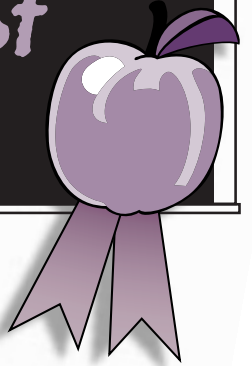


Maryland Classroom

A Publication from The Maryland State Department of Education

Maryland's Teachers of the Year, 2000-2001



Welcome to this special edition of *Maryland Classroom*, dedicated to local school systems' Teachers of the Year — and, thus, the official contenders for Maryland Teacher of the Year. The winner of the Maryland title (to be announced this month) will, this winter, compete for National Teacher of the Year.

We are delighted to honor these truly outstanding teachers and thank them for all they have done on behalf of their profession, their colleagues, their communities, and, most of all, their students.

Ken Baxter, finalist

**Environmental Science & Physics, Grades 10-12
Beall Jr./Sr. High
Allegany County**

A Vietnam veteran, Ken Baxter identifies with the notion that those who have seen the worst in human nature tend afterward to gravitate toward the best in human nature. That's just one of the reasons Ken switched careers in his late twenties to pursue teaching.


Now a nationally certified teacher — one of only two Board-certified science teachers in the state — Ken says most of his instructional choices are data driven. Knowing that a positive attitude improves students' ability to learn the science content covered in class and other science encountered outside of it, he creates opportunities for students to succeed. "I reteach and retest when necessary," he says. Ken uses dialogue and frequent, informal assessments to gauge progress and then adjusts instruction accordingly. "Learning is not just a student effort," he says.

Nor is instruction static. Ken's course changes every year, depending on what's going on around him. "When I was doing NASA enrichment for myself, I got lunar minerals from the Apollo missions to analyze ... and had NASA scientists guest lecture." Now that Ken is working with the EPA on water test-



ing and quality, and the environmental legacy of mining in Western Maryland, his students conduct water testing at the local watershed, share data with the Bureau of Mines (BOM), and create and maintain a water quality website. He's currently working with the local BOM to add a stream assessment series of field trips and to collect baseline data for local agencies.

He integrated a satellite receiving station into his environmental science classes. It wasn't easy, he says, but the students' interest and the extraordinary images generated from the satellite compensate him for all the hard work. Of primary importance, says Ken, is "students doing real science that has real value" — and, he adds, seeing their teacher do the same.

The personal aspect of teaching, however, is never far from Ken's mind. "I genuinely like high school kids, and they seem short on adults they're comfortable with," he says. "At the same time, they want to find out how to become adults. I can help." 

"Learning is not just a student effort."

—KEN BAXTER

Denise Y. Levitine

**Art, Grades 1-5
Four Seasons Elementary
Anne Arundel County**

Interdisciplinary education. Multicultural education. Community and parental involvement. Business as usual for Denise Levitine. For the last three years, Denise has secured grants to help fund schoolwide interdisciplinary initiatives. In 1998, she created "An Interdisciplinary Look at Kenya," in which 4th graders compared the art of Japan and Kenya, wrote about these comparisons in language arts classes, and, with the help of many parents, silk-screened these images onto t-shirts.


In 1999, Denise won funding for the "International Kite." With a Brazilian resident artist, all 700 children, grades K-5, created panels for the two 6' x 20' box kites now suspended from the ceiling of the school's media center. Dozens of parents were also involved in this celebration of the school community's many cultures.

And last spring, Denise tackled "Reading, Writing, and Art Into the Millennium." Children wrote stories in language arts classes depicting book characters that would live in a futuristic setting. In art class, students created paintings corresponding to their writing. And their success was celebrated with parents at a Language and Art Fair.

Capitalizing on the millennial theme, and commemorating the school's 25th anniversary, Denise and the community created a mural, "Four Seasons,



Past, Present, and Future." Before painting, students researched the history of their area, and after completion, documented their thoughts and experiences in journals. Unveiling the finished work at a dedication ceremony honoring parents, students recounted the making of the mural and read aloud their journal entries.

However, she considers the highlight of her career another mural, one recently completed for the Anne Arundel County Animal Control Center. Again, the entire school submitted ideas for the mural, and 75 students (including those in special education) and at least 30 parents painted an impressive 60-foot animal-themed mural. Many of Denise's former students, now in middle school, helped with the project, whose work was done exclusively on evenings and weekends. Denise says these accomplishments prove that absolutely anything is possible when the school community is involved and motivated. 

Melanie J. Rasmussen

**Special Education/
Inclusion, Kindergarten
William S. Baer School
Baltimore City**

Melanie Rasmussen started college as a psychology major conducting research on children's behavior, but soon realized that she wanted to go beyond investigating theory and actually apply what she was learning. It wasn't until her first



(continued on page 2)

Maryland's Teachers of the Year

job interview, however, that she knew she had found her niche. Conducting a demonstration lesson for a group of preschoolers with and without disabilities, Melanie says, "I captivated those children." She managed their behavioral difficulties — without help from the classroom teacher — and kept each child focused. At that moment, she says, she found a career.

And then she found the key to excelling in it. "I observe my students — their facial expressions, body language, and words muttered under their breath. I let them know that what they have to say is important to me. I validate their feelings and, when necessary, model language to help them express themselves. I amend myself, my lessons ... my classroom setting, my rules and routines to meet their needs. I let my students guide my teaching."

