



Credit score

Teacher Sara Bushey helps third-grader Taylor Miller with a math problem at Lake Forest North Elementary School, which was one of 29 schools statewide recognized for outstanding achievement.

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It pays to stay in school

Teachers, students benefit from Co-Op

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

The Delaware Department of Education has renewed its commitment to putting the most effective teachers in front of the students who need them most—and ensuring they stay there.

In October, DDOE named 168 educators as part of the second cohort of the state's Delaware Talent Cooperative (Co-Op), with each having the opportunity to earn a retention incentive between \$3,000 and \$10,000 over the next two years. Two educators were also selected to earn \$20,000 in attraction incentives—new this year—for transferring to a higher-need school. The incentives are funded with part of the state's top-ranked federal Race to the Top grant.

"Educators in our highest-need schools have inspired students to overcome immense challenges to make significant academic progress," said Secretary of Education Mark Murphy. "Our students need their

See **CO-OP** Page 10



Gov. Jack Markell speaks at a Delaware Talent Cooperative convening at Dover High School.

DPAS II: Continuous improvement needed



Mark Murphy

We have one of the most important jobs in our country: Preparing our children for success in life. As educators, it is a task we take to heart, what drives us to preserver through challenges we and our children face and what drives us to seek ways to continuously improve.

Together, we have made great improvements to our state's education system over the past few

years. But we know we have a long way to go: Fewer than half of our students graduate from Delaware public high schools ready for college or a career. We must do better.

Great teaching leads to great learning. We know that. Just as we know teachers are the most important school-related factor in the academic success of our students. We also know our educational system is only as strong as our educators who work with their students every day. That's why it is essential that we have an evaluation system that leads to an accurate assessment of the quality of practice and results our educators demonstrate; an assessment that will lead us to better educator support and accountability, while helping drive policy decisions that will best support the needs of our schools.

Our state has had an educator evaluation system for more than two decades, but it has often fallen short in providing adequate and authentic feedback, support, and accountability for our educators. Over the past three years, hundreds of educators have come together to help us develop a revised system, which evaluates every educator in our state on multiple measures of student growth while maintaining a heavy focus on classroom observations. The revised system was implemented statewide in 2012-13, and the results are set forth in a new report released this fall. You can find it on our website here: http://www.doe.k12.de.us/tleu_files/DPAS_II_Year_One_Report_2013.pdf

The report shows that the improved evaluation system and process has placed an increased focus on individual student achievement. Specifically, educators in Delaware met with their school leaders, set goals for student growth, and evaluated that growth at the end of the school year. Not surprisingly, the growth teachers made with their students varied, as you will read in this report.

The report also shows there is much more work to be done. In this first year, we saw almost no differences among educators on the observational evaluation components, and we often saw school administrators using discretion to set less rigorous goals and upgrading educators to higher ratings within the student growth

component. The result – showing there was very little variation in overall educator performance ratings in 2012-2013 – was troubling, and should prompt greater urgency in implementation.

Our results are similar to other states that are implementing rigorous educator evaluation systems, but we should not take comfort in the fact that we are not alone. Going forward, we need to ensure that school leaders and educators implement the system well, so that our ratings reflect the reality of teaching happening in our classrooms. The system will work best when we have educators and evaluators who understand the value of the system, and feel empowered to use it to provide a valid assessment of teaching practices and to drive improvement in their classrooms. As our educators and administrators work to improve their practice, the Department will simultaneously work to improve the overall system. As the title of this report suggests, we are all committed to continuous improvement.

Mark Murphy is Delaware Secretary of Education.



PUBLISHED BY:

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OF EDUCATION**
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Accelerated Academic Grants awarded

Eight schools, districts receive funding for advanced courses

The Delaware Department of Education has awarded Accelerated Academic Grants, the new state program that made funds available for programs targeted at academically advanced students.

The program—created through legislation proposed last year by Lieutenant Governor Matt Denn and the chairs of the General Assembly's education committees, Sen. Dave Sokola and Rep. Darryl Scott—allows school districts to design programs targeted at students who are ahead of grade level in reading, writing, math or science.

Local school districts and schools applied for start-up grants for programs targeted at students who are at least a half year ahead of grade level based upon current state standards. Most of the programs are expected to be offered beginning in the 2014-2015 school year.

The reviewing committee selected eight awardees, with awards totaling \$246,535. The awardees represent each county (three in New Castle, three in Kent and two in Sussex), different grade levels and both traditional and charter schools. An additional \$53,464 will be available under a second round of applications early next year.

"I am pleased to see the widespread interest in these grants and very impressed with proposals that will allow more of our

advanced public school children to be challenged in the classroom," Denn said.

"There is a real demand among our public school parents for programs like these, and I hope to see even more of them in the future."

Secretary of Education Mark Murphy said educators working closest to our students know best how to meet their needs: "That is why we are pleased to be able to support these local program ideas that, thanks to these grants, will allow accelerated learning for students who are eager for these types of new challenges."

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS FOR GRANTEES

Caesar Rodney School District (\$65,422): The district will use a STEM project approach pullout program in its middle schools with a blended learning opportunity to enhance the learning as well as providing accelerated opportunities using computer programs and tablets for accelerated students in the related arts.

Cape Henlopen School District (\$57,623): The district will implement a progressive, rigorous approach in accelerated education through STEAM enriched instruction. The program will include 60 fifth-grade students from four elementary schools and will inspire creativity, innovation and integrative problem solving above and beyond the curriculum.

Brandywine School District (\$30,000): This vertically-designed program expands opportunities for high school students,

offered as a STEM cluster of critical courses, but matched with arts and humanities.

POLYTECH School District (\$23,800): This funding will allow POLYTECH to expand its AP services for students including online courses and more topics of study.

