



**Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.**  
State Superintendent of Schools

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT:**  
Robyne McCullough  
[Robyne.McCullough@maryland.gov](mailto:Robyne.McCullough@maryland.gov)

## **Finalists Named for 2020 – 2021 Maryland Teacher of the Year**

*Overall Statewide Winner to be Announced in October*

**BALTIMORE** – (September 9, 2020) – Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D. today announced the seven finalists for 2020-2021 Maryland Teacher of the Year. They are:

- Wyatt Oroke, Baltimore City
- Caitlin Fregelette, Calvert County;
- Jena Ehmann, Carroll County;
- Chelsea Jones, Cecil County;
- James E. Ball, Charles County;
- Christine Hurley, Washington County;
- Hemalatha Bhaskaran, Wicomico County.

A panel of judges from key educational organizations that represent principals, teachers, school boards, parents, and institutions of higher education selected from teachers representing each of Maryland's 24 local school systems. The seven finalists were chosen based on a rigorous set of state and national criteria including: teaching philosophy and results, community involvement, knowledge of general education issues, and desire for professional and instructional improvement.

"Maryland's teachers show unwavering dedication in their work to educate, encourage, and inspire our young people," said Governor Larry Hogan. "I congratulate these seven educators on their nominations and thank them for their extraordinary work in the classroom and in our communities."

"These outstanding educators are a true inspiration to their colleagues and students," said Dr. Salmon. "Our seven finalists exemplify excellence in education here in Maryland and have made a true impact in the support they provide to our communities in and out of the classroom."

The 2020-2021 Maryland Teacher of the Year will be announced on Maryland Public Television on October 8, 2020 in a 30-minute special program airing at 8 p.m. on MPT2 and in a livestream on MPT's YouTube.com channel MarylandPublicTV. 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.

The selected Maryland Teacher of the Year will go on to compete for the esteemed National Teacher of the Year Award and spend the coming year as an educational speaker and advisor.

The current Maryland Teacher of the Year is Teresa Beilstein, a third-grade teacher at Anne Arundel County South Shore Elementary School. Maryland has honored its Teacher of the Year and participated in the National Teacher of the Year program for 30 years. Since 2010, Maryland has had five national finalists, with three named National Teacher of the Year.

Presenting sponsors of the Maryland Teacher of the Year Program are Comcast, the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association, McDonald's Family of Maryland, SMART Technologies, and Northrop Grumman Electronic Systems. Platinum sponsors include Maryland Public Television, NTA Life, and Whiting-Turner Contracting Company.

Profiles of the 2020 -2021 [Maryland Teacher of the Year](#) finalists:

**Wyatt Oroke, Baltimore City - City Springs Elementary School, English Language Arts, Grades 7 & 8**

Wyatt Oroke has been nationally recognized for his work in social justice and literacy. He graduated from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (2013) and Johns Hopkins University (JHU) School of Education (2015) and teaches 7th and 8th grade English at City Springs Elementary/Middle School in Baltimore City. "Mr. O" serves as a team leader, girls' volleyball and boys' basketball coach, and has many other school, community, and district roles. He received recognition for his teaching including awards from JHU, the Maryland State Senate, the Orioles, and was awarded the "Superhero Award" by Ellen DeGeneres.

**Caitlin Fregelette, Calvert County – Calvert High School, Physical Education & Health, Grades 9 - 12**

A strong advocate for student wellbeing, Caitlin Fregelette is a SUNY Cortland graduate with a BS in Physical Education and MS in Health. She is an executive board member for SHAPE Maryland and works on MSDE committees designing curriculum and professional development opportunities. As a School Health Council member, system wellness coordinator, and Opioid Addiction Prevention Grant coordinator, Caitlin sponsors several Calvert High clubs focusing on mental health, stress, and trauma. She also teaches community fitness classes and has received numerous community agency awards for enhancing community health.

**Jena Ehmann, Carroll County – Winfield Elementary School, Reading Specialist, Pre K - Grade 5**

Jena Ehmann is the Reading Specialist at Winfield Elementary School. She attended McDaniel College and received a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literacy Acquisition, and a Master of Science in Literacy Leadership. Jena organizes "Winfield Reads," an annual reading initiative supported by community members and attended by hundreds of students and staff. Jena is a team leader and School Improvement Team co-chair. Her professional contributions include work as a county curriculum writer. Jena is Vice President of the Carroll County Literacy Chapter, and is involved in several educational organizations including the State of Maryland Literacy Association.

**Chelsea Jones, Cecil County – Elkton Middle School, Science, Grade 7**

Chelsea Jones is devoted to educating and empowering students from diverse backgrounds. She earned her Bachelor's Degree from West Chester University (2011) and is pursuing her Master's Degree through Wilmington University. A nationally selected Northrop Grumman Teaching Fellow, she teaches life science

and inspires more female students to enter STEM careers by supporting local STEM programs. Chelsea founded a cheerleading program that earned her the “Going the Extra Mile” Award. Chelsea serves as a curriculum writer, lead science teacher, School Improvement Team member, new teacher mentor, and facilitates professional development on Next Generation Science Standards alignment, cultural proficiency, and literacy strategies.

**James E. Ball, Charles County – North Point High School, Art, Grades 9 - 12**

James E. Ball supports students’ health and learning through art exploration, education, and experimentation. He earned both a Master’s Degree in Education and a Bachelor’s Degree in Studio Art from West Virginia Wesleyan College. The cornerstone of Mr. Ball’s art pedagogy is digital journaling which he shares with his students. Mr. Ball also coaches cross-country, basketball, and girls’ lacrosse. Each summer, he runs basketball clinics for students with special needs and teaches art appreciation through the Charles County Sheriff’s Youth Achievement Camp. James also leads a variety of basketball skill-enhancement sessions.

**Christine Hurley, Washington County – Boonsboro Middle School, Library Media, Grades 6 – 8**

Christine Hurley is dedicated to ensuring all students can see themselves in the books they read. She holds School Librarian and Information Technology certification from Mansfield University of Pennsylvania (2010) and Master’s (2004) and Bachelor’s (2002) degrees from Frostburg State University. As a middle school media specialist and member of the instructional team, she facilitates Girls Who Code, empowering female future programmers. Christine is the Lead Secondary Librarian for Washington County Public Schools. She has been honored as a Maryland Society for Educational Technology Outstanding Educator Using Technology and was nominated for the first-ever Maryland School Librarian of the Year Award.

**Hemalatha Bhaskaran, Wicomico County – James M. Bennett High School, Science, Grades 9-12**

Hemalatha Bhaskaran has been teaching since 2004. She holds master's degrees in Environmental Science and Teaching. “Hema” promotes diversity and equity both inside and outside the classroom through her leadership of the Solutions for Multicultural Achievement and Recognition Team. She engages in collaborative leadership by serving as co-chair of her school's Instructional Leadership Team, and a member of the Youth Environmental Action Summit's steering committee and the statewide Teacher Environmental Literacy Leadership. Hema was the 2014 Maryland's Environmental Science Educator of the Year and is currently the state finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

###