

Sell(ing) point: state's top teacher

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

When a fire drill interrupted Sussex Technical High School teacher John Sell's composition class, there was a collective sigh of disappointment among his students.



John Sell

"If there was a fire drill in any other class, we'd be excited for the break, but not this one," said senior Crystal Loudon. "You don't want to miss Mr. Sell's class."

That is no doubt the reason why Sell, in his 22nd year teaching, was named the Delaware State Teacher of the Year for 2013. D.J. Forcucci, an English content specialist at Sussex Tech, called Sell a naturally gifted teacher in a letter to the Teacher of the Year Selection Committee.

"It isn't about his content knowledge, although he could quote any poem written in the last

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Clayton Elementary School kindergarten teacher Wendy McCabe teaches students sounds of the alphabet.

PHOTOS:
JASON
MINTO

It's a small world

Youngest students now studying foreign languages

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

More than 340 Delaware kindergarteners have begun their study of either Mandarin Chinese or Spanish this year and will be able to continue that study into middle school, thanks to the launch of the Governor's World Language Expansion Initiative.

"World language capacity is crucial for Delaware to maintain and strengthen our

state's economy," said Gov. Jack Markell. "Delaware graduates who enter the job market will be at a significant advantage in today's global marketplace. We want students in Delaware to have the challenge and the opportunity to learn another language before they reach high school."

In the immersion program, students learn academic content through a second language.

They learn the second language by encountering and using the language in multiple meaningful contexts. The focus is on building proficiency – being able to use the language – not on teaching grammar.

Delaware's program includes 50 percent instruction in the world language and 50 percent in English. Classes have two teachers – one for each language. The

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Supporting successful implementation of Common Core State Standards

**Mark Murphy**

In a recent interview for a newspaper story evaluating the state's progress implementing Delaware's education plan, I was asked about my focus. It was an easy answer for me: ensuring that we support successful implementation of the

Common Core State Standards.

My focus on this area is based upon the significance of the work – the Common Core State Standards are fundamental to our mission that every student will graduate from our system ready for college or career, with the freedom to choose his or her life's course. In fact, that is the starting point that the standards came from: looking at what students need to be prepared for college and career and then back-mapping the standards through the years from there.

The standards are not simply a change to when we teach what but rather are changing the way we teach.

First, some quick background: The standards are the result of a bipartisan, state-led effort by the National Governor's Association, currently chaired by Gov. Markell and the Council of Chief State

Officers, in collaboration with educator groups at all levels. Conversations began in 2005, and Delaware adopted the standards in August 2010.

In addition to creating a college- and career-ready culture, the standards aim to: provide academic consistency within Delaware and across state lines; guide instruction with developmentally appropriate performance standards; establish clear goals, expectations and learning progressions; and guarantee adequate academic preparation for all students, eliminating educational inequities.

The standards are clear on the "what" that educators need to teach but do not dictate the "how." This is not a national curriculum. It is not a curriculum at all. Rather, the standards allow teachers to continue to create lesson plans and tailor instruction to meet individual student needs, including providing advanced coursework beyond the core.

But there are significant shifts involved. In English language arts, Common Core emphasizes building content through non-fiction and informational texts. Reading and writing is grounded in evidence drawn from text, and students practice with complex texts and their academic vocabulary. For math, the foci are more time to learn concepts, recurrent themes and depth over breadth. There is

coherence, building thinking across grades and linking major topics within grades. And there is rigor to pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency and application.

I know many of you, well supported by your districts and charter schools, are working to implement these shifts. You see the importance of this work and how it will help us better prepare our students. I also know it isn't easy and isn't seamless.

Please know that my staff is ready to help. We have been working with your district and charter leadership to support other trainings, curriculum alignment and developing tools for you available on the Common Core website that launched this summer.

Please take time to review the resources online at www.doe.k12.de.us/commoncore/ and reach out with questions and suggestions on how we can better support you. The point person on this work for the department is Shelley Rouser. Contact her at Shelley.rouser@doe.k12.de.us or 302-735-4279.

Thank you for all you do every day to support our students.

Mark Murphy is Delaware secretary of education.

DOE welcomes two new administrators

**David Blowman**

The Delaware Department of Education recently welcomed two new senior leadership team members: Deputy Secretary David Blowman and Chief of Staff Mary Kate McLaughlin.

Born and raised north of England, Blowman graduated from the University of Leeds with a bachelor of arts in economics and political science before earning a master's of science in policy analysis from Penn State University. He began with the state as tax policy analyst in the Delaware Department of Finance. After two years he moved to the State Budget Office, where he spent more than four years as a fiscal and policy analyst, the last three of which as the senior analyst responsible for Delaware's public education budget.

In February 1999, Blowman was tapped by then-Secretary of Education Iris Metts to serve as executive assistant, a role he continued under former Secretary of Education Valerie Woodruff until 2002. For the past 10 years Blowman served as the chief financial officer for the Brandywine School District, guiding the district through three successful referenda and restoring its financial health. Blowman lives in Wilmington with his wife of 13 years, Sheryl. They have one daughter, Meredith, who attends fifth grade at Claymont Elementary School in the Brandywine School District.

McLaughlin graduated from the University of Delaware with a bachelor of arts in international relations before serving in the first class of Public Allies in Wilmington. Her career then took her to Cecil Community College in

Maryland, where she worked for five years administering non-credit career and vocational training programs. She began her legislative experience as a policy analyst for Maryland's Workforce Investment Board under Governor Parris Glendening's administration.