Indian River School District (\$21,100): The BRITE (Bringing Intellectual Talents Everyday) Project's purpose is to provide professional development for teachers and administrators' implementation of the SpringBoard program with honors level students. SpringBoard curricula are designed to build a pathway in grades 6-10 towards AP competency in later grades.

Las Americas ASPIRA Academy (\$17,576): ASPIRA will implement the QUEST (Quality Utilization and Enrichment of Student Talents) Program that will be focused on developing students' critical, creative and logical thinking skills as well as problem-solving abilities.

Capital School District (\$16,740): This funding will permit William Henry Middle School to implement Making Math Matter to identify fifth- and sixth-grade students from underrepresented groups with the potential for success in advanced math classes and prepare them to qualify for and pass Algebra I in seventh grade.

Newark Charter High School (\$14,274): NCHS just opened for ninth grade and is planning for grades 10 to 12. This grant will allow the school to offer a wide variety of AP coursework for students capable of accelerated learning.

Students start on pathway to engineering careers

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Freshmen at Indian River High School are learning to master the same industry-leading 3D design software used by companies such as Intel and Pixar—all while potentially earning college credit and developing the skills to compete in today's high-tech, high-skill global economy.

The students are part of Project Lead the Way (PLTW)'s Pathway to Engineering Program—a curriculum designed to encompass all four years of high school. Indian River launched the program last year and is currently offering two foundation courses—Introduction to Engineering Design, which teaches first-year students the about the design process using 3D computer modeling software and other tools, and Principals of Engineering, which is offered to second-year students and explores technology systems and engineering processes.

PLTW's comprehensive curriculum has been collaboratively designed by PLTW teachers, university educators, engineering professionals and school administrators to promote critical thinking, creativity, innovation and real-world problem solving skills in students. More than 4,700 schools nationwide offer PLTW courses.

"There's a big shortage of engineers in this country, so the more we can get our students excited about the field, the more likely we'll be able to fill that gap," said Allen Timmons, who teaches Introduction to Engineering Design at Indian River.

The course last year had 13 students – 11 of whom passed the online exam and qualified to earn partial, full or transfer credits at select colleges. This year, 22 students enrolled. To earn a seat in the class, each student had to pass Algebra I, submit an application and be selected by a committee.

"I really wanted to do this," said freshman Nicholas Feldman. "I've always enjoyed designing and sketching."

"It's fast-paced. I've definitely learned a lot already," said freshman Jared Arlett, who hopes to later earn admission to the Naval Academy and pursue a career in engineering.

Timmons and colleague John Milspaw, who teaches Principles of Engineering, were trained during an intensive two-week summer session, in which they were responsible for completing all of the coursework and projects they would be teaching throughout the year. PLTW's network includes 500 core training instructors who are among the best and brightest Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) educators in the country.

"It's a very hands-on, rigorous program," said Milspaw. "I enjoy it, and I know the students love getting to investigate challenges and actually design and test solutions."

Indian River hopes to expand its course offerings as students advance through the pathway. Elective courses that could be available to them in the coming years include: Digital Electronics, Aerospace Engineering, Biotechnical Engineering, Civil Engineering & Architecture and Computer Integrated Manufacturing.

During their senior year, students will be required to complete Engineering Design & Development, a capstone class, which will require them to work in teams to design and develop an original solution to an open-ended technical problem by applying the engineering design process. At the end of the course, they must present and defend their solutions to an outside panel of engineers.

"It's valuable, real-world experience for them," said Timmons. "They're applying what they've already learned as theories and can see how it all makes sense outside of the textbook."



Indian River High freshman Mikie Mochiam works on a design in engineering class.



Teacher Allen Timmons answers a question for Nicholas Feldman.



Jordan Berrish, a freshman at Indian River High School, studies his design.

2014 TEACHER OF THE YEAR



attended Appoquinimink High School. “She demanded more, and it really made you dig down to find out what you were capable of.”

Wainwright graduated from the University of Delaware and earned her master’s in education from Wilmington University.

Wainwright is a leader outside the classroom, serving as a lead mentor for new teachers, participating on a state teacher advisory committee, helping develop statewide teacher evaluation measures, coaching lacrosse and volunteering in the community.

“Teacher burn-out is a critical problem,” she said. “It seems that the new teacher gets the largest classes and multiple courses so they have more preparation to do in the same amount of time as a veteran teacher.”

As the lead mentor for both high schools in her district, Wainwright connects veteran teachers with new teachers to help them through their first year. She also conducts workshops to address issues such as grade reporting, parent conferencing and lesson planning.

Elise Summer was one of those new teachers who relied on Wainwright during her first year teaching last year.

“I would refer to Lea as my work mother,” Summer said. “Not only did she boost my self-esteem but also gave me advice I will never forget.”

Wainwright follows John Sell as Delaware Teacher of the Year. She will address community groups, business leaders, legislators and educational organizations to inform the public about the status of Delaware schools. She also will become Delaware’s candidate for National Teacher of the Year.

Lea Wainwright, a French teacher at Appoquinimink High School, is Delaware’s State Teacher of the Year for 2014.

Wainwright, who began her teaching career in 1993, has taught at the middle-school, high-school and community-college levels, working in both public and private schools. She has spent 12 years in the Appoquinimink School District.

Wainwright has high expectations for her students, with real communication as the goal.

“In a civilization (that) lives by social media, the language classroom is one place where face-to-face conversation is taught and sustained,” she said. “Students who move on from my classroom will have had innumerable occasions to interact with others in a meaningful way.”

“Her approach to teaching wasn’t the same as everyone else’s,” said Robert Dina Jr., a student of Wainwright during all four years he



Lea Wainwright, a French teacher at Appoquinimink High School, receives her Delaware State Teacher of the Year award from Gov. Jack Markell.

She will receive a \$5,000 grant to use for the educational benefit of her students, as well two personal grants totaling an additional \$5,000. The remaining 18 school district candidates each will receive a personal grant of \$2,000.

