychecks.

Please check with your supervisor or call the FCPS Division of Human Resources if you are unsure about your eligibility for the 2% February pay raise.

New Faces in Key Places

- Upon the retirement of **Dr. Michele Krantz**, please welcome **Dr. Linda Burgee** as new elementary associate superintendent.

"Michele has brought us an infectious commitment to children and education, and her enthusiasm and energy have led our elementary program to much higher levels of performance," said FCPS Superintendent Dr. Jack Dale. "Of course, having served as elementary instructional director, Linda brings her own exceptional leadership skills and love for education to the job. Michele will be sorely missed, but I have no doubt that our elementary education program is in the right hands."

To ensure a smooth transition, Linda will begin her new duties the first of the year. Michele retires the end of January.

- **Sue Ann Nogle** is assistant principal at Governor Thomas Johnson High, following **Everett Warren's** move to another school system. ★

★★★ ACCOLADES ★★★

Best of '03 — The Frederick Association of Educational Office Professionals named **Cathy Rossomondo** instructional assistant of the year, **Richard Wandres Jr.** administrator of the year and **Kay Schroyer** office professional of the year for 2002-03. *The Washington Post* named Ballenger Creek ES Principal **Larry Cassell** winner of our county's 2003 distinguished educational leadership award. The Maryland Center for Character Education honored **Hillcrest** and **Windsor Knolls** for outstanding character education programs. The Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics named **Andrea Kerslake** 2003 outstanding high school mathematics teacher of the year.



From left to right: Cathy Rossomondo, Richard Wandres Jr. and Kay Schroyer at the FAEOP awards banquet.



Caring Thanks to the generosity of so many throughout the county, by press time FCPS staff had pledged \$75,548 (and climbing) to this year's Combined Charities Campaign.



Super Super The Maryland Department of Education awarded **Dr. Jack Dale** its very 1st superintendent's award for exceptional leadership support during **Darren Hornbeck's** tenure as Maryland Teacher of the Year.



Phonics Saxon, Inc. presented FCPS an award for outstanding academic achievement, to recognize the dedicated teachers who use a phonics intervention program for "turning around education in America."



Leading the Way At the annual National Association for the Education of Young Children conference, more than 250 participants attended the session led by **Shari Ostrow Scher** and **Marilyn Dolbeare-Mathews** about project-based learning.

What Are Your FCPS Spending Priorities?



Board of Education members took time at their November 24 meeting to list their individual priorities for the FY '05 operating budget. Speaking in turn, they suggested the following:

- Meet class-size targets
- Expand pre-k and Judy Center, and provide Even Start for ESL families with pre-school children
- Provide competitive salaries and benefits for employees
- Concentrate assets (staffing, equipment, etc.) at low-performing schools
- Work with area colleges to provide more opportunities for students to earn college credits during high school
- Assure fiscal resources for full-day kindergarten
- Restore the maintenance/custodial budget
- Fund a technology replacement cycle
- Provide more extended-learning opportunities for students

The BOE would like to hear employees' feedback on their list as well as thoughtful input on items that should be added and current expenses that could be trimmed or reprioritized. Employees are encouraged to contact the BOE via e-mail to boe@fcps.org, or speak during the public comment section of an upcoming public meeting. ★

Listening to Serve You

Thank you to the readers who returned the "What do you think of your employee newsletter?" questionnaire included in the last issue.

79% of the 200 respondents said they are school based. 51% are teachers, 33% support employees, 12.5% administrators (7% at central offices and 5.5% at schools).

Asked to give *Inside FCPS* an overall grade for effectiveness in communicating employee news, 93% rated it A or B (more than half giving it an A, and 4% a C).

A whopping 96% get the newsletter in their mailbox. Asked how much of it you read, 56% said "all," 37% read "most of it," 8% read "about half," and 1.5% read "less than half."