She joined Delaware state government as chief policy advisor for the Department of Health and Human Services during Gov Minner's first term, where she helped to implement key initiatives such as the smoking ban (Clean Indoor Air Act) and the cancer treatment program. In Minner's second term, she moved into the governor's office, serving as advisor on Health & Social Services, Children's Issues and Labor. She left Minner's office at end of second term to serve in government affairs roles with Valero's Delaware City Refinery and subsequently with Wyeth pharmaceuticals in Madison, New Jersey, where she was the manager of state and federal government affairs for the company's Consumer Division.

McLaughlin joined the Markell administration in February 2009 serving in a dual role – primarily as Deputy to the Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families, and secondarily as Gov. Markell's liaison on Health & Social Services & the Department. Her roles included work on early education and overseeing the education unit at DSCYF.

A Wilmington resident and proud aunt to nine nieces and nephews ages 8 to 20, McLaughlin also serves on the 21st Century Fund for Delaware's Children Board and is a mentor to youth aging out of foster care.

**Mary Kate McLaughlin**

UP TO THE CHALLENGE



Thomas A. Edison Charter School kindergarten teacher Andrew di Michele works with student Ny' Zhae Hines.

Delaware Early Learning Survey in its first year

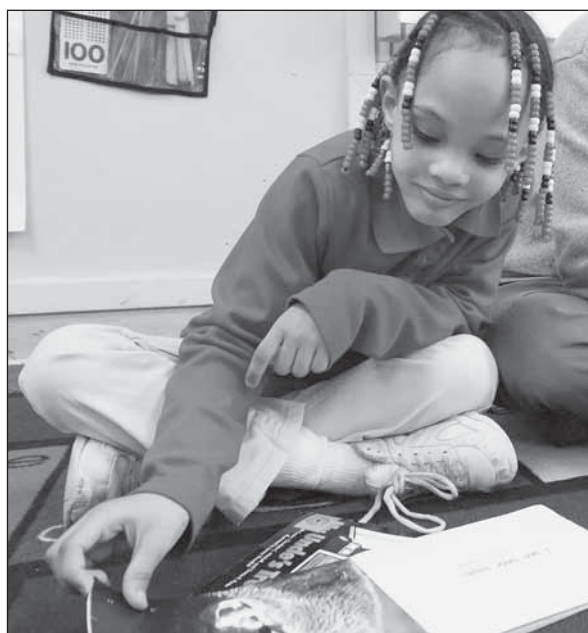
BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Each year, 8,500 children in Delaware enter kindergarten with a varying degree of skills. Schools, early learning programs, teachers and parents all want to know about the strengths and needs of children to provide effective learning opportunities and support successful linkages between the early learning and K-12 school systems. The fall launch of the Delaware Early Learner Survey (DE-ELS) is part of an exciting new initiative in Delaware — the federally funded Early Learning Challenge — designed to accelerate the state's work to support children's school-readiness.

The DE-ELS relies on kindergarten teachers' observations of students and their professional judgment of children's skills and development milestones. It focuses on the following areas: language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical and motor development, and social-emotional development. The survey was conducted within the first 30 days of the school year to provide the best picture of the readiness of entering kindergarteners.

"It's a valuable tool to determine what our students' abilities and learning styles are, and to measure their growth," said Edison Charter School kindergarten teacher Andrew di Michele, one of the 100 teachers statewide to implement the survey. "I'm more of an improvisational teacher, so it's given me structure for detail and organization."

Named the state's Charter School Teacher of the Year for 2012, di Michele earned his bachelor's in philosophy and his master's in French and served as an adjunct professor at



Student Leilani Backus works on her reading.

Tulane University in New Orleans before he began teaching kindergarten.

di Michele volunteered to be a part of the first-year implementation for the Early Learners Survey, recognizing that the information garnered will be used to help both early learning programs and elementary schools throughout the state. The state provided implementation support and resources to educators and schools through online guidance, customized individual assistance, and in-person training.

"It's an advantage for us to figure out what the baseline is, right when they step in, so we can put instruction and intervention plans in place," said di Michele.

Teachers in the pilot were successfully able to survey more than 1,000 kindergarteners this year, meeting the first-year Early Learning Challenge goals. Participating districts and charter schools included: Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Caesar Rodney, Cape Henlopen, Capital, Christina, Colonial, Indian River, Lake Forest, Laurel, Milford, Seaford, Red Clay, Woodbridge Academy of Dover, Delaware College Preparatory Academy and Newark Charter.

The information garnered from the survey will be used by the state to improve its supports for early learning programs, while also informing kindergarten instruction. Results are not being used in the decision of children's grade placement, nor will the data be made public. An advisory committee of participating teachers is working to revise the survey, while also recommending how the next cohort of teachers can better use the tool next year. The committee meets monthly.

"It has been a privilege to work with such a committed group of educators," said Harriet Dichter, Executive Director of the Delaware Office of Early Learning. "Their deep dedication and cooperation enabled the state to meet its Early Learning Challenge goals for its young learners this year. We could not have done it without them."

Next year, an additional 200 teachers will roll out the survey in their classrooms, and statewide implementation is scheduled for fall of 2014.

