

Professional Biography

Rachel L. McCusker is a Carroll County Public Schools (CCPS) K-5 vocal/general music teacher and currently serves as the teacher member of the Maryland State Board of Education. She earned her B.S. in Music Education in 1993 from Towson State and her M.S. in School Administration from McDaniel College in 2004.

In 2019, Rachel became the first teacher elected by active teachers across the state to serve on the State Board of Education. Her Board service is highlighted by serving throughout the ongoing challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuring that State Board members heard the perspectives and workload and safety challenges of building-level educators, advocating for increased transparency and stakeholder collaboration, bringing teacher voice to the Board's decision-making process, serving on the Superintendent Search Committee, and building positive relationships with Board members.

She has also been a long-time advocate for reducing the amount of instructional time spent on mandated standardized testing and testified and spoke out in support of the passage of the More Learning, Less Testing Act of 2017. That bill set an annual limit on the number of hours that students could spend taking standardized tests.

As a school leader, she has served on Instructional Leadership Teams, Instructional Support Teams, ETM Committee, CCPS Teacher Advisory Council, CCPS District Assessment Committee, CCPS Meaningful Professional Development Committee, CCPS Curriculum Writing, and MSDE Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel. She has served on community fine arts boards, been a community theater musical director, and volunteers with 4H Therapeutic Riding. She was the 2015-16 Carroll County Public School's Teacher of the Year.

McCusker, Rachel

Candidate for The Maryland State Board of Education

Education

- May 2004 | Master of Science, School Administration, McDaniel College
- December 1993 | Bachelor of Science, Music Education, Towson State University

Certifications

- Music PreK - 12
- Administrator 1

Experience

- 2011-2012 | Adjunct Lecturer, Elementary Music Methods | McDaniel College, Westminster, MD
- 1994 - current | Vocal Music Teacher: Linton Springs (4 yrs.+), Winfield (1 yr.), Piney Ridge (10 yrs.), Cranberry Station (5 yrs.), Taneytown (4 yrs.), Spring Garden (1 yr.), Freedom (1 yr.), Westminster (3 yrs.), and Elmer Wolfe Elementary Schools (1 yr.) | Carroll County Public Schools, Westminster, MD.

Leadership

- 2020 - current | **Teacher Member, Maryland State Board of Education**
 - Collaborate with Board members, legislative leaders, and stakeholders to develop state-wide education policy and law. Hire and oversee the work of the State Superintendent of schools and work collaboratively with the superintendent and the MSDE to implement state education policy and law effectively and efficiently.
- 2019 - 2020 | **MSDE Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel**
 - Collaborate with multiple stakeholder groups to develop and implement state-wide Fine Arts initiatives
- 2019 - 2021 | **Carroll Singers Board of Directors**
 - Oversee financial operation, judge and award local scholarships, award charitable contributions, contribute to regular business operations of the group
- 2017 - 2019 | **CCPS District Assessment Committee**
 - Implement the regulations put forth by Maryland's "More Learning, Less Testing" legislation
- 2017 - 2018 | **Co-Chair CCPS Meaningful Professional Development Committee**
 - Research and provide training in best practices for designing and implementing staff development initiatives on the county and building levels



- **2017 and 2013 | Vocal Music Curriculum and Common Assessment Writing Teams**
 - 2017 Co-author K – 5 Scope and sequence and sample lessons as aligned to new State Standards
 - 2013 Co-author K – 5 Scope and Sequence and 5th grade General Music Common Assessment to satisfy the data requirements of RTTP
- **2015 - 2017 | Teacher Advocate for “Less Testing, More Learning” Legislation**
 - Advocate for national standardized testing and accountability reform at the US Senate
 - Testify before the Maryland House of Delegates Ways and Means Committee advocating for testing reform in Maryland
 - Participate in public advocacy efforts (press conference, interviews, commercials, etc.)
- **2013 - 2016 | CCPS Teacher’s Advisory Council**
 - Provide advice and recommendations to the Board of Education and Superintendent regarding issues related to instruction and learning, as requested, or as initiated by the Council
- **2013 - 2015 | Musical Director, September Song Community Theater**
 - Participate in audition process and cast selection
 - Prepare and implement musical rehearsals of a full-scale Broadway show featuring a multi-generational, volunteer cast and conduct all performances
- **2012 – 2015 and 2018 - 2021 | Co-Chair of the School Improvement and Instructional Leadership Teams**
 - Monitor school improvement data and effectiveness of school improvement plan
 - Plan and implement leadership meetings
- **2011 – 2016 and 2018 – current | Fine Arts and Fitness Team Leader**
 - Participate in leadership team meetings and act as the liaison to the Fine Arts and Fitness Team
 - Collaborate with teams to implement and monitor school improvement goals
- **2011 - 2015 | CCPS ETM Planning Committee**
 - Attend county level planning meetings; develop 5-year county level goals
- **2003 - 2019 | CCEA Contract Negotiations Team**
 - Plan and prioritize negotiations initiatives
 - Participate in the collaborative bargaining process to ensure contract improvements and enhancements for the members of the CCEA bargaining unit

Awards

- 2015 - 2016 Carroll County Teacher of the Year
- 2015, 2021 CCPS Outstanding Teacher Award

Personal Statement

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Nelson Mandela

My election by active teachers across Maryland to become the first-ever teacher to fill the new seat for a current teacher on the Maryland State Board of Education came shortly before an historic pandemic rocked education and life as we know it. The pandemic made it all the more critical that the voices of educators were heard loud and clear by the other members of the State Board. It required every ounce of experience I have as a knowledgeable practitioner, a tenacious child advocate, a dedicated public servant, a willing consensus builder, and a trustworthy professional to raise our voices and concerns to the State Board table. As we continue to navigate through this pandemic, address the workload and health and safety concerns of educators and families, and work together to develop an equitable plan for the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, I seek the support of my fellow educators to continue my service as your representative on the State Board of Education.

