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The



Advocate

ACEA Retirement Seminars

If you are considering retirement this year, in the near future, or in a few years, please feel free to attend one of our virtual informational sessions on **Thursday, April 21, at either 3:30 p.m. or 4:30 p.m.** If interested, please email Kim at ksloane@mseanea.org and she will register you and send the Zoom invite with referenced documents to you in advance of the seminar.



A SUMMER PD OPPORTUNITY is being planned for certificated members through MSEA's Center for Education Policy and Practice (CEPP). The course, known as CARES, is designed in three parts of 15 hours each, for a potential 3 MSDE CE credits. The course has been updated and submitted to MSDE for final review and approval. In the meantime, we have tentatively planned to offer this course in three parts on July 20 and 21, July 27 and 28, and August 3 and 4. The best part is that this would be at no cost to our members! If interested, save the dates and stay tuned for additional information.

Congratulations

...to each of the **2022 ACPS Teacher of the Year Finalists**, all of whom are also **awesome ACEA members!**

Karissa Brandenburg - Braddock,
Jeanette Milburn - John Humbird,
Angela Walbert - Flintstone,
and

Amy Rice - Cash Valley- pictured at the right, who was selected as the ...



2022 ACPS Teacher of the Year!

By its very nature, spring provides a setting for optimism. Seeing blossoms on trees, flowering bulbs, moderating temperatures, and increasing sunshine gives hope that we are finally coming out of a darker season. Perhaps this year, after the last two, spring will indeed be better.

There are other indications of this as well. With a state general budget surplus realized at \$7.5 billion - yes BILLION - over FY22 and F23, legislators are proposing to designate another \$1.5 million towards funding the out-years of The Blueprint, which is a significant step in helping to ensure that students and schools continue to benefit from the expanded programs and staffing levels promised by the Blueprint. Additionally, [HB1349/SB831](#) which would give support staff \$500 bonuses in both FY23 and FY24, as well as create a workgroup on improving the wages of our ESPs, is still progressing. Other pieces of key legislation have also made the March 21 crossover deadline including [House Bill 850](#), [Senate Bill 410/House Bill 743](#), and [House Bill 172](#). I hope this encouraging news puts a "spring" in your step too!

Kim

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MSEA BOOK DONATIONS

Throughout the *Read Across America* month of March, MSEA celebrated and encouraged a lifelong love of reading by donating new books to all 300 community schools in Maryland. The four designated community schools in Allegany County are: Georges Creek Elementary, John Humbird Elementary, South Penn Elementary and Westernport Elementary.

Each community school received a copy of *Piecing Me Together* by Renee Watson, which has won the Newbery Honor and Coretta Scott King Author Honor and is a New York Times bestseller. In addition, each received *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick Barnes, which is also highly acclaimed, and which received the Newbery Honor, Caldecott Honor, Coretta Scott King Author Honor, Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor, and the 2018 Kirkus Prize for Young Readers.



Melissa Kealy (center), an ACEA Executive Director and Building Representative at Westernport Elementary, presented the two books donated by MSEA to Principal Derek Horne (right), and Media Specialist Deb Hendrickson (left).

Q&A: What is FMLA?

FMLA is the acronym for the *Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993*. The Act is intended to promote the stability and economic security of families as well as the nation's interest in preserving the integrity of families.

FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take job-protected, unpaid leave for specified family and medical reasons. While it applies to only certain sectors of private employers, it applies to all public agencies and local education agencies.

To be eligible for FMLA leave, an individual must meet the following criteria:

- Have worked at least 12 months (which do not have to be consecutive) for the employers; and
- Have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12 months immediately before the FMLA leave is to begin.

Eligible employees are entitled to:

*Twelve (12) workweeks of leave in any 12-month period for:

- Birth and care of the employee's child, within one year of birth
- Placement with the employee of child for adoption or foster care, within one year of the placement
- Care of an immediate family member (spouse, child, parent) who has a serious health condition
- For the employee's own serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job
- Any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is on active duty or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty in the U.S. National Guard of Reserves in support of a contingency operation

*Twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the servicemember (Military Caregiver Leave)

If an employee was receiving group health benefits when leave began, an employer must maintain them at the same level and in the same manner during periods of FMLA leave as if the employee had continued to work. However, the employee must pay for their normal share of these premiums, even when they are not receiving a paycheck. To offset this as long as possible, an employee may elect (or the employer may require) the substitution of any accrued paid leave (vacation, sick, personal, etc.) for periods of unpaid FMLA leave. Substitution means the accrued paid leave runs concurrently with the FMLA leave period.

Employees may take FMLA leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule (that is, in blocks of time less than the full amount of the entitlement) when medically necessary or when the leave is due to a qualifying exigency.

For additional information or assistance with a potential FMLA request, please contact ACEA.