With the support of an occupational therapist, Melanie implemented a sensory motor activities program to help students with and without disabilities strengthen their language, social/emotional, play, and motor skills. She created a Friendship Circle in which she and her students discuss disability awareness, cultural diversity, character education principles, and

peaceful conflict resolution. She helps her colleagues recognize students' sensory motor difficulties, fears, and emotional trauma, which so often resemble misbehavior. Melanie writes notes daily to parents so they can keep up with their child's progress, and shares strategies with them so they can be teachers of — and advocates for — their own children.

Melanie acknowledges the awesome power teachers have over their students — power that can create *and* destroy. "We can teach students to dread coming to school each day. We can make them feel that they do not fit in, that they are not valued, and that it is not worth trying because they will fail anyway. We ... have the power to hurt them forever."

It is, however, the flip side of power — the power to help and to heal — on which Melanie has built a career. "We can help [students] develop their minds and imaginations and sense of self-worth. We can help them to feel confidence in themselves as learners and to feel pride in what they accomplish. We can teach them to take responsibility for their own behavior and solve conflicts peacefully. We can help them look forward to coming to school each day." 🌟

Sarah Jeanne Hollister Davis

**Mathematics, Grade 8
Catonsville Middle
Baltimore County**

It's been only eight years since Sarah Jeanne Davis rolled her first cart into her first portable as a brand new teacher. She still remembers, keenly, the awe — and the terror — she felt. That's why she seeks out new teacher assistance programs and mentoring opportunities. She accepted her first student observer this year to pass on the wisdom and compassion her own teachers had given her. "At the beginning of her assignment," says Sarah Jeanne of her observer, "she was undecided about her choice of career and subject." Things soon changed. "She left our school with a developing teaching style, a passion for mathematics, and a love of teaching."

Sarah Jeanne's love of teaching is as infectious as her profound love of learning. Now pursuing her Doctorate in Innovation and Leadership, she earned a Master's in special education so she could better address students with special needs in her regular education classroom. She already has triple the number of graduate credits necessary for advanced certification. She is Maryland's only nationally certified teacher in early adolescent mathematics, the Central Regional Represent-



tative for the Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and winner of the National Science Association's Maryland Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching.

A gifted teacher herself, Sarah Jeanne still credits math teachers past with her many and growing accomplishments. "My students collaboratively solve Ms. Rey's upper-level thinking problems within Ms. Taylor's structured classroom setting. Ms. Mann's high expectations and intense critical thinking lessons have been replanted ... in my own classroom. Ms. Sollars' passion for mathematics and love for teaching weave in and out of each lesson and each assessment." Maybe so, but it's obvious to all those around her that Sarah Jeanne has as much to do with her success as any mentor before her. 🌟

Jennifer Carlucci, finalist

**Grade 5
St. Leonard Elementary
Calvert County**

Being able to motivate children "regardless of their academic or behavioral predispositions is one of my greatest achievements as a teacher," says Jennifer Carlucci. Jennifer cultivates this motivation through role plays, simulations, reader's theater, technology, and hands-on experiences. Take physics, for instance — a "high-risk" unit Jennifer transforms into a high-energy one. Students learn about velocity by calculating their running speeds. They play tug-of-war to learn about force and build racetracks while studying inclined planes.

But applying conceptual material to the real world helps Jennifer's students solve much more than their physics problems. Last year, her 5th graders researched five House bills concerning homeless children. They then attended the Student Rally Day at St. John's College in Annapolis (the only elementary-aged class to do so), and walked across the street to the State House so they could lobby legislators to pass the bills they supported.

Environmental issues aren't beyond their purview either. After discovering that the silt fence surrounding their school was buried under run-off from new construction, and, consequently, that the nearby creek was clogged with soil, Jen-



nifer's students enlisted the help of schoolmates and parents to repair more than 1,000 feet of fence. That work done, they are now organizing a stenciling committee to paint "Chesapeake Bay Drainage" over all the drains in their community. These efforts, along with one of the most effective Character Education programs in the state, have prompted CNN, Maryland Public Television, and the *Washington Post* to come calling on Jennifer's students.

Describing her teaching philosophy, Jennifer borrows a line from Zachary Clemens: "Your kids won't care what you know until they know that you care." That's why every student who enters her classroom has an individualized education plan and why she teaches other educators, locally and nationally, to provide the same. In short, she says, caring is the key to everything she does — in the classroom and out. 🌟

"Being able to motivate children regardless of their academic or behavioral predispositions is one of my greatest achievements as a teacher."

—JENNIFER CARLUCCI

Ellen F. Mulder

**U.S. History & Marriage and Family Living, Grades 11-12
North Caroline High
Caroline County**

The seventh child of 12, Ellen Mulder knew she'd need some help paying for college. Maryland offered that help, in exchange for a two-year, in-state teaching commitment. Two years turned into 29, and Ellen is still helping her students achieve what she says is one of teenagers' greatest developmental tasks — accepting themselves. "I respect my students in their uniqueness, their strengths, their weaknesses, and the persons they're trying to become," she says. Ellen supplies this empathy and enlightenment in two very different courses: U.S. History and Marriage & Family Living.



In the former, she helps students analyze evidence, detect bias, evaluate the country's successes and failures in resolving conflict, and determine what they think is appropriate policy for the nation. The key to opening unenthusiastic students' minds, she says, is showing them that history isn't just about presidents and wars, but, in fact, about generations of perfectly ordinary citizens — people like them.



If Ellen's U.S. History class produces students who better understand their country, her Marriage & Family class produces students who better understand themselves. Appreciating the pressure teens face today and the pain that so often accompanies it, Ellen helps students find the social services, counselors, and community resources they need when difficulties arise. She laughs *at* herself — and *with* her students — so that they're more willing to express themselves in class. She shows students that she genuinely enjoys their company — something she says is critical to success (and sanity) in the teaching profession.