Wainwright will receive an educational technology package valued at approximately \$18,000 from the SMART Technologies, ULC. She will also receive grants from the

American Institutes for Research, Delaware State Education Association, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and Delaware Professional Standards Board.

Wainwright’s selection as Delaware’s top educator makes her the 50th Teacher of the Year since Delaware’s recognition program began in 1965. This year’s celebration was sponsored in part by ING Foundation.

Cape Henlopen principal earns national recognition

Jennifer Nauman, principal of Cape Henlopen’s Shields Elementary, was one of seven principals nationwide to receive the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership in 2013. She is the first Delaware principal to receive this award.

The Terrel H. Bell Award, named for the second U. S. Secretary of Education, recognizes outstanding school leaders for the vital role they play in guiding students and schools to excellence, frequently under challenging circumstances. Principals selected for this award are school leaders committed to fostering successful teaching and learning at their schools to help their students meet high standards.

“Great schools are always a reflection of great principals,” U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said. “High-quality examples of leadership can help shape a school’s culture and create an environment where students are excited to learn. The Bell Award recognizes principals for the essential work they do every day to improve our nation’s schools.”

Principals selected as Bell Award recipients have transformed their schools. Their vision and collaborative leadership styles have produced outstanding results for all their students, regardless of race, language proficiency or socio-economic status. They have shown that with effective leadership and teaching and a firm conviction, all students can learn.

As described by one district administrator, Nauman is a principal who leads with both her head and her heart. This process started three years ago when Nauman arrived. She set forth to



Jennifer Nauman, second from left, receives the Terrel H. Bell Award from Judith C. Richardson, Associate Director, National Association of Secondary School Principals; Gail Connelly, Executive Director, National Association of Elementary School Principals, and Massie Ritsch of the U. S. Department of Education.

create a clear, concise vision for the school.

Shields was already a good school, but Nauman intended to make it great. Her first step was to bring everyone on board. She asked questions, talked to stakeholders and surveyed parents and teachers to get an understanding of who they were and what they needed from her. Then she created a school improvement team to map what she learned onto her vision. The result was a shared

vision that prioritized high standards that focused on continuous improvement.

Throughout the school year, Nauman continues to question stakeholders to ensure the school is meeting everyone’s needs. She uses surveys, committee meetings and one-on-one conferencing to gain constant teacher feedback and input on school challenges and concerns. Teachers feel they have a say in what happens not only in their classroom, but also the school as a whole, and this communication gives teachers a voice in school decisions.

Nauman believes in nurturing all aspects of a child’s development. Through her leadership, she encourages a positive, caring school environment that welcomes all students and families. Family events and student celebrations are conducted including curriculum nights and technology nights. Visual and performing arts programs draw in community members as well as parents.

“We know effective leadership is essential for students’ continuous learning and growth,” Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Murphy said. “Jennifer has cultivated an environment in which all students can learn. I am inspired by the hard work and passion that have driven her.”

The Bell award is given by the U. S. Department of Education, together with the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Middle Schools Association and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.



Principal Laura Lands visits a kindergarten class at Lake Forest North Elementary, which was named Recognition School.

Getting their due

Schools recognized for academic excellence

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Signs throughout the hallways of Lake Forest North Elementary School assert the school has “just one focus: student success.”

That focus seems to be working, as Lake Forest North was named a Title I Distinguished school and one of the state’s 15 Recognition Schools. Announced in October, the 15 Recognition Schools and two Reward Schools were each awarded \$50,000. Additionally, 12 Schools of Continued Excellence were honored for winning an award last year and having outstanding performance again this year, but they are not eligible for a financial award again until 2014.

The awards, known informally as the state’s Academic Achievement Awards, were created by legislation in 2009 funded from the state’s Race to the Top grant. They are given to schools whose students are performing at an exceptionally high level, particularly those schools with large percentages of students coming from low-income households, and to schools that have succeeded in closing the achievement gap for students such as low-income students, students from minority groups, and students with disabilities. Winners were selected based on 2012-13 data.

“I am thrilled to be able to honor these schools with an award that will help them expand services for our students,” said Lt. Gov. Matt Denn. “As in past years, I will be trying to visit as many of these schools in person as I can, so we can learn from schools whose kids are

succeeding — often in spite of serious challenges.”

“We must take what is working well in these schools and share those lessons with school communities throughout our state,” said Secretary of Education Mark Murphy.

Lake Forest North was one of three schools serving K-3 in the Lake Forest District to be named a Recognition School this year. The others were Lake Forest East and South elementary schools. Denn and Murphy visited Lake Forest North to make the announcement.

“We’re here to celebrate teachers, staff and parents who are changing the lives of kids in the state and the kids whose hard work’s paying off,” said Denn.

Superintendent Dan Curry was thrilled to see that half of the schools in his district were honored.

“It’s a great day to be a Spartan,” Curry said. “All six schools in Lake Forest represent less than 1.5 percent of all the schools in the state. Yet, when the state is recognizing those schools with the highest achievement, 18 percent of them are Lake Forest schools. That’s pretty cool.”

Curry attributed the success not so much to location and demographics, but to the supportive parents, hard-working staff and students, vigilant school board and diverse community of Lake Forest.

“Our kids who hit high targets and earned this recognition for their schools are from a variety of backgrounds and many face personal challenges outside of school,” said Curry. “Yet, they do outstanding work and reach for the stars.”

“We were so excited to get the award,” said Lake Forest North Principal Laura Lands. “Our staff and students work so hard and everyone in this building is focused on helping our students achieve to their fullest potential.”

2013 honorees

Reward Schools

Title I schools identified for being either highest performing or high progress.

- Elbert-Palmer Elementary School, Christina School District
- Sussex Academy, Georgetown

Recognition Schools

These are chosen for exceptional performance and/or closing the achievement gap. Both Title I and non-Title I schools can qualify.