Readers said that front-page articles are the most useful and interesting (79%), followed by News to Use (76%), lists such as retirees, 25-year honorees and award winners (70%), Accolades (69%), Board Briefs (68%), Giving the Best to Education photos and captions (62%), upcoming dates to remember (61%), Ask the Superintendent (60%), New Faces in Key Places (57%) and the FCPS Factoid (50%).

Advised that later this year the newsletter will arrive via e-mail, 50% said they prefer a printed copy. Others asked that we save money by making it available on-line only (web site and e-mail).

Beginning in 2004, employees will receive an e-mail link to our web-posted edition. Schools and offices will receive limited copies to place in a central location for staff without Internet access. ★



Inside FCPS earned the 2003 Award of Excellence issued by the Maryland-DC-Virginia-West Virginia region of the National School Public Relations Association for a school district newsletter. Our School Report 2002 also won the regional Award of Excellence.

NEWS TO USE

8-911 To reach an emergency operator, employees must dial 8-911. This ensures proper routing of the call and permits the emergency operator's equipment to display the correct address and phone number from which a call originates. If you dial just 911, you will hear a recording with instructions to hang up and dial 8-911.

Employee Hotline for Closing Info When schools are closed due to inclement weather, FCPS staff can get info by calling 301-644-5111, tuning to channel 18, visiting www.fcps.org or subscribing to www.schools-out.com for automatic e-mail updates.

These sources will announce when a liberal leave policy is in effect for employees (other than those on the 10-month "school" calendar). When it is, non-essential personnel may use personal or annual leave without prior approval. Support employees may, with supervisor's approval, make up time in lieu of using leave. In cases of absence or late arrival, always inform your supervisor.

Please do NOT announce our employee hotline number to the public, as the system is not capable of handling a high volume of calls. There are no guarantees that 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 or have computer access. The hotline also provides employee work status details that FCPS cannot always rely on the media to provide.

Clipart Check out www.school.discovery.com/clipart for graphics to enliven school handouts and publications.

Fast Forward FCPS students can earn college credit for some high school classes through the Fast Forward program. School counselors have details.

Job Shadow Thanks to 100,000+ host employers, more than a million students will explore careers by visiting a workplace on February 2. State Superintendent Nancy Grasmick urges Maryland students and school staff to participate in this valuable opportunity. Could you host a student? Visit www.jobshadow.org or call **Lisa Eye-Mangini**, 301-696-6875. A useful web site for students exploring their options: CareerVoyages.gov.

Bonus If you are new to the teaching profession and graduated with a Bachelor's or Master's degree between December 2002-03 and 3.5 or higher GPA, you may be eligible for a \$1,000 signing bonus from the Maryland Department of Education. For info, call 301-644-5115.

Certification If your teaching certificate expires January 1, please send renewal items to **Nancy Slovikosky** in Human Resources. Please staple your \$10 money order, payable to the MSDE, to all paperwork submitted.

Have a wonderful
winter break!

Schools closed: December 24-January 2

Tuscarora Conversation with Superintendent: January 6

FCPS Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration: January 22

Job Shadow Day: February 2

FCPS FACTOID

What's the difference between the FCPS intranet and web site?

The intranet is for employees only. From any FCPS-networked computer, type *insidecps* in the Internet address line to tap into not available to the general public: FCPS forms, a searchable phone directory, a payroll guide explaining how to understand your paycheck, and tips for publicizing your school news.

The web site, www.fcps.org, is for everyone. It lists job openings and benefits info, school profiles, FCPS news, emergency info and much more.



Tune to channel 18 for FCPS news:

School Talk – 2:30 & 7:30 PM

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

Inside Look – 2 & 7 PM

PTA Perspective – 10 AM & 8 PM

Health Matters – 11 AM & 9 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.

Classic Arts – Midnight to 5 AM

See our program guide at fcps.org

Schedules are subject to change

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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. Or courier to the
Communications Office, 115 E. Church Street.



Frederick County Public Schools

Working Together to Educate Each Child and Promote Success

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