Dashboards provide new Insight

By PAUL HALLORAN

After a successful pilot program last spring, the Delaware Department of Education’s Insight Dashboard system has been implemented statewide, allowing educators to make data-driven decisions to improve instruction and learning for students.

The web-based dashboards were made available to all teachers on Sept. 4, as well as

administrators who requested access to the system. As of the end of November, about 40 percent of the state’s 10,000 teachers had logged in, and there were more than 8,500 visits to the site, according to Reese Robinson, Program Manager for Race to the Top Technology Projects for the DDOE.

“We are reaching critical mass in the amount of functionality and the number of visits,” Robinson said.

An updated version of the program was launched in October, working out some bugs and providing a new metric that identified all students who had not taken the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) exams during the fall assessment period.

Funded with part of the state’s \$119 million federal Race to the Top grant, the Insight Dashboard takes data from disparate sources and puts it in one place in a clear, easy-to-

interpret picture. For example, a teacher can look at the grades for all students in the class as well as DCAS scores on the same screen. “It’s all presented in the form of metrics,” Robinson said, noting that a teacher can easily see what percentage of students in the class have scored proficient or better on the DCAS exams, or the attendance rate for each student. “The visual presentation of the metrics makes it easy to identify problems, patterns and areas of concern with a district, school or classroom and take action.”

Attendance is an area in which the dashboard can be beneficial. “Research from 2010 tells us that about 88 percent (attendance) is the cutoff point for potential dropout,” Robinson said. “Teachers can determine what percentage of the time students are in school.”

The system is designed to be a one-stop for student, class, school and district performance

information. Including maintenance, the state has spent \$1.3 million on the project. The system is provided free of charge by the state to all districts and charter schools.

Robinson said the DDOE gets about two dozen calls a month from users either reporting bugs in the system or seeking additional training. There is also an online mechanism to provide feedback.

The next major upgrade will be released in January, and will include a watch list feature, whereby a teacher can separate students into different groups and track their individual and collective progress. For example, students could be grouped according to reading ability.

Another feature that will be introduced is historic metrics. Teachers will be able to compare current attendance rates to another period of time, such as a school year, grading period, month or week.

Sell is Delaware’s Teacher of the Year in 2013

TEACHER: from Page 1

two centuries, and it isn’t about his pedagogy, although he memorized the Common Core standards in a day,” Forcucci said. “It is about his innate charisma. It is about his ability to connect with students so naturally and on so many levels that they seek him out on the days they don’t have him just to say hi. And it is about his ability to make his students and his peers better through their experiences with him.”

“He connects with us and makes class fun,” said senior Abby Genshaw.

For Sell, laughter truly is the best medicine, or at least the best way to connect with his students.

“The most important thing is to create a learning environment that’s engaging and enjoyable,” he said. “If you can laugh and smile a lot, your students want to be there.”

His second priority has been making the curriculum accessible 24 hours a day by uploading all of his course materials online.

“You want to give your students the most opportunities possible to access the curriculum,” said Sell. “If they can access it 24/7 through databases and websites, they’re more organized and accountable.”

Noted by his colleagues for his use of technology to connect with students and parents, Sell was the first teacher at Sussex Tech to use online instructional activities and assessments in his daily instruction. He also is a lead teacher outside the classroom, serving as an original member of his school’s teacher leadership academy, a mentor for Sussex Tech’s new teacher program and a leader of a professional learning community. He is currently



Teacher of the Year John Sell is an English teacher at Sussex Technical High School. Above, he is shown working with student Natea Welch.

teaching 10th-grade English, as well as two sections of English composition, through which seniors can earn up to six college credits through Delaware State University.

A native of Pennsylvania, Sell began teaching at Caesar Rodney High School in 1991, and is in his 12th year at Sussex Tech. He earned his bachelor’s degree in English education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and his master’s in curriculum and instruction from Delaware State University, and is completing a doctorate in educational leadership from Northcentral University.

“My parents always stressed the importance of education,” he said. “When I first student-taught, that’s when I knew it was the fit for me. It’s an incomparable feeling.”

Sell’s wife, Michelle, is a teacher at Postlethwait Middle School in the

Caesar Rodney School District. The couple met at a writing conference. They have two children who attend Caesar Rodney schools: Tyler, 11, and Michael, 9.

Sell’s selection as Delaware’s top educator makes him the 49th Teacher of the Year since Delaware’s recognition program began in 1965. The demanding process of selecting Delaware’s Teacher of the Year is designed to find that teacher who is most representative of the entire profession through in-class observations, portfolio reviews and consideration of finalists by a representative panel. This year’s celebration was sponsored in part by ING Foundation.

Sell inherits from outgoing Teacher of the Year Amber Augustus the responsibility of representing all teachers in Delaware. He will

address community groups, business leaders, legislators and educational organizations to inform the public about the status of Delaware schools. He also will become Delaware’s entrant in the National Teacher of the Year Program. Sponsored by Target, it is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with the ING Foundation, Phoenix and People to People Ambassador Programs.

By action of the General Assembly, Sell has also received a \$5,000 grant to use for the educational benefit of his students, as well two personal grants totaling an additional \$5,000. Additionally, he received an educational technology package valued at approximately \$18,000 from the SMART Technologies, ULC, as well as a \$1,000 grant for educational/classroom use from American Institutes for Research; grants from the Delaware State Education Association, the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce and the Delaware Professional Standards Board; a State of Delaware Teacher of the Year commemorative plate from the Division of Motor Vehicles; free graduate-level courses from Delaware’s higher education institutions, including a full doctorate program from Wilmington University; a gold watch from the Delaware State Teachers of the Year Association; a 10-karat gold ring from Jostens; and lunch in Washington D.C. with Sen. Tom Carper.