My 2 years of successful service on the State Board, my professional credentials, my long-standing record of excellence in teacher leadership, and my positive relationships with Board members will ensure that the myriad experiences and concerns of Maryland’s teachers and students continue to be heard and valued.

Throughout my career, leadership opportunities gave me first-hand experience with the challenges teachers and students face in the complex, constantly changing world of public education. Through school- and county-level initiatives and trainings via the Education That Is Multicultural program, I expanded my diversity and equity lens. I was appointed to the CCPS Teacher Advisory Council, which advised the local school board and central office leadership on a range of topics and policy initiatives that were driven by student, teacher, and board interests. I honed my negotiation and diplomacy skills as a member of the Carroll County Education Association Core Contract Negotiations Team. As the CCPS Teacher of the Year, I joined a statewide network of master teachers and found my voice as an advocate for commonsense testing reform, helping pass the More Learning, Less Testing Act of 2017. Finally, I have trained pre-service educators at the college level, helping build the next generation of Maryland teachers.

As the first active teacher on the State Board, I used these skills to build relationships and become a valued member of the Board with a unique and respected viewpoint. I was entrusted with the critical task of serving on the committee that spear-headed the superintendent search process. Currently, I collaborate with stakeholders to develop the strategic plan guiding MSDE leadership and the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. I fearlessly speak the truth of teaching in turbulent and challenging times.

I’m ready to continue using my voice and leadership skills on behalf of all educators as your elected representative on the Maryland State Board of Education. I humbly ask for your support.



Linton Springs Elementary School

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Sykesville, Maryland 21784

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@LintonSprings

Mr. Glen P. Messier, *Principal*
Ms. Jessica Bailey, *Assistant Principal*

January 2022

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Rachel McCusker as she seeks re-election to the teacher representative position on the Maryland State Board of Education. I have had the honor of working alongside Ms. McCusker at Linton Springs since August 2021. At Linton Springs, I currently serve as the building principal, and Ms. McCusker serves as the vocal music teacher.

Ms. McCusker is a true professional who always strives to make a difference in teaching her students about the many instructional elements of music education. Despite our time together being brief, it is evident that Ms. McCusker is a distinguished educator and leader who actively seeks opportunities to improve her craft and to inspire students to develop a love of music.

In addition to inspiring our students, Ms. McCusker serves as a leader among our faculty and staff. She currently serves as the instructional team leader for the fine arts and fitness team. As a member of our leadership team, Ms. McCusker actively contributes to developing our school improvement plan and seeks opportunities to propose solutions to instructional challenges that we have faced.

Ms. McCusker is an asset to the Linton Springs and Carroll County Public Schools communities. She is very deserving of any leadership position she may seek within the Maryland State Department of Education

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you should you have any questions. Please contact me at [REDACTED]

Respectfully,



Glen P. Messier, Principal

Linton Springs Elementary School

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my absolute pleasure to recommend Ms. Rachel McCusker for re-election as a Teacher Member for the Maryland State Board of Education.

Ms. McCusker and I have worked together at Linton Springs Elementary School for 4 years. We serve on the Instructional Leadership Team at Linton Springs Elementary School. Together, we communicate, collaborate and devise strategies to support our students and staff to create an effective and efficient school culture and community.

I thoroughly enjoy my time working with Rachel and have come to know her as a truly valuable asset to our team. She is honest, dependable, and incredibly diligent. Beyond that, she is a remarkable leader who can effectively manage situations with students, parents, and staff members.

Ms. McCusker's knowledge of local and state policy and expertise in advocacy for students and staff is an immense advantage to our entire school. She puts her skill set to work by promoting a safe and healthy environment for learning and teaching.

Along with her undeniable capacity to assist and empower others, Ms. McCusker has always been an absolute delight to work with. She is a true team player, and always fosters positive discussions, and brings the best out of her students and colleagues.

Without a doubt, I confidently recommend Ms. Rachel McCusker to continue her impeccable and essential work as a Teacher Member of the Maryland State Board of Education. As a dedicated and knowledgeable educator and an all-around phenomenal person, I know that she will continue to be beneficial to your organization.

Please feel free to contact me for more information.

Best wishes,

Alexis Bush

Educator
Carroll County Public School



To: Maryland Department of Education

From: Debra Benner, recently retired Carroll County elementary school principal

Letter of Recommendation – Rachel McCusker

January 17, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

Having had the privilege to work with Ms. McCusker for 4 years, I am able to recommend her continuance as the teacher member of the Maryland State Board of Education with utmost confidence. Ms. McCusker is a hardworking and dedicated educator. She is a champion of shared decision-making whose rich and varied experience in schools has given her the ability to see, understand, and consider different perspectives when solving problems.

Ms. McCusker is extremely organized which allows her to balance her school work, State Board work, family life, and hobbies with ease. She is always well-prepared and accomplishes assigned tasks promptly and expertly. She eagerly accepts leadership opportunities and supports all school initiatives with energy and positivity. She is recognized as a master teacher who excels in her content area. Ms. McCusker shares her knowledge with others by mentoring new teachers. She is truly an asset to any school.

Ms. McCusker takes time to listen and understand another's point of view. She is a team-player who values multiple perspectives in decision-making. Through her work on the school's leadership team, I have witnessed Ms. McCusker's ability to ask leading questions that expose root causes to problems that need to be solved. These strengths have led to her appointment to various county level committees and panels. Because of these experiences, she understands the strengths and needs of schools and school personnel at all levels.

In closing, Ms. McCusker is the best choice for the teacher member of the Maryland State Board of Education. She is committed and best qualified to continue the important work of this governing board.

Debra Benner