- Charter School of Wilmington, Red Clay School District
- Carrie Downie Elementary School, Colonial School District
- East Millsboro Elementary School, Indian River School District
- Georgetown Elementary School, Indian River School District
- Georgetown Middle School, Indian River School District
- Hanby Elementary School, Brandywine School District
- Lake Forest East Elementary School, Lake Forest School District
- Lake Forest North Elementary School, Lake Forest School District (also a Title I Distinguished school awardee)
- Lake Forest South Elementary School, Lake Forest School District
- Long Neck Elementary School, Indian River School District
- R. Elisabeth Maclary Elementary School, Christina School District (also a Title I Distinguished school awardee)
- Middletown High School, Appoquinimink School District
- North Dover Elementary School, Capital School District
- W. B. Simpson Elementary School, Caesar Rodney School District
- St. Georges Technical High School, New Castle County Vocational Technical School District

Schools of Continued Excellence

Schools that received state awards during 2012 and continued to qualify for Reward or Recognition School distinction in 2013. They will be eligible for funds again next year if they meet the Reward or Recognition School qualifications.

- Beacon Middle School, Cape Henlopen School District
- John M. Clayton Elementary School, Indian River School District
- William B. Keene Elementary School, Christina School District
- Kuumba Academy Charter School
- Lord Baltimore Elementary School, Indian River School District
- Evelyn I. Morris Early Childhood Center, Milford School District
- Newark Charter School
- Rehoboth Elementary School, Cape Henlopen School District
- Richard A. Shields Elementary School, Cape Henlopen School District
- Phillip C. Showell Elementary School, Indian River School District
- Nellie Hughes Stokes Elementary School, Caesar Rodney School District
- Sunnyside Elementary School, Smyrna School District



Jake Steinfeld, Gov. Jack Markell and Principal Theodore Boyer cut the ribbon on A.I. DuPont Middle School's new fitness room.

STAYING FIT IS POSITIVELY A GOOD IDEA

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

If a fit body equals a fit mind, students at Red Clay Consolidated School District's Alexis I. du Pont Middle School in Greenville, Christina School District's Bancroft Elementary School in Wilmington and Colonial School District's McCullough Middle School in New Castle are on the right track.

The three schools were selected by the National Foundation for Governors' Fitness Councils (NFGFC) to receive state-of-the-art Live Positively™ fitness centers as part of the National Champion Schools campaign.

At Bancroft Elementary, Principal Butch Ingram is excited about his school's new focus on fitness and hopes the increased physical activity will help to improve academic achievement, reduce discipline problems, cut absenteeism and foster better interpersonal relationships.

"If you don't feel healthy, you won't produce as much," said Ingram. "If our students get in there first thing in the morning, they get their blood flowing and they're ready for the day. It's a total development of the mind and body."

Tasnim Williams, 11, said her favorite machine is the elliptical with the stationary bike a close second. She comes to the fitness center "to work out and have fun and chat with my friends," she said.

In 2012, the NFGFC awarded 11 Live Positively fitness centers to schools in California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. This year,

the program spread to Delaware, Georgia, New Jersey and West Virginia. A.I. Middle, Bancroft and McCullough were among 12 National Champion Schools selected for demonstrating new innovative ways for promoting student physical activity and wellness. Their fitness centers opened this fall with a full line of strength training and cardio fitness equipment provided by NFGFC partner TuffStuff Fitness Equipment.

"Jake Steinfeld (fitness icon and NFGFC chairman) made a promise to bring fitness centers to schools in our great state and he's made good on his word," said Governor Jack Markell. "The three winning schools put their best foot

forward by creating innovative fitness programs that have been embraced by our students and will lead them on a path to a bright and healthy future. We need to support efforts that encourage our young people to be more active, and I thank Jake for bringing these fitness centers to our state."

Said Steinfeld, "I've always said that academics and fitness go hand in and hand and believe that if you provide the schools with the tools, students will excel beyond their wildest dreams."

Steinfeld, who has made it his life's work to fight childhood obesity, was on hand for the ribbon cutting of each of Delaware's new fitness centers. In addition to the equipment designed to fit the unique needs of each school, the centers also include interactive exercise games.

Bancroft students in grades 3-5 have full access to the equipment and have gender-specific classes in the center twice a week. They also use the center after school in a program combining 45 minutes of academic time with 45 minutes of exercise. Younger students are able to enjoy the Xbox Kinect games.

Bancroft applied to become a National Champion School last year after physical education teacher Arden Miller joined the staff and the school formed a wellness committee. In addition to promoting fitness, Miller, who started out as a personal trainer before going back for her master's in education, is trying to teach her students healthy eating habits.

"It's rewarding to see them so excited about working out," said Miller.

The National Champion Schools campaign will eventually roll out to all 50 states, with a goal to build a nation of the fittest, healthiest students in the world. Each fitness center is financed through a public/private sector partnership with businesses like the Coca-Cola Company.

Fifth-grader Donald Miller, 12, said he likes to use the center to work on his chin ups and pull ups: "I play sports and I got to get my weight up."

Classmate Nasir Johnson, 12, said the sit up machine is his favorite because "it will give me abs."

Louvenia Perry, 10, said she feels more focused for school after working out. She likes to exercise "because it will make me strong," she said.



McCullough Middle School celebrates its designation.



Fifth-grader Louvenia Perry works out at Bancroft Elementary School.

Nasir Johnson works on strengthening his shoulders.



Tasnim Williams, above, and Donald Miller, right, work out in the new fitness center at Bancroft.

FITNESS

OPENING THE DOOR TO COLLEGE



Gov. Jack Markell observes Newark High School senior Emily Garcia submitting a college application online.

Delaware is taking groundbreaking steps to ensure that a college education for students across the state is not just a dream, but a reality.

In September, Gov. Jack Markell, Secretary of Education Mark Murphy and College Board President David Coleman announced a partnership that is enhancing the administration's work to best equip its high school students for the college application process.