In short, Ellen makes sure her students are educated citizens and educated individuals, that they are nationally aware and self-aware, that they appreciate their responsibilities to their nation, but also to their communities, their families, and themselves. The goals, it seems, aren't so very different at all. 🍎

Margaret A. Wood, finalist

**Technology
Elkton Middle
Cecil County**

Peggy Wood is the first to admit that she hasn't always met with success on the first try — not as a student nor as a teacher. And the lesson that comes from that, she says, is what she wants to instill in her students. It's not your mistakes that define your potential; it's your response to them.

She finds it most rewarding to watch students pondering a problem and working as if she weren't there. "For the ultimate goal," she says, "is to have students become self-motivated, self-governing, self-producing — in essence, to get along without the teacher." That autonomy, she adds, is gained when teaching champions student activity.

As a math and science teacher, Peggy found that students work best when they discover the real meaning behind mathematical concepts and approach the lab with a scientist's — an experimenter's — enthusiasm. And because the two



subjects lend themselves to integration — "mathematics is the language of science, and science gives real purpose to mathematics" — she made a smooth transition to teaching technology,

"The ultimate goal is to have students become self-motivated, self-governing, self-producing — in essence, to get along without the teacher."

—PEGGY WOOD

"where content, critical thinking, and communication come together."

Peggy uses her computer lab not only to revolutionize student learning, but professional learning

as well. Teachers accompanying their students to the lab for co-planned lessons learn the intricacies of the programs used to make the projects possible. Once introduced to the technology, Peggy says, it's often the content teacher who comes up with the next integration possibility — one that meets both teachers' objectives. Peggy considers these roles — *de facto* staff coordinator and developer — her greatest contributions to teaching.

She sees them, too, as the most critical, especially when it comes to technology. "Educational technology is not a panacea for educational reform," she says. Its potential as a learning tool is realized only when teachers are familiar with the technology itself, where it can fit into the curriculum, how to align it with learning goals, and how to use it in engaging projects. Thus, she says, professional development is the key issue in making sure that technology used in the classroom actually promotes student learning. 🍎

Alan P. Zepp

**English, Grades 9-12
Westminster High
Carroll County**

While we often watch films about those we consider mythical teachers who do the impossible, there is one who is miraculously in our midst: Alan Zepp." Those are the words of Mary Nevius-Maurer, Alan's colleague at Westminster High. Steven Johnson, Carroll County's Supervisor of English and Modern/Classical Languages, says, "Most teachers can teach most students, but only outstanding teachers can teach all students. Mr. Zepp connects with each of his students — the motivated and the unmotivated, the college bound and the work bound, the gifted and the needy — and drives them to commit their best effort to each lesson and each task."

Alan's students, on the other hand, acknowledge his value by greeting him with his own signature salute: "Whoa-whoa!" If their syllables are fewer than his colleagues', the sentiment is the same.

Why such devotion? Alan tutors about 40 at-risk students every day from 2:30-5:00 p.m. He serves as advisor to the school's literary magazine and helps students publish original literary and art works. He always greets his students at the door, acknowledging each one personally. He laughs at his students' jokes. He thinks a teenager's world is full of disappointments, and that "an outstanding teacher minimizes them in the classroom." He thinks it's his responsibility to care when they feel no one else does and vows, in



turn, to teach students "not to make a playground of others' affections."

But he knows, too, that caring is only part of a teacher's job — that humor must be leavened with rigor and discipline and holding students accountable for their work. Westminster High Principal Sherri-Le Bream says, "The highest compliment I can pay [Alan] is my inability to determine which level English class I am observing when I walk into his room. Students are always active and engaged. They take pride in the work they are doing, and when I look at samples, I see skillfully completed assignments."

Colleagues have also come to rely on Alan's talent, expertise, and — most of all — his enthusiasm. He plans and leads workshops for faculty in his department, his school, and his county; opens his classroom to prospective and beginning teachers; and has served on numerous curriculum-writing committees. 🍎

Karine Ingersoll

**Special Education/Science,
Grades 11-12
Westlake High
Charles County**

Before Karine Ingersoll became a teacher herself, she took a college class with an elementary school teacher named Jane. The friendship that developed between the two endured — as did a lesson Jane shared with Karine. Respect for her students, Jane said, was the essential link, bridging the gap between an indifferent class and an inquisitive one.

Later, when Karine arrived for her first day as a long-term substitute teacher, she discovered that the respect Jane talked about would, perhaps, be even more critical in her classroom than in others'. Instead of being led to a "well-oiled, fully functional class," she was taken out the back door to a dark trailer filled with students who were unsuccessful academically and socially. And that's when Karine knew the student population she most wanted to help.

It was a calling she might have predicted. Growing up in Scandi-



navia during World War II with parents deeply involved in the Underground, she understood fear and persecution. With each refugee snuck into her home, she learned that a person's value transcends the classification assigned him or her.

"When I get my students, they've already failed at too much, too many times," Karine says. So she takes full advantage of that one fleeting moment when the student goes from "determinedly bored to open and interested." This moment, she says, often has little to do with the topic under discussion, but generates, instead, from secondary example or from a split-second reaction to a question another student has asked.