“I had to get over the initial shock, but it was a humbling experience and it’s opening so many doors,” Sell said. “I’m able to travel and meet so many incredible people and share ideas. It’s very exciting.”

District Teachers of the Year

Katie Martinenza
Olive B. Loss Elementary

Sarah Rusk
Hanby Elementary

Karen Hruz
Kirk Middle School

Julie Alexander
Harry O. Eisenbery Elementary

Donna Poore
St. Georges Technical High

Emily Burnham
Pencader Charter High School

Patricia Dallas
Richardson Park Learning Center

Susan Passwaters
Milton Elementary

Thomas Slavens
Delmar Middle School

Cynthia Baker
Millsboro Middle School

Crystal Ellison
Laurel Middle School

Laura Amidon
Seaford Central Elementary

John Sell
Sussex Technical School

Constance Bean
Woodbridge High School

Kimberly P. Simmons
W. Reilly Brown Elementary

Jennifer O’Keefe
South Dover Elementary

Clara B. Conn
Lake Forest Central Elementary

Michele McKinzie
Lulu Ross Elementary

Sean P. Kenny
POLYTECH High School

Stefanie Ralph
Smyrna Middle School

P.S. DUPONT: HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Students plant the seeds for their future

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Students at P.S. duPont Middle School in the Brandywine School District are planting the seeds for their future among the beets, tomatoes and herbs of their new, 3,500-square-foot school garden.

The garden, which features native plants, as well as a vegetable patch, pond, greenhouse and seating area, is a result of a partnership with Longwood Gardens, Bancroft Construction, Cotswold Gardens, First State Landscaping and Wistar Equipment, and support from an anonymous donor. The project was the brainchild of Lisa Rochford, Facilities Specialist for the Brandywine School District, who was chief of school facilities at P.S. duPont Middle School in 2008, when the school reopened after a \$44 million renovation project – the largest renovation project in state history.

“Lisa poured her heart and soul into this project,” said Alexis Andrianopoulos, Public Information Officer for the Brandywine School District.

Rochford recognized the potential of the school’s courtyard,



Eighth graders Tansia Charles, left, and Cionie Lum water the vegetables in their school garden; below, Nicholas Jones.

enclosed by the school’s three-story walls, and approached Nathan Hayward III, the president of board of trustees at Longwood Gardens, who spoke at the school’s grand re-opening ceremony. He was quick to set the plan in motion.

“It was a perfect space to develop,” said Rochford. “It already had trees and plants, but nothing native that would be conducive to maintenance and growth. We wanted a place for students to enjoy educational and extracurricular opportunities for years to come.”

Representatives from Longwood Gardens met with students and staff over the next two years to discuss and develop plans for the site. The end result aligns perfectly with the vision of Pierre Samuel DuPont, who was the founder of Longwood Gardens and the major donor when

the original school facility was constructed in 1935.

The garden was officially unveiled during a ribbon cutting on Sept. 26. The school’s horticulture club, led by science teacher Mike Williams, maintains the space, and residents from the neighboring Harlan Civic Association have also volunteered to assist with maintenance. Students will be able to use the space for hands-on learning, and much of the food harvested will be used in the cafeteria.

“I like getting to harvest all the plants,” said Nicholas Jones, a seventh-grader and member of the horticulture club. “We were able to take some of it home and make salads and use the peppers for stir-fry.”

“It’s fun taking care of the plants and being with your friends,” said Tansia Charles, an eighth-grader.

“I like gathering around with everyone and learning about crops I never heard about,” said eighth-grader Cionie Lum. “It was interesting to see how different tomatoes have different tastes – some sweet, some sour.”

“It gives students a sense of purpose, taking care of it,” said Principal Lewis Cheatwood. “It has also opened doors for the community and alumni to get involved.”