The College Board is sending resources to students who have demonstrated the potential to succeed in college, but who may be at risk of either disregarding the best schools for which they may qualify or of not applying to college at all. In addition to the support from the state's colleges and universities, Delaware's effort is backed by a group made up of all of the Ivy League schools, MIT and Stanford.

"We know the increasing importance of education and training beyond high school to succeed in today's economy," said Markell. "Our education system must prepare students with the skills most valued by colleges and employers, while also ensuring they have access to education opportunities after high school graduation. Too many students are turned off to a college because they don't know about all of the available financial assistance or they underestimate their qualifications. Our partnership with the College Board is a significant step toward solving these challenges."

The project grew out of research by Stanford Professor Caroline Hoxby, who discovered that relatively few high-achieving, low-income students attend highly-selective universities. She found these students are often unaware of available financial aid and are unlikely to have had a mentor who attended a selective university, leaving them

without positive examples.

The Delaware-College Board partnership is specifically reaching this group. Those students have received college application fee waivers, detailed information about affording college and a letter from all of the Ivy Leagues institutions, Stanford and MIT encouraging them to apply to top schools.

Delaware has expanded the project to reach a broader set of students to help them recognize all of their options. In addition to the high-achieving, low-income group, more than 2,000 other seniors have received materials tailored to their needs, including information about how to research colleges, details of Delaware scholarship programs and a letter of encouragement from Delaware's colleges and universities. All students who qualify have received application fee waivers.

"The College Board is delighted to partner with Delaware on this critical effort to expand access to opportunity for students," said Coleman. "The Delaware partnership is at the forefront of the College Board's efforts to ensure that students across the country pursue the opportunities they have earned."

Murphy stressed that the Delaware-College Board partnership is a key addition to the state's robust plan to improve college access.

"Our department's vision is to ensure all students graduate college and career ready, and we are working toward that goal by addressing four key areas: affordability, academic readiness and persistence through college, alliances across K-12 and our post-secondary system and connecting highly qualified students with top schools," Murphy said. "This project touches on all of those areas."

Survey says: More educators confident in data use

Delaware educators gave the statewide Professional Learning Community (PLC) initiative high marks in a report released in September. Teachers expressed greater confidence in their ability to use data to inform their instruction and gave higher reviews to their shared planning time and data coaches in the second year of the initiative.

"The survey results reflect what I often hear when I am visiting educators in schools across the state: Professional Learning Communities are one of the most valued supports," said Secretary of Education Mark Murphy. "Teachers appreciate the job-embedded time to work with and learn from their colleagues, and they are using the knowledge gained in these sessions to meet the needs of their students."

"The best professional development often comes from the peers you're working with every day," said Dover High School teacher Paul Booton. "They're valuable mentors."

PLCs were a central component of Delaware's top-ranked federal Race to the Top plan, which required that all core content teachers in all schools across the state

meet in small, consistent groups of six to 10 people for 90 minutes each week with an emphasis on analyzing student data and using it to shape instruction. This school year, about 40 schools opted to work with data coaches, while all other schools are maintaining the 90-minute weekly sessions using school-based facilitators.

Teachers participating in the survey responded positively about their PLCs and coaches: 68 percent said their use of data to inform instruction had increased or improved as a result of participating in their PLC. They also agreed administrator presence is valued in PLCs and the data coach or PLC facilitator plays a critical role in guiding the success of PLCs. A majority rated their data use and analysis skills as "developed" or "independent."

Other results included:

- 82 percent agreed there was a transparent, collaborative culture in their PLC, up from 76 percent in 2012.
- 71 percent of teachers agreed their coach effectively facilitated the use of data, up from 64 percent in 2012.
- 70 percent said PLCs help them develop useful skills around the collection and use of data, up from 63

percent in 2012.

- 65 percent said they were confident in making instructional decisions based on data as a result of their PLC participation, up from 59 percent in 2012.

These findings are consistent with the TELL Delaware statewide teaching and learning conditions survey administered earlier this year. In that survey, 92 percent of educators who responded agreed that "teachers use assessment data to inform their instruction" and 76 percent of educators noted that supports such as professional learning communities "translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers."

The survey's open-ended responses captured areas of improvement to strengthen the impact of PLCs. Educators noted that their input should shape PLC content to a greater degree, consistently expressed a desire to have more direct administrator presence and requested that PLC content and focus be tailored to meet their individual needs.

The full report is available on the DDOE's website at www.doe.k12.de.us.



Redding Middle School science teacher Robert Ferrell helps eighth-grade student TJ Henry with his self-assessment.

Climate for learning

Science teacher urges students to think globally

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Louis L. Redding Middle School science teacher Robert Ferrell knows the best way for his students to grasp science is to make it personal.

Ferrell, who teaches eighth grade and serves as the department chair, also works with the Maryland and Delaware Climate Change Education and Research group (Made Clear) and has been introducing his students to some of the group's research about the region's vulnerability to sea-level rise.

"Climate is a big part of our students' lives, but it hasn't been part of our curriculum," said Ferrell. "Del-Mar residents are much more affected by shore lines and it's important for our students to look into the future and think about real-life, high-impact plans."

In October, Ferrell presented a workshop at the prestigious, 42nd annual conference of the North American Association for Environmental Educators (NAAEE) in Baltimore. His workshop, *Climate Change: Issue Investigations in Formal and Informal Settings*, offered cutting-edge climate science lessons aligned with Next Generation Science Standards and include a demonstration of how to use technology that is free and easily accessible (such as Google Docs) to create real-time assessments that measure student comprehension.

"By spending time up front creating assessments, I'm

able to evaluate how my students are processing the information I'm giving them," said Ferrell.

"Based on the results, we can adjust and revisit individual components of a lesson until they've mastered each concept."

