QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Where Our Future Begins

*****NEWS RELEASE*****

May 20, 2025

QACPS Charts New Path for Arts Education with ArtScene and Maryland's First Fine Arts Signing Days

CENTREVILLE, MD - In a historic celebration of student creativity and achievement, Queen Anne's County Public Schools (QACPS) has emerged as a statewide and national leader in arts education by hosting two of Maryland's largest K–12 *ArtScene* student art shows and launching the state's first districtwide Fine Arts Signing Days, honoring graduating seniors who are pursuing the arts in college.

Between April 29 and May 9, QACPS transformed its two high schools into showcases of talent and public affirmation—first through *ArtScene*, a dual K–12 gallery event held at Queen Anne's County High School (April 29) and Kent Island High School (May 1), followed by *Fine Arts Signing Days* at KIHS (May 2) and QACHS (May 9). These events drew hundreds of attendees, including families, educators, community members, and statewide leaders.

📺 **WATCH THE STORY UNFOLD: YouTube Video**

View highlights from both ArtScene and Fine Arts Signing Days—along with insights from QACPS Fine Arts Supervisor Michael Bell—in a special video feature spotlighted during Bell's recent appearance on the *Creative Coast* radio broadcast.

Celebrating the Full Arc of a Student's Artistic Journey

ArtScene featured hundreds of student artworks from every grade level, transforming school spaces into professional-grade galleries and affirming the value of creativity at all ages. It was followed by Maryland's first Fine Arts Signing Days, where graduating seniors signed symbolic certificates recognizing their commitment to pursue college degrees in visual arts, music, dance, and theatre.

"These were two of the most vibrant, inclusive, and expansive K–12 student art shows anywhere in the state of Maryland," said **Michael Bell**, QACPS Fine Arts Supervisor. *"And Fine Arts Signing Day took that journey one step further—recognizing students for their imagination, dedication, and hard work as creative professionals."*

State Leaders Applaud QACPS as a Model for Maryland

"This event is an excellent example of how we can elevate arts education in Maryland," said **Elizabeth Devereux**, Director of Comprehensive Arts Education for the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). *"The timing couldn't be better, with MSDE launching new Comprehensive Arts Pathways next year that will open doors for even more students to graduate college and career ready in the arts."*

"Congratulations to the QACPS students who are taking their public education to the next level and pursuing the arts in college," said **Rachel McGrain**, Executive Director of Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) and 2025 NAEA National Distinguished Service Outside the Profession Award Winner. *"This level of excellence doesn't just happen. It must be nurtured—from district-wide policies to outstanding teaching to the commitment of each student."*

"MSAC is thrilled to see students in Queen Anne's County continuing their artistic journeys," added **Steven Skerritt-Davis**, Executive Director of the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC). *"This is a model for how arts education can be fully embedded in a school system's culture."*

Student Voices and Teacher Pride

"Being recognized at Signing Day for pursuing theatre made me feel like what we do in the arts truly matters," said **Sam Holdgreve**, a senior at QACHS heading to Emerson College. *"It showed that we have a future in this field—and that our work is taken seriously."*

"The recognition matters to me because it helped give all of the people going into the arts some recognition for all of our hard work—both toward our education and our investment into our skill. I am very excited about going to art school because I want to continue to improve my abilities and make more connections in the art world." – **Brooke Register**, senior at Kent Island High School, pursuing Illustration at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA)

"The first Fine Arts Signing Day was an excellent display of pride for our students and their future in the arts," said **Kimberly Scully**, Band Director at Kent Island High School and 2025

MMEA Outstanding Music Educator of the Year. *"Whether their decisions lead them into a career or a lifelong appreciation of their discipline, we are proud of their growth."*

A Blueprint for What's Possible in Public Education from District Leaders

Adam Tolley, QACPS Career and Technology Education Supervisor, who collaborated on Fine Arts Signing Day logistics and student pathways, noted: *"Our collaboration with the Fine Arts Department reflects a shared commitment to expanding how we define and celebrate career readiness. Being part of the first annual Fine Arts Signing Day—the only event of its kind in the state—is a reminder that creative expression and career development can go hand in hand."*

Daniel Harding, Principal of Kent Island High School, added:
"It was a great moment for our school. Our students in the arts and career fields deserve to be celebrated just like athletes on signing day—and this event made that happen. I'm looking forward to building on this success."

John Schrecongost, Principal of Queen Anne's County High School, shared:
"Our first annual signing day highlighting the achievements, talents, and future plans of our Visual and Performing Arts students was a huge success and a great step forward for our school. The students and parents were thrilled to be recognized. Our Visual and Performing Arts programs continue to set the standard of success."

Dr. Patricia Saelens, QACPS Superintendent and 2023 Maryland Superintendent of the Year, shared:
"Our students and staff continue to shine. We are so blessed to have strong programs that provide our students endless opportunities to grow and meet their individual potential."

Dr. Matthew Kibler, Assistant Superintendent, added:
"These recognitions are a direct reflection of the passion and professionalism of our educators, the engagement of our students, and the unwavering support of our families and community. We are proud to celebrate our national honors and the creative opportunities it represents for every child in QACPS."

Michael Bell concluded:
"Every student has a story, and every student deserves a moment where their story is honored. Through ArtScene and Fine Arts Signing Days, we've created platforms where students are becoming known—and remembered. And we're just getting started."

A Track Record of State and National Arts Excellence

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Over the past two years alone, Queen Anne's County Public Schools has earned:

- **Maryland Teacher of the Year Finalist** and **Arc of Maryland Inclusion Award Winner** – *Andrea Schulte, 2023 QACPS Teacher of the Year*
- **2023 NAEA National Art Honor Society Sponsor of the Year** – *Stephanie Zeiler*
- **2024 NAEA National Supervisor of the Year** and **2022 Eastern Region Supervisor of the Year** – *Michael Bell*
- **National Scholastic Art & Writing Medalists** and **NAHS National Exhibition Honorees**
- **National Art Education Presenters** at the NAEA Convention and **MMEA State Music Education Presenters**
- **All-State Dancers, Chorus, and Band** student selections
- **MMEA Music Administrator of the Year** – *Daniel Harding,* **MMEA Music Educator of the Year** – *Kimberly Scully*
- **MACRO Conflict Resolution Day Bookmark Contest Winners** – *QACPS Elementary Media Specialists*
- **The Arc of Maryland Coloring Book Contest Winners** for Disability Day (3 consecutive years)
- **2025 NAMM Best Communities for Music Education** – *national QACPS designation*

Watch Both QACPS Fine Arts Signing Day Ceremonies & Tune in for More

- **Kent Island High School**: YouTube Link
- **Queen Anne's County High School**: YouTube Link
- **ArtScene | the Podcast**