(continued on page 4)

Maryland's Teachers of the Year

Or, say, from roses. One day Karine spoke to students about her gardens — a common digression — before launching into a history lesson. Her J. F. Kennedy rosebush was in full bloom, she said, and was absolutely gorgeous. At the end of the period, one student who would speak neither to other students nor to her stayed after class to tell her something. He said he didn't really like white roses. Shocked, Karine asked how he knew the Kennedy rose was white. It turns out the boy grew Bonsai and later that semester taught the class how to grow and prune them, as well. That, she says, is the teachable moment. And just one of the small miracles that occur every day in her classroom.

The key to cultivating the garden of her classroom, says Karine, is recognizing differences in attention spans, in backgrounds, and in learning styles. "I must have individual knowledge of each plant, I must tend it well and be sensitive to its needs, but each plant still must grow on its own." 🌸

Marta A. Drodzy

**Language Arts, Grade 4/
Renzulli Enrichment
Twin Ridge Elementary
Frederick County**

Two teachers, in particular, persuaded Marta Drodzy to become an educator herself. One was Mrs. Kennedy, grade 2, who tutored Marta for hours on the finer points of phonics and, in an attempt to boost her self-esteem, gave her the lead in the Christmas play. The other was Mr. Dupre, grade 6, who told Marta's parents she'd never amount to anything because she was "too emotional." Two very different people — with two very different perspectives — set in motion Marta's exceptional teaching career.

The cornerstone of that career has been encouraging students to explore, invent, and discover — and then reinforcing the concepts they've gleaned. "Giving students the opportunity to ask questions, work cooperatively, and experiment with ideas helps [me] learn from the children," Marta says. She takes direction from them, as well. The students Marta worked with last year, for instance, were fascinated with technology. So she taught them how to use the computer to conduct research, write reports, create presentations, and design web pages.

Being a good "people watcher," Marta knows which students work better in groups and which ones need solitude, which students need visual clues and which ones need verbal. She knows who has already responded and who would desperately like to. Whenever possible, Marta uses tactile, hands-on activities that allow children to draw their own conclusions — a process that she says gives her students a better grasp of the curriculum.

Marta also takes great pride in her work with colleagues. She regularly hosts student-teachers and interns, mentors fellow teachers, and leads workshops for them. But it is the less formal assistance Marta provides that, perhaps, means the most to her. She's been a sounding board for some teachers, a source of ideas for others, and a shoulder to cry on for still more. She's helped teachers write, administer, and grade performance assessments; found materials for teachers, shared her own, or helped them make new ones; supported teachers with parents and administrators and colleagues. "Teachers, instructional assistants, custodians, secretaries, and cafeteria workers have all asked me for advice," Marta says. "Their trust in me is my greatest achievement." 🌸

Jeffrey L. Webb, finalist

**Grades 4-5
Vienna Elementary
Dorchester County**

To Jeff Webb, education is as much about imparting values — a respect for knowledge, learning, school, and others — as content. The two complement each other nicely in Jeff's 4th- and 5th-grade classrooms. In addition to customary student-centered civic activities like canned food drives and collections for needy families, Jeff's students have developed a nationally recognized nature study area and school yard habitat; worked with the humane society; and created a dry-cell battery recycling program for the county's

To Jeff Webb, education is as much about imparting values—a respect for knowledge, learning, school, and others—as content.

public schools and the town of Vienna. In 1995-96, Jeff's "Just Say No to Drugs" club was the only in Maryland to win recognition from the U.S. Department of Education.

A teacher at Vienna Elementary since 1982, Jeff has had many former students stop in to thank him for influencing their lives. One visited this year to tell him she had just been accepted to medical school; another, handing him a wooden heart inscribed "Teachers make a difference," has been an Army nurse for four years. It's clear that these rewards mean more

to Jeff than the dozen or so local and national plaques documenting educational and civic excellence that line his classroom walls. He eagerly



takes on student-teachers to keep on top of his game and continually improve his skills — and, just maybe, to catch up with one more student whose life he's touched. After all, the teacher-in-training he greets this year was in his 5th-grade class more than a decade ago. 🌸

Charles G. Trautwein, III

**Instructional Technology,
Grades K-12
Garrett County**

Shortly after Chuck Trautwein became Garrett County's instructional technology coordinator, he also became "one of the most recognizable teachers in the school system's history," according to Route 40 School Principal Patrick Delaney. He scheduled himself into all schools and taught as many classes as possible (while also teaching computer courses at Frostburg State University).

A 1999-2000 Milken Award winner known for always setting the bar higher, Chuck then expanded his responsibilities and began training teachers, administrators, and parents. In addition to regular staff development sessions, he scheduled time to work individually with teachers and set up personal computers in their homes. He won't accept compensation for these house calls — made to parents and teachers alike — aside from "the occasional plate of cookies." To Chuck, it's all part of the job.

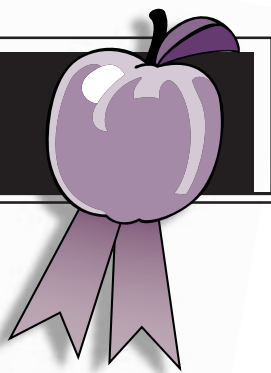
Another part of the job is securing the funds necessary to provide adequate hardware and digital access for the county's students. And Chuck's efforts to do that have paid off handsomely. Winning Garrett County hundreds of thousands of dollars for computer- and web-based resources, the school system now posts a student-to-computer ratio of 7:1 — lower than the state's 8:1 average.

Teaching is not just something Chuck is good at; it's something he



enjoys immensely, "whether it's in a classroom with 25 students ... or a cafeteria with as many teachers." But it's when he's able to combine the two — by working with students and teachers together in the classroom — that he is most satisfied. "I strive to work with every teacher as if he or she were my child's teacher, and to see that every classroom is equipped as if it were my child's classroom," says Chuck. "This is my obligation to the children I teach, the teachers I assist, the parents I serve, and the supervisors to whom I am accountable."

