



## Harford County Public Schools

102 S. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, Maryland 21014 ● Teri D. Kranefeld ● Manager of Communications  
office: 410-588-5203 ● cell: 443-752-2062 ● [teri.kranefeld@hcps.org](mailto:teri.kranefeld@hcps.org) ● [www.hcps.org](http://www.hcps.org) ● fax: 410-893-2478

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### **Harford Schools awarded District of Excellence Distinction by School Nutrition Association**

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) was awarded the *District of Excellence in School Nutrition* distinction by the School Nutrition Association for exceeding national best practice standards for school nutrition programs. Currently, there are only 29 Districts of Excellence in the country. Harford County marks the 30th district – and the only district in Maryland this year – to make the distinguished list.

“We are extremely proud of this achievement,” said Superintendent Robert M. Tomback. “This honor highlights the quality of the food services and nutrition management at HCPS, and we will continue to strive to serve healthy, affordable meals to our students.”

The *District of Excellence* distinction recognizes school districts that complete a thorough self-assessment in four key areas: administration, communications and marketing, nutrition and nutritional education, and operations. These areas make up the “Keys to Excellence” program. Keys to Excellence is a national best practice standards program that is the core of the School Nutrition Association’s professional development and training programs. It allows for school districts to compare their food services program to the industry’s gold standard and to meet their goals to serve nutritious, tasty food in a cost-effective way. After completing the Keys to Excellence, the district must submit an application that details its operations.

HCPS Supervisor of Food and Nutrition Gary Childress, HCPS Food and Nutrition Dietitian Karen Olsen and central staff in that department were responsible for assembling and submitting the material needed to apply for the award; however, all of the dedicated employees in the Food and Nutrition department contributed to earning the award.

“We are very proud of our staff and the dedication they provide every day to serve the students in the school system,” said Gary Childress. “This national recognition was the result of a team effort to meet the needs of our customers, the students and staff of HCPS.”

Nearly five million healthy meals are served during the school year at HCPS, and more than half a million dollars is allocated to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. In addition, HCPS participates in the Farm to School program, which provides students with food selections that include locally grown agricultural products.

For more information on the District of Excellence program, visit [www.schoolnutrition.org](http://www.schoolnutrition.org).

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