

Professional Biography

Rachel L. McCusker is a Carroll County Public Schools (CCPS) teacher. 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. 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 volunteered with 4H Therapeutic Riding. She was the 2015-16 CCPS Teacher of the Year.

Rachel McCusker

Candidate for The Maryland State Board of Education

Education

- May, 2004 | Masters of Science, School Administration, McDaniel College
- December, 1993 | Bachelors 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, Winfield, Piney Ridge, Cranberry Station, Taneytown, Spring Garden, Freedom, Westminster, and Elmer Wolfe Elementary Schools | Carroll County Public Schools, Westminster, MD.

Leadership

- 2019 - current | MSDE Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel
 - Collaborate with multiple stakeholder groups to develop and implement state-wide Fine Arts initiatives
- 2019 - current | 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 - current | 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 CCPS Outstanding Teacher Award**

Personal Statement

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

The election of the first practicing teacher to the Maryland State Board of Education is both historic and significant. It requires an experienced educator who is a knowledgeable practitioner, a tenacious child advocate, a dedicated public servant, a willing consensus builder, and a trustworthy professional. Because I possess all of these qualities, I seek the support of my fellow educators to serve as their representative on the State Board of Education.

Teachers rarely have a seat at local board of education tables and practicing teachers have never had a representative on the state board. My professional credentials, my long-standing record of excellence in teacher leadership, and my selection as the 2015-2016 Carroll County Public Schools (CCPS) Teacher of the Year show why I am best positioned to serve on this board and to give voice to the myriad experiences and concerns of Maryland’s teachers and students.

My first school leadership position was in 1996 as a Related Arts Team Leader. Since then, I have served in this capacity at three schools as well as serving as the Leadership Team co-chair in two of those schools. These opportunities gave me first-hand experience with the challenges teachers and students face in the complex, constantly-changing world of public education. My capacity to listen, organize, analyze, and build shared vision were developed and strengthened. While serving on Instructional Support teams, I grew my capacity for exceptional first-pass instruction, goal setting, and implementation of multi-tiered instructional supports in an atmosphere of collaborative problem-solving. While serving on ELA and math committees, I improved my knowledge of core subject curriculum, and through school- and county-level initiatives and trainings via the Education That Is Multicultural program, I expanded my diversity and equity lens. In 2013, 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 have tried to give voice and support to the concerns of my fellow educators throughout my career. 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 common sense testing reform. My advocacy assisted in the passage of the More Learning, Less Testing Act of 2017 that helped to reduce and cap the amount of mandated standardized testing in every district in the state. Finally, I have trained pre-service educators at the college level, helping build the next generation of Maryland teachers.

I’m ready to continue using my voice and my 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

375 Ronsdale Road | Sykesville, MD 21784

Phone 410-751-3280 | Fax 410-751-3285

Building the Future

Carroll County Public Schools

Debra Benner
Principal

Jessica Bailey
Assistant Principal

Our Mission:

Collaborate, Teach, Inspire, Support, Empower

Our Vision:

Linton Springs is a community of lifelong learners who demonstrate academic excellence and outstanding character.

Letter of Recommendation: Rachel McCusker – Candidate for the Maryland State Board of Education

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with both confidence and pleasure that I submit this letter of recommendation for Ms. Rachel McCusker as she seeks the teacher position on the Maryland State Board of Education. I first met Ms. McCusker just over two years ago when we became colleagues at Linton Springs Elementary School. In addition to having first-hand knowledge of her leadership abilities, Ms. McCusker's reputation for being a strong and dedicated educator is well known throughout the Carroll County Public School system.

Upon coming to Linton Springs, Ms. McCusker was elected by her new colleagues to the role of team leader for the Fine Arts and Fitness Team. Additionally, she accepted the position of co-chair of the Instructional Leadership/School Improvement Team. Under her leadership, this team has been able to write our mission and vision statements, as well as our school improvement plans, review and improve school level procedures and expectations for staff and students, analyze both local and state assessment performance data for grade level and school trends, and then plan for and implement school-wide professional development for staff as we strive to better meet the needs of all of our students. In my experience, Ms. McCusker has consistently shown her ability to identify a problem and develop an effective solution. Her strong interpersonal and communication skills have allowed her to collaborate well with others. As a master teacher, she has gained the respect of colleagues throughout the county. Ms. McCusker has proven herself to be a team player by helping others realize their potential for professional growth and leadership. She has been and continues to be a school leader who immerses herself in the life of the school and actively participates in activities and initiatives. Daily, she models respect and empathy for others as well as a strong work ethic.

Ms. McCusker is a well-known and respected educator in our system. She was awarded Carroll County Teacher of Year (2015/2016), has served on a myriad of councils and committees during her tenure with CCPS. Most recently, she has served on the CCEA Contract Negotiations Team, co-chaired the CCPS Meaningful Professional Development Committee and the District Assessment Committee. Additionally, Ms. McCusker has made a positive impact at the state level as well with her work on the MSDE Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel and advocating for "Less Testing, More Learning" legislation by testifying before the Maryland House Education subcommittee in support of testing reform in Maryland.