At the conference, Ferrell had the opportunity to collaborate with more than 1,000 educators from across North America. A former Presidential Awards for Excellence in Math & Science Teaching (PAEMST) finalist, Ferrell has a bachelor's degree in earth science, a master's in educational technology and is pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership.

New online assessment tools give Delaware educators real-time data

Educators around the state are beginning to use PerformancePLUS for more than just a warehouse for Measure B assessments and score reports. Educators are using PerformancePLUS to pilot state pre/post assessments online giving them real-time access to student data via the Online Assessment Module (OLA). Students take the assessments online, eliminating the need to print and scan bubble sheets and thus the streamlined implementation and grading process saves time and increases educator efficiency.

PerformancePLUS is also being used by educators to deliver common assessments via AssessmentBUILDER. Educators can create tests using their own content or by choosing from thousands of standards-based questions with the option to include selected response and open-ended questions. Additionally, these applications provide for dynamic reporting and analysis capabilities allowing users to aggregate and disaggregate data with ease.

PerformancePLUS is linked with eSchoolPLUS and the EdInsight

Dashboard for seamless communication. The EdInsight Dashboard has seen many updates in its first year and was visited 25,113 times during 2012-13 by 6,779 unique visitors representing 61 percent of the professional staff in the state (administrators, teachers and instructional support staff). The EdInsight Dashboard and PerformancePLUS are provided free to all public and charter schools across the state. For further information about these opportunities, contact Brenda Dorrell at brenda.dorrell@doe.k12.de.us

Delaware teachers, students benefit from Co-Op

CO-OP: from Page 1

talents, passion and leadership, and we share in their belief that every child in Delaware deserves the opportunity to learn and grow alongside an excellent educator. Cohort 2 is joining a cadre of educators that have pledged to help our students succeed. In turn, we have pledged to support and recognize them.”

“A student’s education should not be limited by his or her zip code,” said Chelsea Baxter, a fourth-grade reading teacher at Kuumba Academy, who was one of 28 teachers to earn a retention incentive in the first year of implementation. “I fell in love with my school and my students, and I wanted to stay. Being part of this initiative gives us the support system we need to continue focusing on student learning.”

Baxter had high praise for her experience in the Co-Op last year, as well as the professional development opportunities that have been made available to her and fellow cohort members—including a summer training session on time and behavior management.

“That’s something we might all think we have control of, but often the smallest details can mean the difference between mediocrity and greatness,” said Baxter.

Initially, 49 high-need schools were invited to participate in the initiative. Of those, 18 accepted the state’s invitation and 13 are represented among the 161 teachers and specialists and seven school leaders recognized this round: Capital School District’s Dover High School, East Dover Elementary and South Dover Elementary; Seaford’s Blades Elementary and West Seaford Elementary; Brandywine’s Harlan Elementary; New Castle County Vocational’s Howard High School; Kuumba Academy, Prestige Academy, Reach Academy for Girls, Positive Outcomes, Thomas Edison and East Side charter schools.

“This investment in you is a direct investment in our children’s future,” said Gov. Jack Markell. “The challenges you face every day are intense and profound, but you never make excuses for your students or for yourself. It’s all about progress and making the American Dream real for them. Because of you, they are going farther than they ever thought they could go.”

To provide further incentive, the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) is offering Co-Op members reduced interest rates on mortgages. Those who qualify for a DSHA mortgage loan will receive a 0.5 percent reduction on a new loan, helping to make homeownership more affordable. Individuals looking to take advantage of the reduced rate also may participate in DSHA’s down payment and closing cost assistance programs, with the interest rate reduction applying solely to the first mortgage. For an average buyer purchasing a \$200,000 home with a 30-year fixed interest mortgage, the lower rate could save more than \$700 each year—amounting to more than \$21,000 over the life of loan.

“You’ve made a special commitment to Delaware’s students and we want to make a commitment to you,” said Bill Salamone, DSHA housing mortgage loan officer. “It’s money that you’ve earned, and it’s money that you deserve.”

“Affordable housing is always a key component in recruitment and retention of talented individuals in any field,” said Markell. “DSHA’s involvement with this initiative represents another important way we can show our commitment to encouraging the best teachers to live in Delaware and give our children the opportunities they deserve.”

The educators in the Co-Op qualified in part because they earned an “exceeds” rating on the student growth component of the state’s educator evaluation system (DPAS-II). They also demonstrated professionalism and consistent practice during classroom observations. This year’s effort expanded to include more schools, more educators from all grades and subject areas, expanded professional development and networking opportunities and the addition of the attraction incentives for educators seeking to work in a more challenging setting.

“It’s exciting to be recognized for the work that we do,” said Dover High School teacher Adonia Chadwell, who teaches Latin.

“Every child deserves a great teacher and this initiative helps us to spread the wealth,” said Michelle Duke, principal of South Dover Elementary School.

As part of the initiative, DDOE will maintain communication with the selected educators as they mentor

colleagues, serve on a program evaluation focus group and have their exemplary classroom instruction videotaped or cataloged for sharing with colleagues.

“It’s about camaraderie,” said Christopher Ruszkowski, chief officer of DDOE’s Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit. “This is a really powerful network, and we want you to share ideas, emails and opportunities to continue to grow your craft. There’s still a lot of work that we need to do, and we’re going to lean on each other to get there.”



**Delaware
Talent Cooperative**
EQUITY. RECOGNITION. EXCELLENCE.

Starting in January, the Delaware Department of Education will again be seeking top-performing educators from across the state to teach and lead in our highest-need schools. The Delaware Talent Cooperative was started two years ago to recognize the excellence of our educators serving students who need them most, and to attract educators from across the state into these same schools. There will be informational events held in February and May where educators will have an opportunity to meet current Delaware Talent Cooperative Cohort members as well as school leadership from participating schools. If interested and eligible, one can receive an award of up to \$20,000 over two years of service. DDOE is also partnering with the state housing authority (DSHA) to provide “settlement and closing cost assistance” (up to another \$15,000) for Cohort 3 members. Apply and learn more at www.detalentcoop.org. If you have any questions, please e-mail angeline.rivello@doe.k12.de.us.



