

My name is Cresta Kowalski, and I am the new UniServ Director for Allegany and Garrett Counties in beautiful Mountain Maryland. It is an honor to serve my fellow professionals in this position, and I look forward to a positive future for education in Allegany County!

I am a native of Allegany County, growing up and attending school in this system before going away to college. I received my Elementary Education degree from Towson University with an additional certification in Special Education. Right away I was hired in Baltimore County Public Schools, where I taught for five years before moving back to Allegany County where I was hired by Mineral County Schools to design Special Education programming at Frankfort Middle School for students with low incidence disabilities. Then I received two master's degrees, one from WVU in Special Education with a specialization in Autism and one from Wheeling Jesuit University in Educational Leadership. I taught in Mineral County for ten years before the opportunity to be hired in ACPS became available and I took it. I had the pleasure of teaching in the special education departments of Cash Valley and South Penn with skilled, talented colleagues for six years before accepting the job as UD for our area.

“The ability to read, write, and analyze; the confidence to stand up and demand justice and equality; the qualifications and connections to get your foot in the door and take your seat at the table — all of that starts with education.” —Michelle Obama. I can say without a doubt that I am the person I am today because of the education I received in the Allegany County Public School System. Every time I work in a community group and talk about the rights of people under the Constitution, I remember lessons in the 4th grade at South Penn with Mr. Northcraft. When I hear about the work being done in the fields of biology and medicine, I recall the lessons of Mr. Taylor in middle school science. As I sit and type my doctoral dissertation, I am visited by the lessons of Ms. Morgan and Ms. Roderick on grammar, syntax, and the writer's voice. Finally, each time I speak to an audience of people, I am reminded of the words of Mr. Bob Thompson, reminding me to project and engage with the people who are filling the room. These competent and gifted educators, and many more, granted me gifts that I regularly use. I am so thankful for their hard work and dedication.

As I embark on this new journey, know that you are an important piece to the success of the students in your classroom. Even on the hardest days, your work is vital to their social, emotional well-being and hope for their future. I am here to support you and hear your concerns as you take on this essential work. Reach out when you need and know that each day you are making an impact on the lives of those around you!