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VOLUME 1  
ISSUE 10

A MONTHLY INSIGHT INTO THE HAPPENINGS AT MSDE

# THE MSDE PULSE



### Special points of interest >>>

- EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
- STATE BOARD ACTIONS
- WELCOME STEVEN HICKS!
- WINTER WONDERLAND LUNCHEON HIGHLIGHT



MARYLAND CHARITY

### CAMPAIGN

The 2017 Maryland Charity Campaign officially closed on December 31, 2017. Thank you so much to everyone who pledged to make a difference this year! Your contributions make an incredible difference in the lives of many across our State and beyond! Thanks to your support.....

*WE BEAT OUR GOAL!*

**\$71,492.03.**

Beat Goal by \$7,000!

## EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!

MSDE is proud to announce our December 2017 Employee of the Month:



Zina Spriggs, December 2017

## Zina Spriggs

Zina is an **Administrative Aide** under Elizabeth Kelley and Judy Walker in the Division of Early Childhood Development. Zina was nominated by one of her co-workers (Traci Verzi) for going above and beyond the expectations of her duties.

**Read below for some highlights from Zina's nomination submission!**

Zina is always willing and able to assist other branches within her division when needed. She accepts challenges with a **good attitude** and **follows up** on requests before being asked.

Zina is a **role model** and has become the "**go-to-person**" within the division because of the **positive disposition** she displays when asked for assistance or when reaching out to others.

Zina excels as a **team player** and does not limit herself to the parameters of her MS-22 or her assigned branch.

Zina is an **invaluable** member of the division as she is very **attentive** to the routine tasks that need to be accomplished, but she also goes above and beyond to regularly check with everyone to ensure that the less routine tasks also get the attention and support they need.

**Congratulations Zina!**

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS OUR EMPLOYEE NOMINATION FORM](#)

# EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH!

Congratulations, Certification Specialists Team!

MSDE is proud to announce our January 2018 Employee(s) of the Month:

## MSDE's Certification Specialists Team!

This nomination gives special recognition to the Certification Specialists who work in the Certification Branch in MSDE's Division of Educator Effectiveness, under Sarah Spross, Assistant State Superintendent. Our Certification Specialists are Linda Bongiovano, Danielle Clinton-Williams, Tamara DeShields-Burns, April Wade, and Kelly Meadows, Branch Chief.

Below are just a few of the many areas highlighted in this nomination:

Historically, the Certification Branch has worked on a significant backlog in responding to initial applications for certification, renewal requests, and general customer service. At its peak, some cases were over two years old.



To better meet their constituents' needs and improve customer service, in May 2017 the certification specialists were given an aggressive goal to reduce the certification processing backlog to six-weeks or less by September 30, 2017.

On May 30, 2017, there were 2,641 cases that were older than 6 weeks. As each week passed, new cases were added to this pool as they reached the six-week threshold. Kelly Meadows, the Certification Branch Chief, tracked weekly statistics, provided feedback to each specialist and periodically reassigned cases requiring the specialists to work as a team to reduce the backlog. During this period the specialists completed 9,800 tasks. They came within 136 cases of having all certification requests within a six-week period as of September 30, 2017.

In addition, the team trained ten Local School System personnel as Certification Authorized Partners/Associates to provide direct support to their system employees. This effort effectively increased the capacity of seven Local School Systems and the level of technical assistance provided.

Overall, this group is commended for their efforts in providing more efficient and effective customer service to individuals seeking certification in Maryland. Kelly Meadows provided exceptional leadership through her hands-on approach and commitment to her staff and their shared goals. Other DEE staff provided important supports to these efforts to ensure that specialists had the necessary materials to process these cases more efficiently.

Congrats again to Certification Specialists who work in the Certification Branch!