One such supervisor is pleased indeed. "Many pages could be written about Chuck and the rationale for his selection as Maryland Teacher of the Year," says Garrett County Superintendent Wendell Teets. "However, the most significant statement I can make to support his selection is this: In all my years in education, I have never been more proud of a teacher or a man than I am of Chuck Trautwein." 🌸



Donna Marie Zavacky, finalist

**Grade 3
Ring Factory Elementary
Harford County**

Donna Zavacky videotapes her 3rd graders on their first day of school, capturing their cautious entrance into the classroom. She asks them about their expectations for the coming school year and their fears. Throughout the year, she continues videotaping events and interviewing students. And then she plays the tape back for them during the very last week of class. "They delight in this tangible evidence of their ability to conquer their fears, to adapt, and to flourish," Donna says. And therein lies her reward.

A cooperating teacher, Donna encourages her observers and interns to recognize, accept, and teach the whole child.

Donna cultivates students' confidence by adhering to six core beliefs that influence her actions inside the classroom — and reflect her values well beyond it.

- Each child has his/her own unique talents, skills, interests, and needs.
- All students can be valuable members of society.
- All students can learn.
- Our world is a beautiful place.
- Learning is a life-long process.
- Developing healthy relationships is essential to all members of society.



They are also the values she works to instill in the prospective teachers she guides. A cooperating teacher, she encourages her observers and interns to recognize, accept, and teach the whole child. "Can our profession reasonably expect an inexperienced college student to become a successful

teacher without first watching, modeling, and practicing in a classroom?" she asks.

An advocate for teaching and teachers, Donna writes curriculum and assessments for all elementary subject areas; coordinates, plans, and presents staff development sessions; attends national conferences; and, for eight years, served as Ring Factory's "Teacher in Charge," a position she says helped her enhance the understanding and "sense of team" among teachers and administrators. 🍎

Linda K. Storey, finalist

**English, Grade 11
River Hill High
Howard County**

Thirty years ago, Linda Storey entered New York University on a full scholarship to study biology. The plan, since age six, was to be a physician. Then, during her junior year, she studied literature with famous English linguist and writer Anthony Burgess. The rest, as they say, is history.

Linda's desire to teach, late to blossom, is maybe the stronger for it. "The sense of teaching — the need to teach — drives my intellectual endeavors with commanding force," she says. "All of this passion is who I am; it cannot be separated from me."

And, indeed, teaching seems to occupy much of Linda's time. She develops model lessons and assessments for teachers and demonstrates them in colleagues' classes; helps select Howard County's textbooks; coordinates summer reading projects and other schoolwide activities; and writes and revises county curriculum.

In fact, Linda's reach extends right into students' homes. She designed Project Success, an evening program for adolescents who have trouble adjusting to high school and their parents. She helped develop a mentoring program in which teachers "adopt" at-risk students, and wrote guidelines for one of the county's first site-



based management teams. She uses River Hill's email server list to communicate with parents, encourage their involvement, share the Core Learning Goals, and organize writing contests.

"The sense of teaching—the need to teach—drives my intellectual endeavors with commanding force."

—LINDA STOREY

Right now, she and parents are planning a live-action email drama, to which the whole community can contribute ideas and passages. Even Linda's own home isn't off limits. That's where

she tutors (without remuneration) students who need help.

While these efforts imply an enthusiasm for teaching that extends well beyond the classroom, she says her greatest contribution to education is what goes on inside it. Cooperative learning, performance assessments, and cross-curricular connections aren't buzzwords to Linda. They are practiced every day. For instance, art, history, and music figure prominently in her literature lessons, and she uses computer applications to encourage the reluctant writer. 🍎

Stacey Baker

**Language Arts, Grade 3
Rock Hall Elementary
Kent County**

If the Rock Hall community were asked to pick one word to describe Stacey Baker, "energetic" would most likely tumble quickly and unanimously from their mouths. It's a reputation well-deserved — and well-received. "Children feed off the energy from their teachers," she says. "Everyone needs to be excited every day in the classroom."

But energy isn't reserved only for Stacey's 9-year-olds. Presenting a workshop ("No Gimmicks, No Buzz Words, Just Results") to 75 somewhat reluctant middle school teachers, Stacey found herself on a chair demonstrating the chicken dance with a book balanced atop her head — all within 15 minutes of her arrival. The teachers — three-quarters of whom, Stacey estimates, started the session either grading papers or doodling — became active participants (even in the dreaded chicken dance). And, most importantly, they invited her back to share her real message — one that encompassed innovation, flexibility, motivation, integration, and risk-taking.

One can imagine, then, what Stacey does for her students. Not a night goes by, she says, that she



doesn't receive a phone call from a parent or student, asking about a homework assignment, or checking on progress, or just shooting the breeze. Certainly, Stacey cultivates this familiarity. After all, she hosts "Homework Saturdays" at her own house. She invited the entire third grade — comprising 52 children — to her first session. Forty-one children and 20 parents showed, all armed with blankets and snacks.