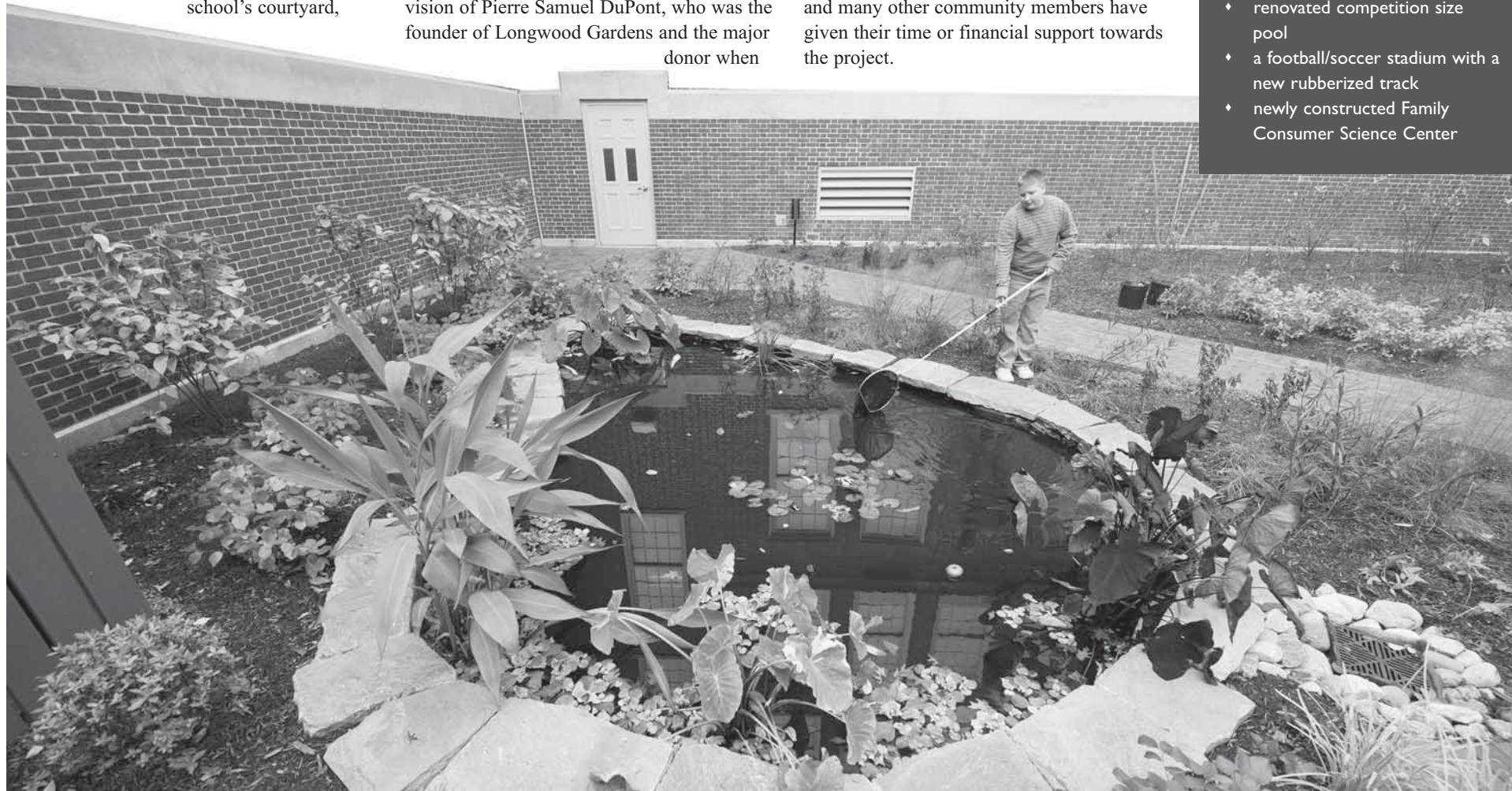
The class of 1947 generously stepped up to pay for half of the costs of the greenhouse, and many other community members have given their time or financial support towards the project.

About the school

Designed by E. William Martin and built in 1935 for \$1.9 million, P.S. duPont originally served high school students. It became an elementary school in 1978, then an intermediate school for students in grades 4-6 and has since been transformed into a middle school.

The new, three-story structure has been designed to accommodate up to 950 students. Designing architects masterfully preserved the historic charm and character of the school while complimenting it with all the modern amenities of a new building. In addition to the garden, a few of the building’s features include:

- ♦ a 1,200-seat auditorium with new lighting and sound system
- ♦ a newly constructed STEM Learning Center
- ♦ a cafeteria with restaurant-style seating and food prep and kitchen areas
- ♦ two gymnasiums
- ♦ an art display gallery
- ♦ a restored historic library with all original oak casework
- ♦ a history room with relics from the past 77 years
- ♦ three full computer labs
- ♦ a variety of instructional technology to enhance learning
- ♦ renovated competition size pool
- ♦ a football/soccer stadium with a new rubberized track
- ♦ newly constructed Family Consumer Science Center



Schools earn rewards and recognition for excellence

Success stories

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

At South Dover Elementary School, test scores skyrocketed from the fall to the spring last year, with a more than 70-percent increase in students meeting or exceeding standards – the most gains statewide.

“We have a ‘so what?’ attitude,” said Principal Michelle Duke. “Give us any issue – students are tardy, students are falling below the achievement line – and we’ll say, ‘so what can we do?’ and come up with a solution. It’s not

just about waiting to see what happens. We make it happen.”

Duke, in her third year as principal, is proud of the school’s continued academic success and students’ strong desire to excel. With a large emphasis on core subjects, math and reading, students receive 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction with support from reading specialists. They are provided differentiated instruction in small groups that are based on assessment data and focus on the five core components of literacy at each

grade level. The school also addresses its academic needs through the use of extensive after-school enrichment programs, Positive Behavior Support program, “Super Citizen” program, student mentoring and family nights. One of the most important priorities for Duke, however, has been making a personal connection with each and every one of the school’s 487 students.

“I don’t want to know that 12 percent aren’t making it,” said Duke. “I want to know that

Bobby, Jill or Sammy aren’t making it. We check in on the students and monitor them every week or every other week.”

In recognition of its progress, South Dover Elementary was named one of 19 winners of the state’s Reward and Recognition Awards, announced in October.

These awards, created by legislation spearheaded by the Lt. Governor Matt Denn and passed by the Delaware General Assembly in 2009, formerly were called Academic Achievement Awards and

annually gave five public schools \$150,000 each for significantly closing the achievement gap and/or exceeding adequate yearly progress on state tests for two or more consecutive years.

