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## PGCPS Express: #ThankAPrincipal, New Grading Tool, Virtual Hall of Fame Gala

Prince George's County Public Schools sent this bulletin at 10/09/2020 05:22 PM EDT - Escuelas Públicas del Condado de Prince George envió este boletín/anuncio a 10/09/2020 05:22 PM EDT

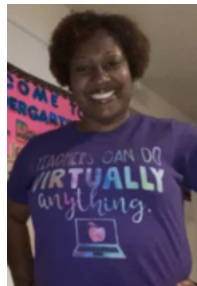
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October 9, 2020

### Get the Scoop

#### In the News: Barack Obama Teacher Shares Insight on Virtual Learning Challenges



**Barack Obama Elementary School kindergarten teacher Vatesha Boulter** recently shared with [Time Magazine](#) the impact of virtual learning:

"It takes a lot more work, a lot more patience, a lot more planning to teach not only kindergarten, but in my opinion, any grade level with distance learning versus being in the classroom," she says. "I tell parents this is a learning experience for all of us. We are all holding each other's hand during this."

#### #ThankAPrincipal for National Principals Month!

Many thanks to all principals for their leadership and hard work to support students, staff and schools all year long! You are appreciated!



#### New Grading Tool for Teachers

The new GradeMAX tool provides teachers with a spreadsheet like view of students and assignments on one page. Teachers will be able to create an assignment, score an assignment, and use other features to manage assignment data. [Learn more about GradeMAX](#). Please note that the GradeMAX section starts on slide 24.

#### New Zoom Features for Secure and Easier Access

As we continue to navigate through distance learning, here are two new features to Zoom.



### New Authentication

Zoom recently released a new option for authenticating users. This will make it much easier for participants to access and sign into meetings. As a reminder, all meetings with students must have authentication enabled. Please note that all scheduled meetings must be updated by Sunday,

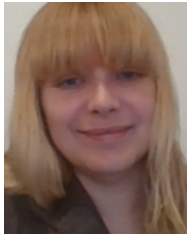
Oct. 18.

### Dropped Hosts - Waiting Room

When a host unexpectedly drops from a meeting, students will no longer be designated as hosts. Instead, after a brief delay, they will be moved to the waiting room until the host returns. This feature is automatically on for everyone.

## In the Spotlight

### PGCPS Pride



**Giuseppina Spillane, Individualized Education Program Chair at Surrattville High School**, goes above and beyond for her students.

Parent Marian Williams applauds Spillane for working tirelessly to instruct and support students. "She would work several hours after the official end of the school day. She made herself available by Google Voice for quick messaging and emotional support for my daughter. She has made herself available to us during the summer and continues to do so. I am very grateful to her."

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## Looking for Distance Learning Pros!

Do you have advice on making the most of the distance learning experience with students? Starting next week, we will highlight **distance learning stars** discussing or demonstrating your best practices for teachers and/or families on PGCPS social media for #TeacherTuesday. Videos should be no longer than one minute. Send submissions to [communications@pgcps.org](mailto:communications@pgcps.org).

**Nominate a colleague** who makes you #PGCPS Proud by sending their name, office/school, photo and a brief description (100 words or less) to [communications@pgcps.org](mailto:communications@pgcps.org). Submissions may be edited for length, clarity or grammar.

## Benefits Services: Our Focus Is You

### #HealthyPGCPS: October Activities

**Fall into good health!** Take advantage of a wellness webinar, an online weight loss challenge, or join the "[Walkober](#)" [social media challenge](#). All activities are available through the Benefits Office and hosted virtually. Classes are open to all employees.

Details are available on the [Employee Wellness Program](#) webpage. For more information, please contact [wellness.benefits@pgcps.org](mailto:wellness.benefits@pgcps.org).

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## Tax Sheltered Annuity (TSA) Program

PGCPS employees have the opportunity to save for retirement by participating in both a 403(b) and or 457(b) plan.