Stacey quiets the cynics who find such largesse lovely but hardly profitable in terms of student achievement. Rock Hall's 3rd graders have consistently scored well above the state's MSPAP composite and have exceeded the state's 70-percent-at-satisfactory standard since 1997. In fact, Stacey uses MSPAP to help her make connections among subject areas, apply content to real-life problems, and show students how to assess their own work. 🍎

Maryland's Teachers of the Year

Jo Anne McKernon, finalist

**Grade 4
Thurgood Marshall
Elementary
Montgomery County**

Jo Anne McKernon admits that, years ago, she "wasn't the easiest student to have in class." Fortunately, she had teachers who counseled her through the rough spots — who guided, supported, and encouraged her. Now a nationally certified teacher, one of only 27 in the state, Jo Anne is, herself, a counselor, supporter, and advocate for Thurgood Marshall's 4th graders. She says her greatest contribution to teaching — aside from special expertise in reading/language arts and gifted and talented education — is an ability to transfer her love of learning to her students. "I knew that as a teacher, I would be able to take children in all different directions, be it math, science, or art," she says. "In the process, I would be going there myself."

This collaborative approach often results in student-led detours along the academic journey — detours that turn out to be equally productive, and a bit more fun. For example, an electricity unit about

batteries and wires took an unexpected turn when Jo Anne asked students what they already knew about electricity and what they wanted to know. Apparently, lightning "struck" a chord. "They wanted to know how it forms, why it strikes trees, and what would happen to a person



hit by lightning." It ended up being a ride through the forces of nature, and Jo Anne was happy to plot the course.

Jo Anne says the national certification process has made her more effective at doing just that, because she now manipulates curricular scope

"I knew that as a teacher, I would be able to take children in all different directions, be it math, science, or art. In the process, I would be going there myself."

—JO ANNE MCKERNON

and sequence to suit her students' readiness and abilities. During a math unit on area, for instance, she found that students needed plenty of opportunities to manipulate objects and discuss what they were doing with classmates. After discovering that one student

had trouble expressing himself with pencil and paper, Jo Anne decided to use grouped discussions following every science experiment as an informal assessment of students' conceptual understanding. The key, she says, is always to look to *students* for direction. 🌟

Patricia Duncan Bradford

**English/Language Arts,
Grade 7
Hyattsville Middle
Prince George's County**

Patricia Bradford's love of learning fuels her passion for teaching. And so she indulges that love every chance she gets. Last summer, Patricia won a fellowship to participate in an archaeological dig on a West Indies sugar plantation. The year before, she went to France for a 3-day conference — and stayed on the rest of the summer to travel the country. She used the proceeds from an award won in 1996 to tour Senegal.

But Patricia's travels do more than satisfy her wanderlust. She shares her voracious appetite for discovery with her students. Patricia took one class on her own archeological dig — to North-



hampton Plantation in Prince George's County — and helped another prepare a museum exhibit on living things, evolution, and people indigenous to this continent. "I try to model for my students the behavior of a person who appreciates life and all its bounty," say Patricia, "so that they, too, will taste and see that their lives are enriched through learning."

This idealism, Patricia says, is the product of her coming of age during the civil rights struggle, the

Charles J. McNevech

**Physical Education, Grades
preK-5
Carver Elementary
St. Mary's County**



About 80% of Chuck McNevech's 6- to 10-year-olds can climb a knotted rope to the top of Carver's gym. Many of his 1st graders can run a mile in less time than most adults could ever imagine. But his students can also discuss the physics involved in gymnastics, track heart rates, and measure distances in track and field. Chuck incorporates math into almost every unit, and is

working with struggling readers on a big book series that incorporates both reading and kinesthetics. Chuck says there isn't one area of teaching that he hasn't been able to tie into physical education ➤

Debra L. Klobucar

**Science, Grade 6
Stevensville Middle
Queen Anne's County**



William Burd, Queen Anne's County Supervisor of Instruction and president of the Maryland Science Supervisors Association, says Debra Klobucar "not only does the right things in the classroom, she knows why and plans for them." Her students' "aha" moments, he says, don't happen by accident. They're preprogrammed and sustained for maximum effect. "Mrs. Klobucar has been teaching using multiple intelligences before Howard Gardner even thought about them," he adds.

Debra makes sure these "aha" moments happen in the classroom and out of it. She won a grant last year from the Tidewater Environmental Health Association that will help more Stevensville Middle students collect and test rainwater for various pollutants. Debra works extensively with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, most recently collaborating on the "Chesapeake Choices and Challenges" curriculum, which serves as a model Service Learning project.

Debra has written lesson plans for and advised on Maryland Public Television's "Outdoor

Maryland Field Trip" program, and Scholastic Publications uses her "Rock and Roll Physics" teaching guide for educators nationwide. Obviously impressed with this initial contribution, Scholastic enlisted Debra to advise on its subsequent "Mine Elements" curriculum guide.

National exposure, however, hasn't hampered Debra's ability to focus on local issues and needs. She continues to write curriculum for Queen Anne's County and the state and, just last year, wrote the end-of-year science assessment for the school system's 6th graders.

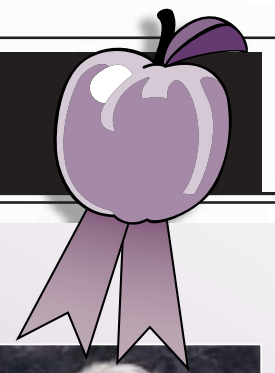
The pay-off for all this, Debra says, is that each of these experiences shapes her instruction. "I'm always eager to try something new in my classroom." 🌟

Vietnam War, and the war on poverty. "I grew up believing ... that every child is and can be somebody, regardless of color, economic or social standing, whether they've lived here since the landing of the Mayflower or just last week." Education, she says, is the only way to recognize the rights and access the privileges afforded us under the Constitution — the manuscript, really, for the American Dream. That certainly explains her teaching style. "I cajole,

repackage, nudge, prod, praise, and, yes, criticize and correct to make sure every child, every day, gains from the classroom experience," she says.