At left, Secretary of Education Mark Murphy, top, and East Side Charter Principal Lamont Brown speak to the new cohort of Co-Op teachers. Christopher Ruszkowski of the Department of Education conducts a workshop.



AROUND DELAWARE SCHOOLS

Twenty Delaware high schools across the state provided designated school time this fall to help seniors apply for college as part of the state's **College Application Month**. Each school chose its own College Application Week in November. Wilmington University and Delaware Technical Community College offered students in participating schools the opportunity to apply without an application fee. Application fee waivers also were available for other schools for income-qualified students.

The program followed last year's pilot, in which two schools – Lake Forest and Smyrna High Schools – dedicated school time to encourage every senior to complete and submit at least one college application. Volunteers from the state's universities and colleges, and leaders from the business and nonprofit communities, again were on hand to help students complete and submit applications.

College Application Week is a nationwide effort to assist high school seniors in the college application process and increase college attendance. Special focus is placed on first-generation college students or those who otherwise may not have considered applying to college.

This fall the state launched its new effort to recruit top educators to teach in Delaware schools. The

campaign — **Join Delaware Schools** — aims to attract the caliber of teachers necessary to realize the state's vision of a world-class education system for all students. Central to the campaign is the launch of an online teacher recruitment portal — www.joindelawareschools.org — that gives applicants a one-stop site to look for and learn about education jobs in the state. Join Delaware Schools is the first statewide teacher recruitment effort of its kind.

By having a central hiring website and one common application for every school in the district, the portal will make it easier for schools to recruit and retain high-quality educators. While the campaign and portal will assist in recruiting efforts, hiring decisions will remain at the local level with district and charter school human resources administrators continuing to lead this work for their districts and schools.

The applicant tracking feature of the portal piloted in the spring with a soft launch of the full site in August. Thanks to the portal, funded by part of the state's federal Race to the Top grant, applicants no longer must check every district and charter school's individual site to find job openings. The aim is to include all vacancies in the state in one place. By 2016, all districts and charters will be expected to use the site.

Three Delaware schools are among 286 schools nationwide that U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recognized as **2013 National Blue Ribbon Schools**, based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in improving student academic achievement.

The Charter School of Wilmington in the Red Clay Consolidated School District, Frear Elementary School in the Caesar Rodney School District and Shields Elementary School in the Cape Henlopen School District are among the 236 public and 50 private schools that were honored at an awards ceremony Nov. 18-19 in Washington, D.C. The schools' principals — Charles Baldwin and Samuel Paoli (Charter School of Wilmington), Tara Faircloth (Allen Frear) and Jennifer Nauman (Richard A. Shields) — were invited to attend the national awards ceremony with a teacher representative from each of their schools.

The award honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools whose students achieve at very high levels or have made significant improvements are being made in students' levels of achievement, especially among disadvantaged and minority students. Each year since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has sought out schools where students attain and maintain high academic goals, including those that beat the odds.

The State Board of Education has approved new science standards that better reflect the knowledge and skills students will need to be prepared for college and career.

The Delaware Department of Education will work with educators to develop a multi-year implementation plan to provide teachers with the training and resources they will need to transition to the **Next Generation Science Standards** in the coming years.

Delaware officials partnered with scientists, administrators, teachers, parents and business leaders as the state helped review and refine the standards. DuPont is among the sponsors that have helped fund the development nationally.

Jill Szymanski, a teacher at Red Clay Consolidated School District's Brandywine Springs School, was named the 2013 National History Teacher of the Year by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. The National History Teacher of the Year Award honors outstanding K-12 educators in American history. It includes a \$10,000 prize.

A 16-year teacher, she incorporates a range of techniques into her teaching, including student use of primary and secondary sources on their assignments.

Dept. of Education awards Innovation Grants worth \$1.5 million

The Delaware Department of Education granted 14 schools and districts a total of almost \$1.5 million to fund innovative practices and projects that will support increased academic student growth.

“As our state raises expectations for student achievement, we are looking to our teachers and school leaders for innovative ways to meet those higher standards. They understand how to help all of our young people get the skills they need to compete for colleges and careers,” Gov. Jack Markell said.

State officials selected the winners from among 74 applications for the Specific and Innovative Improvement Practices (SIIP) grant opportunity.

“These grants are intended to bring true innovation into the classroom and to our children by supporting promising projects that have been developed and will be led by our teachers and leaders. The educators working closest with our children have told us what their students need,” Secretary of Education Mark Murphy said. “We are committed to supporting their work in this way and will be following their progress closely. We look forward to learning from the strong practices demonstrated through this program.”

The purpose of the program is to provide opportunity for innovative and promising: teacher-led projects that drive improved student outcomes; projects for strong Common Core implementation and assessment; projects around student supports and dramatically improved school climate; and strategies to accelerate underachieving groups of students. The awardees were:

Gallaher Elementary School (Christina School District): \$116,029 for GOALS (Gallaher's Outstanding Approach to Learning and Student-Improvement) Program, which is targeting the necessary prerequisite skills in reading and mathematics to allow all students to have equitable access to the skills needed to master the Common Core State Standards.

POLYTECH High School (POLYTECH School District): \$143,000 for instructional interventions, professional development and social-emotional supports.

North Laurel Elementary and Laurel Intermediate schools (Laurel School District): \$149,974 for i-Impact, which will provide student-specific skill instruction, reinforcement and remediation to all students in grades 2-6 via technology (iPods and iPads) in school and at home.