**Left to Right:**  
**April Wade,**  
**Linda Bongiovano,**  
**Tamara DeShields-Burns**  
**Not pictured:**  
**Kelly Meadows**  
**Danielle Clinton-Williams**

# State Board Meeting Actions: December 5, 2017



## **The following actions were taken at the December 5, 2017 State Board of Education meeting:**

- Granted permission to publish proposed amendments to COMAR 13A.05.02.04 State Administration, which governs the identification of significant disproportionality under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Granted permission to publish amendments to COMAR 13A.02.02.03-.04 Emergency Plans, which incorporates by reference the MSDE Emergency Planning Guidelines for Local School Systems and Schools to accommodate students, staff, and visitors with disabilities on public school grounds, in accordance with the federal American with Disabilities Act.
- Granted permission to publish amendments to COMAR 13A.08.04 Student Behavior Interventions to add and clarify definitions and strengthen provisions which require a continuum of behavior interventions to be a part of a student's Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- Granted permission to publish amendments to COMAR 13A.15 - .18 (includes Family Child Care, Child Care Centers, Child Care – Letters of Compliance, and Large Family Child Care Homes). The amendments address the following and apply to all subtitles, unless otherwise indicated: background clearances; child abuse and neglect information; reasonable accommodations; medical information for child care providers and staff of child care centers; reasons to deny an applicant/application and health and safety training requirements for staff; lead testing; counting students; swimming pool security; care of children; child discipline; and reasons and procedures to suspend a registration or license.

- Granted permission to publish amendments to COMAR 13A.08.01.11C – Disciplinary Actions – Suspension and Expulsion, which reflect the provisions of Senate Bill 651, enacted by the Maryland General Assembly on July 1, 2017. The provisions of the law prohibit suspension or expulsion for students in prekindergarten, kindergarten, first, or second grade, except as provided in §C(1)(b) of this regulation, and lists specific interventions and steps that school personnel will take before implementing a suspension or expulsion.
- Granted permission to publish amendments to COMAR 13A.06.07.07 School Vehicle Driver Disqualifying Conditions and Termination, based on substantive changes need to .07 School Vehicle Driver and Trainee Disqualifying Conditions and Termination, and .08 School Vehicle Attendance Qualifications and Disqualifications. The proposed changes modify the inclusion of “assault in the second degree” to “a conviction of assault in the second degree within the past 10 years” for both School Vehicle Drivers and School Vehicle Attendants.

## **The following Opinions and Orders were rendered:**

- *Frederick Classical Charter School v. Frederick County Board of Education - charter school funding – Opinion No. 17-41*
- *Kristine Lockwood v. Howard County Board of Education – attendance area adjustment review – Opinion No. 17-42*
- *Christine Smith v. Baltimore County Board of Education – reclassification of position – Opinion No. 17-43*
- *Nakia S. v. Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners – early K entry – Order No. OR17-19*

## **Meeting materials, Opinions, and Order can be found at:**

[http://  
marylandpublicschools.org/  
stateboard/Pages/default.aspx](http://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Pages/default.aspx)

The next meeting of the Maryland State Board of Education will be held on Tuesday, January 30, 2018 at the Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building, 200 West Baltimore Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Board Room, Baltimore, MD, 21201.

Appropriate accommodations for individuals with disabilities will be provided upon request. Eight business days notice prior to the event is required.

Please contact Charlene Necessary at (410) 767-0467 or TTY at (410) 333-6442 so arrangements can be made.

# Strengthening Education in Maryland

MSDE's Accomplishment Highlights January-June 2017

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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Shared vision instilled in department leaders who add to the strength of the team.

## STRENGTH IN LEADERSHIP

I am proud of a leadership team with the skills, experience, knowledge, expertise and judgement that provides the leadership necessary to develop and implement programs to strengthen education in Maryland.

- Dr. Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.,  
State Superintendent of Schools

Leadership matters in education. The Maryland State Department of Education has recruited and built a strong leadership team, experienced in all areas of school and instructional improvement. MSDE is laser-focused on the goal of helping to make every Maryland school better.

As part of that effort, MSDE has directed its gaze outward. Top MSDE staff members are in Maryland school systems virtually every day, providing technical assistance and helping educators and administrative staff to uncover answers to their most vexing issues.

Maryland is a small state, but our 24 localities include every type of school and school system. Our State has large urban schools, fast-growing suburban schools, and small rural schools. MSDE's leadership team has experience in all facets of the State's system and is working closely with local superintendents and other administrators to move struggling schools in the right direction and help strong schools become even stronger.