Students aren't the only ones benefitting from Patricia's enthusiasm. "Technically," says Gail Dorsey, Hyattsville Middle principal, "Ms. Bradford teaches language arts; in reality, she teaches all of us to be better than we ever knew we could be." 🌟

The Year, 2000-2001



without sacrificing the “heart and soul” of his program — to get kids to *love* and *do* physical activity.

But in helping students achieve this outcome, Chuck helps them achieve much more. “We ask our students to write every day,” says Chuck, “but most times students in schools like Carver don’t have many experiences to write about.” And so Chuck is moved when he finds that many students choose as their writing topics his own activities and special events. Chuck’s students set goals (unrealistic at first, but more manageable as the year wears on) that spill over into every aspect of their lives. Students who act out in Chuck’s class or others’ will likely find themselves one of his equipment helpers or kindergarten peer tutors — giving them something to focus on and to be proud of.

Chuck’s definition of an outstanding teacher is “one who puts the needs of his students before his own.” And Chuck fits that bill perfectly. He skips lunch to help students; spends nights and weekends printing out awards, making displays, hosting events, and evaluating his effectiveness; pays out-of-pocket every week for physical

education and computer equipment, trophies, plaques, and stationery. Instead of accepting a pay raise years ago from the owners of an exclusive summer camp at which he works, Chuck has given needy students more than \$42,000 in free tuition to attend the camp (and recruits other teachers to help get them there).

Chuck started Carver’s student council — the first elementary-level council in St. Mary’s County — 10 years ago and has since deposited \$43,000 into its coffers. Some of the activities he and his students plan are designed to improve achievement (like the Homework Sock Hop) and some are meant to help needy families in the community (like the Christmas-in-April program).

The remainder of his time, it seems, is spent helping colleagues. Chuck’s lesson plans are posted on the Web’s most respected physical education site, and his Jogging Hall of Fame is a Blue Ribbon program posted on MSDE’s Best Practices page. He regularly presents to colleagues statewide, and writes MSPAP tasks that integrate PE into all other subject areas. 🍏

Donna M. Midcap

**Grade 5
Chapel District
Elementary
Talbot County**

Donna Midcap’s success as a teacher is largely attributable to her willingness to try new things. In 1996, she piloted the Professional Growth Portfolio Program, an alternate evaluation system for outstanding teachers. Through the program, she has developed creative MSPAP tasks, looped with her students from 4th to 5th grade, created a differentiation program for 5th graders, and developed a K-5 enrichment model, which she’ll present at next year’s National Gifted and Talented Conference.

It is this last program that has most recently captured Donna’s imagination and focused her energy. After learning how to write a lesson plan according to Talbot County’s guidelines, Donna’s 5th graders signed teaching contracts and were each assigned a kindergartner. “My students use their multiple intelligences to create dynamic lessons,” she says.

This is the kind of innovation that has become Donna’s hallmark. A firm believer in differentiated instruction, Donna practices compacting, flexible grouping, and tiering. Once a week, students divide into small groups to take advantage of peer help or receive instruction in science, math, literature, performing a task, or technology.



“While every student benefits from this program, advanced learners flourish where they may not have had the chance in a traditional setting,” she says.

Fun, too, makes its way into every lesson — like the time Donna put her hair into a ponytail and introduced herself as “Muffy,” the aerobics instructor. She pointed out North, South, East, and West with her exercise moves. It left a lasting impression on one student, who breathlessly related the stunt to her parents. “When I hear about what she does in class ... it makes me want to be a teacher,” said the awe-struck girl’s mother. “I can only imagine how she must inspire her fellow professionals.” 🍏

Patricia B. Butler

**Math & Science, Grade 6
Carter G. Woodson
Middle
Somerset County**

In January 1996, Carter G. Woodson Middle School was placed on Maryland’s reconstitution-eligible list for recording MSPAP scores that lagged far behind the state composite. That was the year Patti Butler came to Woodson — the year she was asked to serve as the school’s MSPAP/Staff Development Specialist.

Last December, the State Board of Education validated Patti’s work in a way that, perhaps, no one else could. Reporting on schools’ and school systems’ 1999 MSPAP progress, State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick made the announcement Woodson had been waiting nearly four years to hear. The school — now posting a composite score exceeding the state’s — would be removed from reconstitution’s rolls. It was the first — and remains the only — school to improve enough to make it off the list.

Not surprisingly, Woodson’s former principal, Gretna Willis, attributes much of this triumph to Patti. Patti’s successes and those of her students,



she says, attest to how much can be achieved “by an individual who is committed, caring, and focused on the goal.” Patti’s students aren’t the only ones whose success is gained with her help. “I want to thank you for making me a more confident and focused teacher,” wrote one colleague who benefitted from Patti’s individualized staff development.

Patti, in turn, is comfortable with her role — one pivotal to Woodson’s continued improvement. “Through my ongoing support of teachers’ growth, my principal is able to establish the accountability measures needed for high-quality, daily instruction. It’s ... rewarding to know in my heart that I have a critical role in Woodson’s progress.” 🍏

Kristine McGee

**Grade 5
Boonsboro Elementary
Washington County**

Though she “adored” all of her elementary school teachers, it wasn’t until Mrs. Schlotterbeck walked into 8th-grade social studies that Kris McGee realized how much fun school could be. “I remember making raised relief maps out of salt dough, designing colonial dolls with shrunken apple heads, and creating Native American papier-mâché pots,” says Kris. “She taught me about learning styles before I ever knew there was such a thing.”