This year, because of the state’s federal Race to the Top funding and the U.S. Department of Education’s approval of a new state school accountability system for Delaware, the Delaware Department of Education was able to expand the number of schools recognized from five to

19, in four categories. Each school, with the exception of the Schools of Continued Excellence, was awarded \$50,000. Winners were selected based on 2011-12 data.

“While the monetary award is lower this year, I am glad we were able to recognize triple the number of schools,” Denn said. “I am thrilled to be able to honor this many schools with an award that will help them expand services for our students. I am proud of the work our teachers and administrators do every day in our schools.”

2012 WINNERS

Reward Schools

Title I schools (federal classification based on high percentage of low income population) identified for being either highest performing or high progress.

- Newark Charter School, Newark
- South Dover Elementary School, Capital School District

Recognition Schools

These are chosen for exceptional performance and/or closing the achievement gap. Both Title I and non-Title I schools can qualify. Two of the schools are also Title I Distinguished school awardees. They were Title I schools that met the criteria for Recognition School that had not been Title I Distinguished school awardees in past two years.

- Appoquinimink High School, Appoquinimink School District
- Beacon Middle School, Cape Henlopen School District
- John M. Clayton Elementary School, Indian River School District (also a Title I Distinguished school awardee)
- Dover Air Force Base Middle School, Caesar Rodney School District
- William B. Keene Elementary School, Christina School District
- Kuumba Academy Charter School, Wilmington
- Laurel High School, Laurel School District
- Lord Baltimore Elementary School, Indian River School District
- Evelyn I. Morris Early Childhood Center, Milford School District (also a Title I Distinguished school awardee)
- Mount Pleasant Elementary School, Brandywine School District
- 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

Schools of Continued Excellence

These schools have qualified for a second consecutive year of recognition. They are not receiving additional funds to allow more schools to receive funding and recognition. They will be eligible for funds again next year if they meet the Reward or Recognition School qualifications.

- Elbert-Palmer Elementary School, Christina School District
- Long Neck Elementary School, Indian River School District



Above, the South Dover Elementary School librarian Nancy Vickers reads to students.

Photos from top right to bottom: South Dover Elementary Principal Michelle Duke works with Mataysia Evans; fourth-grader Tariq Williams gets some work done; several of Cynthia Junge’s students know the answer to a question.

PHOTOS BY JASON MINTO





Data Coach Dr. Robert Burt, right, works with Principal Jason Peel and teacher Judy Scheidecker at POLYTECH High School.

DATA COACHES

Teachers utilize time together to develop skills

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Delaware teachers feel the 90 minutes of weekly time to plan together with colleagues and data coaches is helping them build useful skills and giving them more confidence in making instructional decisions based on data, according to the results of a state survey of educators across Delaware.

The weekly time — also commonly referred to as professional learning communities or PLCs for short — was a key component of the state's top-ranked federal Race to the Top (RTTT) plan and the centerpiece of the Delaware Department of Education's efforts to fuel collaboration amongst educators. All educators who teach core subject areas meet in small, consistent groups of six to 10 educators for 90 minutes weekly. They are usually joined by data coaches twice monthly.

Last year was the first year of full implementation of the state's Data Coach Project, which was created as a support structure for PLC work happening in districts and charters statewide. Through the Data Coach Project, skilled coaches partner on-site with teachers, principals and district administrators to build lasting capacity in analyzing actual student data. They train PLC leaders and often directly collaborate with educators to adjust and individualize instruction, monitor student progress and intervene early for students who are drifting off-track.

"Teachers and administrators are telling us that they appreciate having — sometimes for the first time — the chance to coordinate and plan with their colleagues. And they are benefiting from the

skills and analysis brought to the group by the data coaches," Secretary of Education Mark Murphy said. "While there are areas for us to adjust, we are glad that teachers are finding this time and coaching valuable for their growth and for their students' growth."

At POLYTECH High School, data coach Dr. Robert Burt has been an integral part of the PLC work.

"Dr. Burt encourages us to set time for reflection," said social studies teacher Sara Faucett. "Having someone focus our attention is helpful."

"He's worked with us to think about differentiated instruction and how to help students not just by addressing their weaknesses, but also their strengths, and taking those to the next level," said English teacher Judy Scheidecker.

Burt, who spent 38 years as an educator in Pennsylvania, said it was Delaware's RTTT application that attracted him to the state.

"It was brilliant," said Burt. "I knew this was a place where equity and access are valued for all students. Giving every child a shot at college- and career-readiness is incredibly inspiring."

Through the Coach the Coach model, Burt has been trained as a data coach by Wireless Generation. He spends at least two days a week at POLYTECH, looking at the big picture in terms of academic goals and support for students, as well as the daily collections of data. He particularly enjoys sitting in on the PLC meetings.

"The way these teachers interact with one another and their willingness to try new things is top-notch," said Burt. "They have a real thirst for knowledge, and there's always a lively exchange

of ideas."

State-wide, the educators who responded to the survey rated their data coaches well with at least 70 percent saying their data coach has the appropriate skills to facilitate their professional learning community, is responsive to the needs of their PLC and is responsive to teachers' individual needs. Of elementary teachers surveyed, 73 percent rated their data coach as "good," "very good" or "excellent." About 72 percent of middle school teachers said the same, as did 63 percent of high school teachers.