BRINC (Brandywine, Indian River, New Castle County Vo-Tech and Colonial school districts): \$600,000 for Linking to the Future, supporting personalized learning opportunities for students at Brandywine's Brandywine, Concord and Mt. Pleasant high schools; Colonial's William Penn High School; New Castle County Vo-Tech's Delcastle, Hodgson, Howard and St. Georges high schools; and Indian River's Indian River and Sussex Central high schools. BRINC envisions that students will be able to compare data about their progress against their learning goals, be exposed to new blended learning strategies for anywhere, anytime learning and have more options for non-traditional learning.

Brandywine, Concord and Mount Pleasant high schools (Brandywine School

District): \$26,500 for increasing student college- and career-readiness in the courses of biology and AP biology and funding texts, professional development for teachers and classroom materials.

Chipman Middle School (Lake Forest School District): \$17,714 for Engaging Students in History through Common Core, a classroom project that is providing students with opportunities to read and analyze primary and secondary source materials to engage them in the study of U.S. history through the eyes of the people who actually lived it and witnessed it.

Stanton Middle School (Red Clay Consolidated School District): \$45,083 for implementing a Trauma-Informed System of Care, aiming to improve school culture and social competence of students by training teachers in “The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success” framework and coaching in the collaborative problem-solving process.

A.I. duPont middle and high schools (Red Clay Consolidated School District): \$39,000 for A.I. duPont Astronomy Cooperative Initiative, creating a cooperative high school/middle school partnership to allow rising seventh and eighth graders to work with students at the high school to create public presentations focused on natural resources and astronomy. They are utilizing the planetarium at the middle school and observatory on the roof of the high school.

Warner Elementary School (Red Clay Consolidated School District): \$24,099 for WIZ (Warner Inspiration Zone), expanding the

school's fourth and fifth grade club period to second and third grades. Last year's clubs focused on topics such as math, LEGO Robotics, Science Olympiad, poetry, Spanish and agriculture.

Brittingham and Shields elementary schools (Cape Henlopen School District): \$48,012 for creating a district consortium to help close a socio-economic divide in the district. Focusing on fifth grade, the project will support teacher collaboration and training.

A.I. duPont, Dickinson, McKean, Conrad, Cab Calloway, Delaware Military Academy and Wilmington Charter high schools (Red Clay Consolidated School District): \$70,500 for a free SAT prep evening program offered to all juniors in the district.

H.B. duPont Middle School (Red Clay Consolidated School District): \$32,710 for CELEB (Cognitiave and Emotional Learning and Esteem Building) Program, authored by Wilmington Pastor Derrick Johnson. The goals of the program are to reduce bullying, improve academic performance and decrease suspension rates.

All Red Clay elementary and middle schools (Red Clay Consolidated School District): \$122,600 for a grade 4-6 partnership institute, which will expand educator content knowledge related to the Common Core State Standards.

Gateway Charter School (charter): \$50,922 for expansion of reading workshop model, which targets special education students and incorporates the use of technology to enhance the child's reading experience.



Fourth-grade students McKenna McCausland, left, and Grace Bellamy rely on Chromebooks to work in Tara Amsterdam's classroom at Wilbur Elementary School.

Technically speaking

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

If children are experiential, digital learners, fourth-grade teacher Tara Amsterdam believes it is her responsibility to connect with and inspire them through their most trusted tool—technology.

“Each year, they come in a little more knowledgeable and tech-savvy,” said Amsterdam. “They’re living in a world where they have immediate access to information anytime.”

Amsterdam, named one of this year’s iEducate Delaware honorees, teaches at Wilbur Elementary School in the Colonial School District. Over the past 14 years, she has developed an extensive repertoire of technology skills, which has enabled her to seamlessly integrate technology into every subject area. Three years ago, she was selected as the elementary representative on the committee formed by the district to develop and implement a one-to-one technology initiative.

Last year, she piloted the district-wide Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative, in which students were encouraged to use their personal laptops, tablets or smartphones in the classroom to enhance the educational learning environment.

“The district has been very supportive and not afraid to try new things,” said Amsterdam. “Instead of banning student devices, Colonial is choosing to capitalize on the availability of technology in the students’ hands as educational tools.”

Recognizing the wide range of needs of her student

population – varying in terms of language and income – Amsterdam has also worked to expand what is accessible to them in the classroom. She acquired five Google Chromebooks last year and the school purchased 25 more Chromebooks this year – enough to equip every one of her students with devices.

“The students love it,” said Amsterdam. “They’re so engaged and working so hard – and they don’t even realize it. We’re giving them the resources and they’re producing.”

Student Carissa Vendetti said having the Chromebooks makes it easier and faster for her and her fellow classmates to do research and complete projects. She also praised Amsterdam’s teaching style.

“She always inspires us to try our best and never lets us give up,” said Vendetti.

Amsterdam has flipped the classroom model, delivering instruction at home on video and working one-on-one or in targeted small groups during the day to personalize learning. She has a website and YouTube channel, which she uses to reach her students at home.

In her room, students regularly turn in digital assignments and create digital animations and screencast videos to demonstrate their learning. They are able to publish their writing on a wiki, making it easy to swap ideas and information on projects.

“By posting on digital walls and uploading their work to



Tara Amsterdam uses technology to enhance learning.

digital portfolios, they’re able to communicate and collaborate with one another in a way that wasn’t possible before,” said Amsterdam, who is also Colonial’s district teacher of the year.

“We get to do our work in a new way, not just on paper,” said student Grace Bellamy. “It’s really interactive. Mrs. Amsterdam has her own website and we get to use things like Glogster to write about what we’re doing, which is cool.”

Amsterdam’s students use the student response Socrative system for real-time, formative assessment. They are also part of Global Read Aloud and are connected with a class in Hamilton, Ontario through that project.

As one of five iEducate Delaware honorees, Amsterdam was recognized at the Vision 2015 Conference. Launched last year by the Rodel Foundation, iEducate Delaware continues to unearth stories of Delaware educators who are inspiring young people to learn. As part of the award, Amsterdam has received \$2,000 to support her work with technology.