Richard Reynolds, Kris’ elementary school principal, taught her something else about being an educator. After tragically losing her brother, Kris decided to quit college, even though she had just her student teaching left to complete. Mr. Reynolds routinely kept up on the lives of his former students and was well aware of Kris’ situation. Over her protestations, Mr. Reynolds insisted that Kris serve as a long-term 4th-grade substitute at the elementary school. “It was difficult but I went

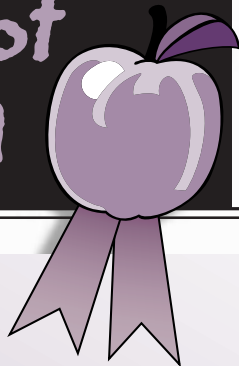


to school that first day,” she says. And that’s when it hit her. She realized immediately that “this was my purpose and place in life. I belonged in a classroom with children.”

Kris hasn’t forgotten the lessons learned from Mrs. Schlotterbeck or Mr. Reynolds or the many other teachers who have marked her life. Her primary contribution to teaching, she says, is giving to others as others have given to her. “If there is anything I can do to help a child or to assist a colleague, I am always willing to do it. Time is a ... valuable gift but, then again, so are our children.”

(continued on page 8)

Maryland's Teachers of the Year, 2000-2001



Time is also something Kris is usually short on. While teaching, Kris completed her Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and started writing MSPAP tasks. She stayed on as Washington County's head volleyball coach and began teaching graduate-level reading courses at Frostburg State University. (She's slated to teach a class in social studies curriculum this fall.) She has trained all new elementary teachers on behavior management and organizational strategies; met with all new 5th-grade teachers to discuss short- and long-term lesson planning, curriculum expectations, and assessment techniques; and taught county-wide new-teacher courses.

But no matter how busy Kris is, says Sharon Palm, a colleague at Boonsboro Elementary, Kris' focus on her 5th graders never wavers. Instead, she incorporates the strategies and skills she learns to enhance instruction in her own classroom and others all across Washington County.

Kris writes social studies curriculum that capitalizes on Boonsboro's proximity to Antietam Battlefield, involves her students in projects like reforestation in the West Woods, and chairs the "Juniors" Volunteer Volleyball program, which offers camps, clinics, and league play for children aged 8-13. And because every activity offers a life lesson opportunity, Kris and her volleyball volunteers (older girls on her Boonsboro High team) give the small amount of operational money generated by the program to a local suicide prevention hotline. 🍎

Teresa L. McCain

**English, Grade 7 / Gifted and Talented Education
Bennett Middle
Wicomico County**

“I am a teacher because of teachers,” says Teresa McCain. And because of their legacy, she is a teacher of teachers. Since 1990, Teresa has been a teacher consultant for the Maryland Writing Project. As such, she is frequently called upon to provide in-service training to teachers in Wicomico and surrounding counties.

These training sessions sometimes demand that Teresa tackle content or processes that she hadn't before, as was the case with “Reading in the Content Area of Science” presented at Salisbury Middle School last fall. Of course, the chal-



lenge to stretch — to value innovation over security — is a way of life to Teresa, who refuses to keep lesson plans from one year to the next. “Each set of students you receive in September is unique,” she says, “and I feel it's not best simply to repeat what you did the year before.”

While her students are unique, Teresa sees some common ground in their developmental experiences. To Teresa, middle-years education means “learning independence when you aren't quite independent, being mature when you aren't quite mature yet, and having self-control when you haven't quite mastered control.” So to capitalize on adolescent strengths, Teresa employs cooperative learning as often as possible. “Middle school children are extremely social and any opportunity that offers them the chance to talk in a constructive way is helpful in assuring a lesson goes well,” she says. “Sometimes students understand each other better than the teacher, so learning from each other can be very successful.” 🍎

Brenda M. Haren

**Mathematics, Grade 8
Stephen Decatur Middle
Worcester County**

In an impassioned plea for her teacher to represent all of Maryland's excellent teachers, Lakeisha Davis says, “If she can have a positive impact on me and the students at our schools, she should have the chance to make a positive impact on students across the state.”

That, apparently, has been the plan all along. When Brenda was 9 years old, she took upon herself the tutelage of a 3-year-old neighbor named Rebecca. But learning was anything but child's play to Brenda. Nearly every day for *three years*, Brenda set up school on her front porch. When Rebecca finally



entered “real” school, Brenda received a letter from Rebecca's teacher. The teacher praised Brenda for having had such a positive influence not only on Rebecca's learning, but on her self-esteem as well. From that day on, Brenda considered no occupation other than teaching.

And she applies all the drive and determination first found in a 9-year-old novice to that same occupation. Currently working on her Doctorate in Innovation and Leadership, Brenda hopes one day to write performance-based activities and assessments for Worcester County and for the state and to

help other teachers become more comfortable with this instructional format.

Brenda thinks a well-thought-out professional development plan should not only form the basis of teacher accountability, but serve as the primary vehicle for teacher success. “Without a plan to improve oneself,” says Brenda, “it's easy to settle into stagnant lesson planning.” She also believes that all teachers should create a portfolio of lessons, activities, and assessments that they intend to develop further.

The high expectations and ethic of continual improvement Brenda stringently applies to herself and her colleagues are not lost on her students. “It's common knowledge at Stephen Decatur Middle School that Ms. Haren is one of our ‘toughest’ math teachers,” says Jean Mahew, a special education support teacher who works with Brenda. “But students say with pride that she is *their teacher*, for they know that her commitment to education and their growth is genuine and sincere.” 🍎

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