

m i n t

Maryland Initiative for New Teachers



2004

MINT NEWS Back-to-School



Caroline Payson and Micheal Aubim of MPT. Guests at a **MINT Social & Seminar** at the Camden Club in Baltimore City talk about Thinkport.org and the benefits that it offers to new teachers. Future **MINT Socials & Seminars** will be coming to Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, and Worcester counties.

Mark Your Calendar

September

Library Card Sign-Up Month

October

Fire Prevention Week, 6-10th

MD Teacher of the Year
Gala, Martin's West, 8th

November

MINT Social & Seminar,
Carroll County, Antrim
Mansion, 3rd

MINT Social & Seminar,
Allegany and Garrett,
Frostburg University 9th

American Education Week,
14-20th

WELCOME TO MINT NEWS

Welcome to **MINT News**, a periodic newsletter designed especially for new teachers—those in their first three years of teaching or those new to Maryland public schools. This newsletter includes articles by teachers, resources and links, and opportunities for discounts and free giveaways. We hope that you find it helpful and encourage you to e-mail us at MINT@msde.state.md.us with comments and suggestions. Best of luck as you embark on the 2004-2005 school year!

—MINT staff at MSDE

September 2004

Where Was Thinkport When I Started Teaching?

By Trista Johnson,
Special Educator, Intermediate Adaptive,
Harford Hills Elementary School

As a fourth-year teacher, all I can say is, where was Thinkport when I started teaching? What an amazing FREE resource for teachers. If Thinkport had been around then, my life would have been much easier.

Thinkport.org is a Web site for Maryland's K-12 education community and families created by Maryland Public Television and the Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education. The site has a special strand just for teachers, called **Think Classroom** with ready-made

student activities and lesson plans. The activities are student-directed and involve some technology. I don't know about other new teachers, but I know I certainly was NOT comfortable taking my students to the computer lab my first year of teaching.

Thinkport can help you feel more comfortable with technology. It's a great resource for pre-made lesson plans that are aligned with the Maryland Content Standards, so each lesson has indicators attached with it as well as the lesson objective. What a bonus! Another cool resource in **Think Classroom** is online field trips. This is great because you can give your students an interactive technology experi-

ence right from the comfort of your own school. Your students can learn more about Poe or Maryland's roots or even Picasso.

The *Idea Box* is one of Thinkport's most valuable tools. With the Idea Box you can upload documents to share them with others. I know that I personally e-mail documents to myself from home or use a disc. Using your Idea Box eliminates discs and the e-mail system altogether because your documents are stored online and all you have to do to access them is log on to Thinkport and go to your *Idea Box*. This is such a time-saver.

Continued on next page

Teachers of the Year Team Up with MINT

Every year, each of Maryland's 24 school systems names one Teacher of the Year. From that pool of talented teachers, one teacher is named the Maryland Teacher of the Year. Teachers of the Year represent years of service and talent from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, and the Maryland State Department of Education is proud to work with them on projects that share their expertise with other teachers, especially new teachers. This year MINT partnered with a group of 15 recent Teachers of the Year to create a series of lesson plans that will be featured on the Thinkport.org Web site.

This rich resource includes lessons ranging from music to reading and math. Simply log on to <http://www.thinkport.org/career/training/mint/default.tp> and access these plans.

Do You Have Questions?

Do you have questions that you'd like answered by a veteran teacher, a Teacher of the Year or other experienced educator who knows exactly how it feels to be a new teacher? Send your questions to MINT@msde.state.md.us. Look for answers to your frequently asked questions in future issues of **MINT News**.

Where Was Thinkport? (continued)

In addition, you can use Thinkport to build a Web site. I did. It was so easy to do—just like writing in a



Microsoft Word document. Now the families of my students have access to my personal Web site and I can include such things as upcoming events, homework assignments, useful Web site links, and whatever else I believe is important for my particular class. It's totally customizable for each teacher at each grade.

But what about certification requirements, training, and keeping up on my professional development? Just go to **Think Career**, where you'll find a link to the MSDE Certification office. I have found this very helpful in keeping track of my certification. There's also information on taking classes and trainings. What better way to keep your certification current than to take more classes!

There are many, many more areas and benefits of Thinkport. Why don't you try them yourself? Register today to get the full benefits of all the wonderful resources that Thinkport has to offer. And remember, Thinkport is FREE.*

**There's no charge for joining. In fact, virtually everything on the site is free, with the exception of tuition costs for some professional development courses.*

Office of the State Superintendent Partnerships and Development Office:

Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools
Darla Strouse, Executive Director and MINT Director

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Dr. Strouse at 410-767-0370.

Discounts & Incentives

MINT is proud to announce a new partnership with Borders. On Oct. 8, 9, and 10, Borders Book Stores are offering 20-25% discounts to Maryland teachers for school related materials. Each location is also hosting author events and programs for children. Don't forget to visit a store near you.

Some Advice for New Teachers...

The following is an excerpt from a column by former Harford County Teacher of the Year Donna Clem from a column featured in Harford County Public Schools' newspaper.

I remembered MY first year. I wish someone would have given me this advice. During that year, my students taught me more than I taught them – it was a difficult year – student teaching had been easier. I happily survived and by the end of the summer of '74 I knew that teaching was in my blood.

What have I learned about teaching and teachers since then? Here are my thoughts on the topic. The first year is the most difficult. I was frustrated and overwhelmed. Good teachers make teaching look easy. Developing your skills as a teacher takes time. You must assess your strengths and weaknesses, then maximize your strengths

and work on your weaknesses. Learn from your colleagues because they can provide guidance and solutions that you alone would not think of. However, my single most important piece of advice is this: find something to laugh at every day, even if it is yourself. This is a tough job; levity helps lighten its load. Teaching is not for everyone. You cannot tell after one year whether you will be successful as a teacher; please try at least two... Here I am with 30 years of experience. Students are still teaching me a thing or two. I love what I do, but, on some Fridays I need to gather with my friends, reflect on the week that was, rest my feet, cool my parched throat, laugh, and give advice. ■