




Nancy S. Grasmick  
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

**TO:** Members of the Maryland State Board of Education

**FROM:** Nancy S. Grasmick 

**DATE:** March 22, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Maryland Teacher of the Year Selected as a National Finalist

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**PURPOSE:**

The State Board will commend Michelle Shearer, our 2011 Maryland Teacher of the Year, who was recently selected as one of only four finalists for the title of National Teacher of the Year. Michelle is an AP Chemistry Teacher at Urbana High School in Frederick County. Ms. Shearer will comment on the importance of this honor in showcasing excellence in teaching and learning.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Maryland is honored once again to be in the national Teacher of the Year spotlight with our 2011 Maryland Teacher of the Year who was selected as one of four finalists for National Teacher of the Year. In 2006, Kimberly Oliver Burnim, a kindergarten teacher from Montgomery County, achieved celebrity status when she was selected as the National Teacher. Michelle Shearer, an AP Chemistry teacher at Urbana High School in Frederick County, is a Princeton University graduate with degrees in chemistry and special education. She taught previously at the Maryland School for the Deaf. Michelle's national quote includes the following: *"All who call school our second home know that teaching is inspiring and frustrating, rewarding and challenging. We always work hard, we sometimes work magic, but rarely can we work miracles, so we need support - particularly from key stakeholders in the educational process."* (Please see her biography which is attached.)

Michelle joined the other finalists in Washington DC March 6-9, 2011 for an intensive set of interviews and presentations used to determine who will be selected as the next National Teacher of the Year. The other finalists are from Florida, Illinois, and Montana. The national announcement will be made by President Obama and the First Lady at the White House in early May. If selected as America's national teacher spokesperson, Ms. Shearer would spend this coming year presenting an education message to hundreds of organizations across America and the world. She would be visiting an average of 3 US cities per week plus several weeks touring China. Michelle's message would relate to the importance of STEM education and its relevance for ALL students.

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The National Teacher of the Year Program is sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with ING and Target. The Maryland program is sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education with its presenting partners: Comcast, The Maryland Automobile Dealers Association, McDonalds Family of Greater Baltimore, and Northrop Grumman. Platinum sponsors include: with additional funding Bank of America, Lockheed Martin, Verizon, and Whiting-Turning Contracting.

**ACTION:**

Ms. Shearer will be presented with “good luck” gift.

## MICHELLE MEREDITH SHEARER



Michelle Shearer earned her bachelor's degree in chemistry from Princeton University and a master's degree in deaf education from McDaniel College. Shearer was inspired to teach by her volunteer experience with deaf and hard-of-hearing students at the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf in Trenton, New Jersey during her college years. At Princeton, Shearer was one of 30 students in her graduating class of 1,070 to earn teaching certification through the Teacher Preparation Program. She graduated *magna cum laude* in chemistry and was awarded the Malcolm H. Chisholm Thesis Award in inorganic chemistry as well as the New Jersey Commissioner's Distinguished Teacher Candidate Award in 1995. Shearer then studied American Sign Language at Gallaudet University and completed her master's degree in deaf education in 1996. She holds dual certification in chemistry and special education, with an emphasis on teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Mrs. Shearer has taught in Maryland's public schools since she began her career in education fourteen years ago. From 1997-2002, she taught all levels of chemistry and started the Advanced Placement Chemistry and American Sign Language programs at Urbana High School in Frederick County. She coached varsity swimming and lacrosse and also served on the School Improvement Team and National Honor Society committee. Shearer was nominated for the Sallie Mae New Teacher Award in 1997 and the Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher Award in 2002.

Mrs. Shearer is fluent in American Sign Language and taught all levels of chemistry and mathematics at the Maryland School for the Deaf (MSD) in Frederick from 2002-2006. At MSD, Shearer served as Content Area Leader and coach of the 2005 National Champion Academic Bowl team. She also served as an interpreter for MSD students attending Space Camp. Since her return to Urbana High School in 2006, enrollment in AP chemistry has increased eight-fold, and this semester Mrs. Shearer currently teaches 92 students AP chemistry. Shearer is also a dedicated mentor for new teachers and serves on the Superintendent's Task Force for Career and College Readiness.

Mrs. Shearer is the 2009 Maryland recipient of the Siemens Award for AP Teaching, the 2010 Frederick County Teacher of the Year, the 2011 Maryland Teacher of the Year, and a finalist for the 2011 National Teacher of the Year. She believes that "chemistry is everywhere, and thus chemistry is for everyone." It has always been her professional mission to create a high-energy classroom environment in which students of all abilities, including those with special needs, can succeed in learning advanced science and mathematics. Shearer is passionate about promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education for all K-12 students and effectively includes those who have traditionally been under-represented in scientific fields.

Mrs. Shearer grew up in Wilmington, Delaware and is the daughter of retired chemist Dr. Philip Meredith and retired elementary school music teacher Beverly Meredith. She lives with her husband George, AP physics teacher at Urbana High School, and daughter, Carly, in Wolfsville, Maryland.

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The Maryland Teacher of the Year Program is administered by the Maryland State Department of Education. For more information, go to [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org), or contact Dr. Darla Strouse, at 410-767-0370.