### Benefits of Saving:

- You do not have to pay income tax on the allowable contributions until you begin making withdrawals from the plan (usually after your retirement).
- Investment gains in the plan are not taxed until distributed.
- Retirement assets can be carried from one employer to another in most states.

### How can I participate?

Prior to contribution, you must open an account with a [participating investment provider](#). Then, complete a [salary reduction agreement form](#).

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## Open Enrollment 2021 is Happening Now!

**Open enrollment for benefits** is open now through Thursday, October 22. This is your opportunity to review options and select the benefits that work best for you and your family.

Visit [www.pgcps.org/open](http://www.pgcps.org/open) for the latest information.

## Announcements

## Virtual PGCPS Hall of Fame Gala



The Excellence in Education Foundation will host a virtual [Prince George's County Public Schools Hall of Fame Gala](#) on Friday, Nov. 6 on WJLA 24 Hour News at 7 p.m. The event will re-air on Sunday, Nov. 8 on ABC7 at noon.

The virtual gala will feature PGCPS alum, on-air personality and author Cayman Kelly. Inductees include Congressman Steny Hoyer and actor-comedian Martin Lawrence.



## Mini-Grants Available for Schools

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association, through its MRSPA Fund, is offering six Mini-Grants to classroom teachers across Maryland. The grants may be used on special projects or activities that are not funded through the school system or Parent Teacher Organization. The deadline to apply is Sunday, Nov. 1. Winners will be notified by January. [Apply now!](#)

## October Commemorations



PGCPS will celebrate the following commemorations in October:

**Bullying Prevention Awareness Month** – Wear orange (Oct. 21)

**Domestic Violence Awareness Month** – Wear purple (Oct. 22)

**Breast Cancer Awareness Month** – Wear pink (Oct. 23)

Share how your school or office marked these special occasions by sending photos to [communications@pgcps.org](mailto:communications@pgcps.org).

## Professional Development: Oct. 16

Schools will be closed for students on Friday, Oct. 16 for Professional Development.

## ICYMI: In Case You Missed It

### Language Access & Parent-Teacher Conferences

With parent-teacher conferences approaching, please make note of language access resources to support communication with parents who are not native speakers of English.

#### **PGCPS Interpreter Bank: Video language support on virtual platforms**

Professional interpreters are available [by request from schools](#) to support language access on virtual platforms on Parent-Teacher Conference Day (Monday, Oct. 12). Interpreters will be assigned to schools based on availability for a variety of conference structures, including grade-level teams, teacher clusters and designated language-specific Zoom rooms.

Please note that students, family members and other staff are not permitted to interpret for parent meetings, consistent with federal language access regulations.

#### **Language Link: Third-party phone calls or audio bridge on virtual platforms**

Staff may also connect with a Language Link interpreter by phone for parent teacher conferences. Follow these [instructions for third-party phone calls](#) to be connected with an interpreter.

Language Link interpreting services can also be bridged to support language access via audio on virtual platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, and WebEx for parent teacher conferences. Follow these [instructions to connect audio interpreting services to a virtual platform via conference bridge](#).

**For more information, please contact the Office of Interpreting and Translation at [interpreter@pgcps.org](mailto:interpreter@pgcps.org).**

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## PGCPS Professional Library is Open



The Professional Library is open on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Bonnie F. Johns Media Center.

Employees can explore the [online library](#) and contact [cathe.francoeur@pgcps.org](mailto:cathe.francoeur@pgcps.org) for pick-up or have items mailed to your school. There are also professional eBooks available in [Sora](#) (use county username and password to login).

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## Nominations Open for LifeChanger of the Year Award

LifeChanger of the Year is an annual program recognizing K-12 educators and school employees across the country. The program celebrates those who are making a significant difference in the lives of students by exemplifying excellence, positive influence and leadership. [Nominations are now being accepted for the 2020-2021 Program.](#)

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