When questioned about data usage:

* 63 percent said their PLCs are helping them build useful skills around the collection and use of data

* 59 percent said they feel more confident in making instructional decisions based on data because of their PLCs

* 88 percent of those who said their PLCs are helping them build useful skills said they feel more confident in making instructional decisions based on data as a result of their PLCs

The survey, administered last spring, was commissioned by the state as part of its statewide PLC initiative. The Data Coach Project is a collaboration between the state's Teacher & Leader Effectiveness Unit with Wireless Generation, which has recruited, selected, trained and provided 29 data coaches to the state's schools over the past two years. The survey was designed to assess participant satisfaction and efficacy while helping identify ways to adjust the project to better meet educator and student needs in the second full year of statewide implementation.

Charter changes benefit students

In collaboration, the Delaware State Board of Education, Governor's Office and Department of Education have developed a comprehensive performance framework to ensure that each and every DDOE-authorized charter school is serving students with high-quality public education.

State officials — recognizing the system that was established in 1995, when the state's charter law first went into effect, was due to be refined — have been working for two years on the performance framework.

In 2010, the state sought an evaluation by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to provide an external assessment with recommendations on how to strengthen Delaware's system. Many of the suggestions in NACSA's report, published in March 2011, are incorporated in the framework, which was released in September and will go into effect next year.

"This comprehensive framework will set the academic, fiscal and governance standards by which all state-authorized charter schools will be evaluated," Gov. Jack Markell said.

"This will help inform the state, school and public about how the school is doing and what needs exist to promote and sustain quality performance," said Secretary of Education Mark Murphy.

"We were pleased to be able to work with Delaware to improve its charter authorizing practices," said NACSA President and CEO Greg Richmond.

The performance framework looks at: Academic performance, including student growth, student achievement, state and federal accountability, post-secondary readiness and mission-specific academic goals

Financial performance, including near-term indicators and sustainability

Organizational performance, including education program, financial management and oversight, governance and reporting, students and employees, school environment and additional obligations

The focus is on outcomes, not inputs.

The state has finalized a new charter school application that goes into effect this year and a template for charter performance agreements for existing charter schools.

COACHING LEADERS

Principals receive one-on-one training

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

There's a reason why Cal Ripken Jr., baseball's all-time Iron Man, never stopped working with batting coaches, or why Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympian in history, remained loyal to swim coach Bob Bowman.

It's because great performance requires more than effort, commitment, raw talent and hard work. Great performance requires feedback, reflection and continuous improvement.

Principals in high-need schools across the state are discovering just that, as they receive one-on-one training from the state's leadership coaches.

The program, which launched last year and is funded through Delaware's federal Race to the Top grant, follows a personal-trainer model, providing principals with individualized support. The coaches, who average 25 years of education experience including success in turnaround schools, are contracted through Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Leadership and Learning Center. Three full-time coaches are working with five schools this year, while two part-time coaches together are supporting five more. The coaches are required to spend about 30 hours a month in the buildings, beginning their work in each school with an audit with the principal and the school's leadership team



Al Thompson of The Leadership and Learning Center, left, coaches Seaford High School Principal Dr. Todd Fishburn.

to analyze opportunities for improvement. They then design the training and support for the identified areas, which could include focuses such as financial management, instructional leadership or time management. The coaches' extensive experience, insight and monitoring of the goals and actions of the leader provide an impartial, fresh perspective to support personal growth and system-wide improvement.

Al Thompson, a professional development associate with the Leadership and Learning Center, is in his second year working with five principals, including Seaford High School Principal

Dr. Todd Fishburn, who was principal of West Seaford Elementary School last year.

"I'm not his supervisor or evaluator; I'm his confidante," said Thompson. "The best thing I can do is just listen. Todd will ask a question, think about it and often resolve his own challenges."

"It's refreshing to have another set of eyes and ears — someone to help make you see things or think more deeply about the things that weigh on you," said Fishburn. "In this fast-paced environment, it's often difficult to slow down on your own, but it's paramount to be able to in order to make conscious, effective decisions."

In his first year as principal of the high school, Fishburn is overseeing a staff of 68 and a student body of nearly 800.

"It's a big village, and I need a thought partner and coach to push my vision forward," said Fishburn.

The pair often focuses on Fishburn's 100-day action plan, and will take learning walks around the school, stopping to visit various classrooms.

"I learn as much being here with him during the day as I hope he learns from me, and I get to take that knowledge to the other schools," said Thompson.

In addition to his work at Seaford High, Thompson divides his time among the following schools: West Seaford Elementary, Blades Elementary, Seaford Middle School and Laurel Middle School.

"I try to allot one day a week to each school, but obviously my schedule changes to accommodate the needs of the principals," said Thompson.

The coaches and principals, many of whom are new to their role, are scheduled to meet together for 12 months followed by six months of continuing support.

The program is one of several distinct statewide professional development initiatives to build critical skills among teachers and leaders. The School Administration Managers (SAM) program focuses on the time management of Delaware's public school administrators. The state's development coaches are trained and calibrated in assessing performance, providing feedback and identifying opportunities for teacher development. They provide coaching to assessors to improve the quality of performance appraisal and instructional planning. Principals who are selected for the leadership coach pairing — a more comprehensive and intensive program — would not also be assigned a development coach. Rather, each of the programs is designed to target the specific needs of that school and its leadership.

