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FINALISTS NAMED FOR THE 2011-2012 MARYLAND TEACHER OF THE YEAR

STATEWIDE WINNER TO BE ANNOUNCED IN OCTOBER

BALTIMORE (August 25, 2011) – Interim State Superintendent of Schools Dr. Bernard Sadusky today announced the names of seven finalists for 2011-2012 Maryland Teacher of the Year.

“This year’s gifted finalists exhibit steadfast commitment to classroom excellence, and are helping to ensure that Maryland public schools continue to prepare world-class students,” said Dr. Sadusky. “These outstanding teachers are ambassadors for our field. They deserve recognition and appreciation for the work they do for our children and our communities.”

The finalists are: Laura Groo, *Anne Arundel County*; Joshua Parker, *Baltimore County*; Aaron Geiman, *Carroll County*; Rhonda Parsons, *Cecil County*; Christian Slattery, *Harford County*; Brian Freiss, *Montgomery County*; and Chad Pavlekovich, *Wicomico County*.

The finalists were selected by a panel of judges from key Maryland education organizations representing principals, teachers, school boards, teacher unions, parents and higher education. Finalists were measured against a rigorous set of national criteria that include teaching philosophy, community involvement, knowledge of general education issues, and suggestions for professional and instructional improvement. Oral interviews with the seven finalists will be conducted on Saturday, September 24th.

The *2011-2012 Maryland Teacher of the Year* will be announced during a gala reception and dinner at Martin’s West in Baltimore on October 14. The winner will receive cash awards, technology equipment, national travel opportunities, and a new car valued at more than \$25,000, donated by the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association.

Presenting sponsors of the Maryland Teacher of the Year Program are Comcast, the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association, McDonald’s Family of Greater Baltimore, and Northrop Grumman Electronic Systems. Platinum sponsors are Bank of America, Lockheed Martin, Verizon-Maryland, and Whiting-Turner Contracting Company.

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The Maryland Teacher of the Year will go on to compete for the esteemed National Teacher of the Year Award, to be announced next April. The winner will also spend the coming year as a speaker and advisor in Maryland. The Maryland Teacher of the Year will be honored by the President at the White House next spring, participate in several national meetings and conferences, as well as in National Space Camp with fellow State Teachers of the Year. Michelle Shearer, the 2010-11 Maryland Teacher of the Year, was selected as the National Teacher of the Year.

Additional information on the seven finalists follows.

Anne Arundel County – Southern Middle School

Laura Groo, Language Arts, Grade 6

With a B.A. degree from University of California, Santa Cruz and an M.A. degree from Northern Arizona University, Laura is a local, state, and international education leader. At Southern Middle School, she is the Cultural Arts Coordinator, a Language Arts Advisory teacher, the 6th grade Service Learning Coordinator, and an Interdisciplinary Team Leader. In the community, she serves in PTA leadership roles, leads a youth drama ministry at a local church, and organizes groups to care for the seriously ill. Her students have raised nearly \$8,000 to support their partnership school in Kenya where Mrs. Groo travels at her own expense to provide materials and professional development.

Baltimore County – Windsor Mills Middle School

Joshua Parker, English/Language Arts, Grades 7-8

Joshua received his Bachelor's degree in Science in Sports Communication from Towson University and Master's of Leadership in Teaching from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland. He has organized a middle-school all-male reading club, directed a top-ten finishing Black Saga team, coached a boys' junior varsity basketball team, implemented a comprehensive after-school program at two middle schools, coordinated a summer program directed at engaging local youth, and served as a panelist and presenter on the issue of Minority Achievement at the local and state levels. He has instructed students to mastery on the MSA and the HSA, with a high pass rate on both exams.

Carroll County – North Carroll High School

Aaron Geiman, Agriscience, Grades 9-12

Aaron Geiman, an Agriscience teacher at North Carroll High School, earned a Bachelor of Science from Oklahoma State University in 1997, and a Master of Education from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in 2009. He is a member of the National Association of Agricultural Educators, where he is a National Committee Chair, and the Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association, where he is a seven-year Executive Board member. Geiman has received numerous awards from organizations, including the National Association of Agricultural Educators and the Maryland FFA Association. He is the nation's *first* Master Teacher for the Curriculum of Agricultural Science Education.



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Cecil County – Elkton Middle School

Rhonda Parsons, Grades 6-8

Elkton Middle School media specialist, Rhonda Parsons, is a U.S. Air Force veteran, National Board candidate, information specialist, and program administrator who teaches inquiry skills to students in grades six through eight, across all content areas. She created her school's first film class and serves on the public library's Film Festival committee. She creates county curriculum, provides school and county professional development, reviews books, and mentors college students. She earned Bachelor of Science degrees in Management/Human Resources from Park College and in Education from Austin Peay University, and a Master of Science degree in Instructional Technology from Towson University.

Harford County – Halls Cross Roads Elementary School

Christian Slattery Sr., Vocal Music, Grades K-5

Christian S. Slattery, Sr. was named a recipient of the 2008 National Milken Educator Award. That same year, he achieved National Board Certification in Early to Middle Childhood Music leading him to mentor Harford County teachers completing the process. He serves on several school-based and school system committees and mentors first-year music teachers. He also conducts programs on motivating teacher and support staff at the local and state levels. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from West Chester University with a Bachelor of Science in Music Education. He is completing a Master's in Leadership in Teaching from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland.

Montgomery County – Highland Elementary School

Brian David Freiss, Mathematics, Grades 2-5

In 2000, Brian earned a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences degree from the University of Pittsburgh. He achieved National Board Certification in 2007. His service includes grade 5 instructional team leader, Elected Faculty Representative, Core Leadership team member, and Baldrige School Improvement team member. He spearheaded the parent outreach event, Dinner for Dads, and created parent math classes, increased attendance at Back-to-School night, and initiated a boys' after-school sports program. He played an essential role in the turnaround of Highland Elementary from a school in Corrective Action to a National Blue Ribbon school. In 2011, Brian was awarded the "Marian Greenblatt Award."

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Wicomico County – Salisbury Middle School
Chad Pavlekovich, STEM/Science, Grades 7-8

Chad received his Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees from Salisbury University. His dedication to helping all students develop a greater understanding of science extends beyond the classroom to founding and facilitating such programs as Salisbury Middle’s, nationally recognized, Science Nights, the SMS Stem Academy, “Blast-Off!” a Summer Scholars program, and “From Stars to Stegosaurus,” a summer enrichment program for elementary students. Chad is a school leader, acting as ILT co-Chair, team leader, and mentor. Past recognition includes: M.A.S.T. Excellence in Science Teaching, Salisbury University Outstanding Mentor Teacher, and Wicomico County Environmental Teacher of the Year.



Maryland Teacher of the Year is a program of the Maryland State Department of Education with major underwriting provided by corporations and other organizations. The program is an affiliate of the National Teacher of the Year Program. All local Maryland local school systems participate and all 24 semi-finalists are engaged throughout their selection year, in learning and recognition programs and also as Advisors to the State Superintendent. Selection of the Maryland Teacher of the Year is made by a Blue Ribbon Panel of Judges that represent teachers, administrators, parents, and higher education. The Maryland Teacher of the Year goes on to represent teachers throughout Maryland and also competes for the title of National Teacher of the Year. Each year, the Maryland Teacher of the Year is named at a Teacher of the Year Gala. The year 2010 marks the 20th anniversary of Maryland’s Teacher of the Year Gala.

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