

Superintendent makes formal announcement of national arts honor

Carver and Patapsco two of five schools honored nationally by The Kennedy Center

TOWSON, MD. – At a celebration this morning of arts education in Baltimore County Public Schools, Superintendent Dr. Joe A. Hairston announced that George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology and Patapsco High School and Center for the Arts were two of only five schools nationally designated as The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts National Schools of Distinction in Arts Education for 2009.

This is the first time ever that two schools from one school district have been honored with The Kennedy Center award in the same year.

Special guests at the event, which was held on the school system's Greenwood administrative campus, included: Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools; James T. Smith, Jr., Baltimore County Executive; Darrell M. Ayers, Vice President for Education, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; and Janice Webber, Program Director, Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance. Governor Martin O'Malley was unable to attend and sent formal greetings and congratulations.

In his remarks, Dr. Hairston noted that "excellence in the arts for Baltimore County Public Schools is a much larger story than just Patapsco and Carver." He described the school system's approach to arts education as "comprehensive, sequential, and integrated."

"The arts are an integral part of our instructional program," Dr. Hairston said, "because we understand that students need to do more than read and write. They need to have ideas about which they can read and write. They need to know how to tap into their creativity. We aren't just trying to educate the next generation of workers. In Baltimore County, we want to educate the next generation of innovators and creative leaders, and this requires the kind of higher level thinking that the arts nurture."

To be nominated for The Kennedy Center national awards, schools have to first win at the state level. In Maryland, the process is coordinated by Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance. For 2009, three of the five Maryland School of Excellence Award winners were Baltimore County Public Schools – Carver and Patapsco, as well as Sandy Plains Elementary School.

Among the school system's other recent arts-related honors:

- Being named by the NAMM Foundation as one of 100 best communities for music education in 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009

- Excelling in the 2009 youngARTS program, with 7 of 140 national honorees representing Baltimore County Public Schools
- Capturing three national awards last year from the National Arts Education Association, including one for Visual Arts Coordinator Linda Popp

Today's arts education celebration featured performances, art demonstrations, an art exhibition, and catering by students from Carver and Patapsco.

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Under the leadership of Superintendent Joe A. Hairston, Ed.D., Baltimore County Public Schools, the nation's 26th largest school district, educates 104,000 students each year. Following its *Blueprint for Progress*, BCPS increases academic rigor and student achievement for all. BCPS attracts recognition for its emphasis on college-readiness, use of innovative technology, and the excellence of its high schools and fine arts instruction.