Left to right:  
Dr. Sylvia A. Lawson, Ph.D.,  
Deputy State Superintendent for School  
Effectiveness, & Chief Performance Officer;  
Dr. Carol A. Williamson, Ed.D.,  
Deputy State Superintendent for Teaching &  
Learning, & Chief Academic Officer;  
Dr. Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.,  
State Superintendent of Schools;  
Kristy L. Michel,  
Deputy State Superintendent for Finance &  
Administration, & Chief Operating Officer

# Welcome to MSDE, Steven Hicks!



*Congratulations and welcome to Steven Hicks, MSDE's new Assistant State Superintendent for the Division of Early Childhood Development. The Maryland State Board of Education approved this wonderful addition to the MSDE team on December 5, 2017!*

*"I am honored to join such a hard-working, highly-skilled team, and to share in the effort of getting our children the strong start they need for success in school -- and in life."*

*-Steven Hicks,*

*Assistant State*

*Superintendent for the*

*Division of Early*

*Childhood Development*

Mr. Hicks has had a long career in education, first as a teacher, then as a federal policy-maker. As Senior Policy Advisor on Early Learning, at the U.S. Department of Education, his focus was to advance the national early learning agenda through the establishment of the agency's first Office of Early Learning and the development and implementation of the Early Learning Challenge and Preschool Development Grants programs.

Hicks contributed significantly to several key policy statements and in the integration of early childhood in the Every Student Succeeds Act. He also was involved in the creation of specific guidance for states and districts on the best use of federal education law to address the needs of young children. He is a frequent speaker on early childhood topics across the country and has represented the United States in China, Italy and Austria.

Hicks leaves his position as Executive Director of Ready At Five to join the Maryland State Department of Education. While heading up Ready At Five, he advocated for improved practices and quality of early childhood education for the children of Maryland.

Hicks was a teacher for 20 years for preschool level through third grade classrooms. While teaching, he founded the Reggio Emilia-inspired early learning center at his charter school, served the workgroup that created and established Los Angeles Universal Preschool, and was the Los Angeles Prekindergarten Director for the California Reading and Literature Project. He was named a Los Angeles County Teacher of the Year and a member of the USA Today All-USA Teacher Team.

Mr. Hicks is a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certified Teacher in Early Childhood, and he has taught family engagement coursework as an adjunct professor for the teacher preparation program at California State University, Los Angeles. He holds a Master of Arts with Option in Early Childhood and Primary Education degree and a B.A. in economics.

Mr. Hicks currently lives in Washington, DC with his husband, David Holladay, and their dog, Duncan. Welcome to MSDE, Steven!

# MSDE

# Safety Section

## Crisis Line

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MSDE has a dedicated phone line if you become aware of any Non-Life Threatening Emergency.

Call extension:

**#7075**



You will be conceded to the front security desk and they will be able to assist you.

## Winter Preparation

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### Prepare your car

According to the Department of Transportation, 22% of all vehicle crashes in the U.S. – and 16% of the fatalities – are due to severe weather such as rain, snow, sleet and ice. So, prepare your car for treacherous conditions and extremely cold temperatures – and know what to do if you find yourself stranded in a vehicle.

When the temperatures start to drop:

- Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive, travel during the day.
- Keep others informed of your schedule.
- Stay on main roads and avoid back road shortcuts.
- Top off antifreeze, windshield wiper fluid, gas, oil and other fluids.
- Check the air pressure in your tires. Make sure your tires have enough tread.
- Keep bagged salt or sand in the trunk for extra traction and to melt ice.
- Clear snow from the top of the car, headlights and windows.
- Save the numbers for your auto club, insurance agent and towing service into your cell phone.
- Keep a cold-weather kit in your trunk. It should include a blanket or sleeping bag, gloves, hard candy, bottled water, folding shovel, first aid kit, flashlight and cell phone charger.

## Floor Wardens

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We are still seeking individuals that wish to volunteer to be an MSDE Floor Warden.

If you have any questions or desire to volunteer to become a Floor Warden, please contact Xavier Richards at:

Xavierer.richards1 @maryland.gov

Office: 410-767-0004



This month in photos >>>

# Happy Holidays •

## MSDE's Winter Wonderland !

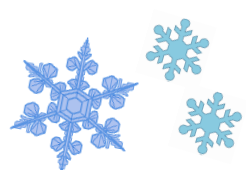
For the third year in a row the Standing Committee on Employee Appreciation, Rewards and Recognition held MSDE's Winter Wonderland Progressive Luncheon. This luncheon is held each year as a way to enhance organizational climate, encourage employee engagement, teamwork and spread some holiday cheer! The event was a huge success due to the dedication and hard work of all the Standing Committee members, volunteers and the contributions of employee donations!



