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HCPS 2026 Teacher of the Year Named State Finalist

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) is proud to announce that Michael James, the HCPS 2026 Teacher of the Year, has been selected as one of seven finalists for the 2026-2027 Maryland Teacher of the Year!

James was selected from among 24 school system Teachers of the Year from across Maryland. The selection panel included leaders from key Maryland educational organizations representing principals, teachers, school boards, labor partners, and families. Finalists were evaluated using rigorous criteria that included student achievement, teaching philosophy, academic results, community involvement, and knowledge of current educational issues.

Jams has dedicated more than 30 years to education and is currently the English Department Chair at North Harford High School. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from Washington and Jefferson College in 1993 and a Master of Arts in Reading from Towson University in 2004. He is a National Board-Certified Teacher.

Throughout his time with HCPS, James has served as a teacher, coach, curriculum writer, and professional development leader. He contributes to district work groups focused on grading, reading, and technology. He is a strong advocate for student voice. In his role as the Voices of Equity advisor and editor of *Misentity* magazine, he creates opportunities for students to share their perspectives and experiences.

"Mr. James is an example of instructional excellence and why relationships are so important in the classroom," said Superintendent of Schools Dyann R. Mack. "His dedication to ensuring students are engaged and encouraged is why students leave high school prepared and ready for their next steps!"

The Maryland Teacher of the Year will be announced during the 36th Annual Teacher of the Year Awards Gala on Friday, October 9, 2026, at Martin's Valley Mansion in Cockeysville. The Maryland Teacher of the Year will go on to compete for the National Teacher of the Year Award, which will be announced in April, and will serve as a speaker and advisor on statewide education issues.

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