Ms. McCusker is well prepared for this next step in leadership and would be a positive addition to the Maryland State Board of Education. She has strong leadership skills and has already worked hard to improve education in Carroll County and in the state of Maryland.

Sincerely,
Debra Benner
Principal – Linton Springs Elementary



Carroll County Public Schools

125 N. Court Street | Westminster, MD 21157

410-751-3000

410-751-3034 TTY

410-751-3003 FAX

Steven Lockard, Ph.D.
Superintendent

To Whom It May Concern:

This is a letter of recommendation and recognition for Mrs. Rachel McCusker, a dedicated and hardworking member of the Fine Arts staff of Carroll County Public Schools. Ms. McCusker has been a music educator for twenty three years in Carroll County. I am proud to call her a colleague as we have worked together in many capacities; five years as teachers in the same building and 15 years as her content supervisor. Ms. McCusker has an unwavering loyalty to her profession, students, school community and passion for education. I believe she takes personal interest in the achievement of each of her students. She has exemplary experience in grades kindergarten through the adult level where she instructs with a comprehensive awareness of methodologies. As a comprehensive educator, her experience includes Elementary General Music, 6th grade Chorus, college level instruction in Methods in Music Education at McDaniel college, Musical Director of Community Theatre- *September Song*, as well as 2015/2016 Teacher of the Year for Carroll County.

Mrs. McCusker's growth within leadership has occurred at the building level, county level, and state level. She has expertly served her school community as an instructional leader for her school based team, School Improvement Team, Education that is Multicultural liaison, and master schedule coordinator at the school level. On a county level, Ms. McCusker has shown leadership as she has participated in curriculum development, common assessment development, iPod pilot program, staff development presenter, Cultural Proficiency Committee, and recently appointed as music specialist to the County Teacher's Advisory Committee. These accomplishments have supported a global perspective as to the issues related to all aspects of education.

Ms. McCusker has always sought opportunities to build relationships, cultivate a community atmosphere in her classroom as well as with staff and colleagues. She achieves this goal through embracing a professional demeanor with authentic kindness. Mrs. McCusker is impacting the profession beyond the walls of the school building. She has a "voice" for not only music education, but education as a whole while also caring for the students who are served. Never losing sight of the true purpose.

In all of my interactions with Ms. McCusker, I have found her to be a kind individual who can look at situations through global and empathetic eyes. I have been most impressed with Ms. McCusker's instructional versatility, work ethic, leadership qualities, and human relations skills. She has established such a rapport, in the classroom and beyond, that she is someone others lean into.

Sincerely,

Cristina Gruss

Cristina Gruss

Supervisor of Fine Arts Carroll County Public Schools

State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore St.
Baltimore, MD 21201

September 14, 2019

Devon M. Rothschild

To whom it may concern:

It is my honor to submit this letter of recommendation in strong support of Rachel McCusker's application for the teacher position on the State Board of Education. Our State Board would truly be lucky to have an educator with such passion, dedication, and leadership skills in this role.

I have known Ms. McCusker for several years. My three sons have been genuinely privileged to explore their love of music with Ms. McCusker. All three have gained confidence in their abilities and increased their skills under her care. When I asked my fourth-grade sons to explain why they enjoyed music class, they shared with me that Ms. McCusker "uses funny voices and has a math side to her." They enjoy her class because she makes music fun while integrating other concepts and skills! I have always been impressed with Ms. McCusker's strong classroom management style that accompanies a playful and joyous teaching methodology.

I have seen Ms. McCusker in action as I attended rehearsals, performances at the community Senior Center and the local high school, and her production of the well-loved second grade play. Throughout all of these experiences, I saw Ms. McCusker competently prepare her students, letting them know what was expected of them, instilling them with confidence, and—most importantly—letting the children know just how important their performance was in bringing joy to the people around them.

I have also known Ms. McCusker in a different capacity—she earned the honor of being Carroll County Public School's Teacher of the Year while I was serving as a member of the Board of Education. In this role, I bore witness to the incredible leadership and advocacy skills Ms. McCusker exhibits. She used her platform to advocate for what was best for educators in the county, because that was what was ultimately best for students. She understood the significance of her role and held it in high regard. Ms. McCusker took every opportunity to give back to the community and the education arena. It was a pleasure to be involved with her during her Teacher of the Year tenure.

As a former CCPS Board of Education President, I truly understand the importance and significance of the State Board of Education. As a current teacher in the CCPS, I understand the value of having an educator serving along-side of the State Board who has a vision based on being in the classroom. As a parent of students who learned from Ms. McCusker, I know that her skills as an educator are unmatched and she is highly deserving of this newly created position. I recommend Ms. McCusker for this position with strong enthusiasm!

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like additional information. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Devon M. Rothschild

Devon M. Rothschild