The MSDE team enjoyed holiday tunes, treats, festive decorations and even a special performance by the Paul Laurence Dunbar High School jazz band from Baltimore City!

The Standing Committee on Employee Appreciation, Rewards and Recognition would like to thank all those who helped organize, volunteered time, donated food/beverage items or participated in the luncheon!

# Happy Holidays!



# MSDE CLASSIFIEDS

## WHAT'S NEW?

### Say Hello >>>

**Who's new to MSDE? Check back each month for an updated list!**

**Lucy Ann Amos**, Staff Specialist III  
(Office of School and Community  
Nutrition Programs)

**Wanda Ascencio**, Accountant II (Division  
of Business Services)

**Taryn Barber**, Teacher APC (Juvenile  
Services Education Program)

**Donetta Brown**, Office Clerk II (MSDE/  
Disability Determination Services)

**Shanicia Hanson**, Vocational  
Rehabilitation Specialist II (MSDE/DORS/  
Region VI/Germantown)

**Debra Howard**, Teacher APC +60  
(Juvenile Services Education Program)

**Meghan Leach**, Staff Specialist II  
(Division of Early Childhood Education)

**Rosemary Lober**, Staff Specialist II  
(Division of Early Childhood Education)

**Faith Mowl**, Vocational Rehabilitation  
Specialist II (MSDE/DORS/WTC/Career  
Assessment Services)

**Yohannes Negassi**, Education Program  
Specialist I (Division of Curriculum,  
Research, Assessment and Accountabil-  
ity)

**Holly Powell**, Education Program  
Specialist II (Division of Educator  
Effectiveness)

**Anna Smith**, Teacher APC +30 (Juvenile  
Services Education Program)

**Morton Waller**, Teacher SPC (Juvenile  
Services Education Program)



## CUSTOMER SERVICE CORNER

### Customer Service Callouts!

#### **Boyd Pusey**

**Division of Special Education/ Early  
Intervention Services**

*"Boyd was very friendly and helpful  
regarding questions on the Autism  
Waiver" - Customer Service Survey  
Response*

#### **Danielle Clinton-Williams**

**Division of Educator Effectiveness**

*"Danielle was very attentive and  
helped me when I was extremely  
frustrated and saw me through until I  
got everything I needed gathered to-  
gether and submitted correctly. She is  
very patient and kind and I am very  
thankful for her help." - Customer  
Service Survey Response*

#### **Linda Bongiovano**

**Division of Educator Effectiveness**

*"Linda was very helpful with my  
situation. I really appreciate her  
kindness and personal touch in dealing  
with teacher certifications." - Customer  
Service Survey Response*

### Best Wishes! >>>

**Sharing staff members that have recently retired! Best Wishes!**

**Bella Conanan**, Physician Program  
Specialist (MSDE/Disability Determina-  
tion Services)

**Gabriel Forest**, Rehabilitation Center  
Residential Advisor II (MSDE/DORS/  
WTC/Residential Advisor/Night Shift)

**Jerome Franks**, Painter (MSDE/DORS/  
WTC/Facilities Department)

**Mary Franks**, Administrative Specialist II  
(MSDE/DORS/WTC/Administrative  
Services)

**JoAnne Kelly**, Staff Specialist II-  
Education (MSDE/DORS/WTC/RTS/  
Worksite Services)

**Carol Lewis**, Staff Specialist III-  
Education (MSDE/DORS/WTC/RTS/Blind  
Services)

**Thomas Scheurich**, Program Manager II  
(MSDE/DORS/Headquarters/Program  
Income Unit)

**Veda Usilton**, Education Program  
Specialist I (Division of Special Education/  
Early Intervention Services)

**Shirley Woodson**, Services Supervisor III  
(MSDE/DORS/WTC/Facilities  
Department)

**Renee Yarbough-Williams**, Education  
Program Specialist II (Equity Office)