Family matters: Schools receive grants for parent engagement

It is Delmar School District Superintendent David Ring's belief that it takes a whole school district and community to raise an engaged parent.

Delmar was among five school districts and a charter school that won state grants totaling almost \$263,000 to support projects aimed to better engage families.

The district is using its \$50,000 in funding to expand evening school resource office hours for parents, support district pride day and pay for technology for a parent involvement tracking system. Ring said the grant is accelerating the district's family and community engagement initiatives, specifically targeting the parents of at-risk students who are not passing the DCAS and/or not passing their coursework.

"We're approaching our parent outreach initiative with a totally new lens that focuses on a comprehensive approach to educating the whole parent," said Ring. "In this belief, our plan addresses the mind, body and soul of the parent by exploring the academics of our school system from a non-threatening venue, engaging in care of the physical body by joining us in

our monthly Dinner N' Learn sessions, and learning about the counseling, nursing and wellness center support services within our district."

In addition to Delmar, the other winners were:

- Capital School District (\$49,889) to create "Parent Patrol" at Dover High School as well as "Inner Circle of Parents" that each teacher will communicate with regularly.
- Christina School District (\$48,000) to support the district's Parent University, including Family Technology Centers and creation of virtual resource center online.
- Kuumba Academy Charter School (\$47,823) to support family/community resource coordinator who will target parents of students behaviorally or academically at-risk; anti-truancy campaign; family outreach and home visit program; and parent/teacher training program.
- Lake Forest School District (\$34,119) to support Spartan Sprouts program, which targets children and families not eligible for other agency services but who may benefit from services such as parenting skills and child development

education as well as Lake's Imagination Library, which allows parents to sign up their children to receive a book a month until they enter kindergarten.

•Red Clay Consolidated School District (\$32,876) for the Red Clay Children Achieving Network, which will design sessions to support student and parent needs after assessing current assets and researching best practices.

This is the second round of winners in the competitive grant process, which was open to all districts and charter schools to apply to up to \$50,000. In December 2011, the state granted Indian River School District \$37,705 for a "Student Success STEMS from Parental Support" educational series and Seaford School District \$47,476 to open an evening Homework Center and support other efforts at its Family Resource Center. The Delaware Department of Education is funding the grants with part of the community engagement funds in the state portion of Delaware's federal Race to the Top grant. This money is in addition to the local RTTT funds district and charter schools already were awarded.

Around Delaware Schools



Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Murphy congratulates Destinny Gosnell on her new iPad.

New Castle County Vo-Tech School District

Destinny Gosnell, an 11th-grade cosmetology student at Howard High School of Technology in the New Castle County Vo-Tech School District, is the first student to receive an iPad at the first public high school to issue iPads in the First State.

Christina School District

Two bills that implement components to combat bullying were signed by Governor Jack Markell in August at George V. Kirk Middle School in Newark. The efforts are the direct result of work done by the Lt. Governor and Attorney General in cooperation with the

strong sponsorship of House and Senate Education Chairs Sen. David Sokola and Rep. Terry Schooley.

"Education is one of my top priorities," said Governor Markell, "and having a safe, secure learning environment is fundamentally important to a child's education. These bills will increase the safety of young people in our schools."

Lt. Gov. Matt Denn and Attorney General Beau Biden began the process of drafting the statewide cyberbullying policy this spring by holding statewide public hearings to gather factual evidence from school administrators and parents about the type of off-campus activity causing disruption in our schools.

"As I have visited middle schools and high schools over the past two school years, cyberbullying has consistently been raised with me by principals and teachers as a real problem that stops them from focusing on educating kids," Lt. Gov. Denn said. "This statewide policy will allow schools to clearly tell students what type of social media conduct is unacceptable, and it will provide legal support from the Attorney General's office for districts where the policy is challenged." The legislation addresses a lack of consistency in how bullying incidents are reported by school districts. Under this legislation, the state Department of Education will begin auditing a small number of public schools each year to ensure that schools are properly investigating and reporting suspected incidents of bullying. Additionally, school districts will now be required to report both substantiated and "unsubstantiated" incidents of bullying to the state Department of Education, so the Department can determine if some schools or districts are failing to properly investigate or report claims of bullying.



Statewide

The Delaware Department of Education honored educators from across the state for outstanding teaching in mathematics and science in November.

The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST) is the highest recognition that a K-12 mathematics or science teacher may receive for outstanding teaching in the United States. Established by Congress in 1983, and administered for the White House by the National Science Foundation, the Presidential Awards allow for each state to select up to three mathematics teachers and three science teachers as state finalists. Awards are given to mathematics and science teachers from each of the 50 states and four U.S. jurisdictions.

The teachers are recognized for their contributions to teaching and learning and their ability to help students make progress in

mathematics and science. A national selection committee will review each state finalist's application and select one awardee in each content area for every state. Delaware's finalists are:

Mathematics

Lori Cabatingan, third grade, MOT Charter School; Kristin Gray, math specialist, Rehoboth Elementary, Cape Henlopen School District; and Jeanine Moore, fourth grade math/social studies, Long Neck Elementary, Indian River School District.

Science

Timothy Dalby, Lower School science, Wilmington Friends School and Ann Marie Fitzgerald, (formerly) second grade, Mount Pleasant Elementary, Brandywine School District.

For more information about PAEMST, see forms and instructions at www.paemst.org.



Nathaniel and Jonah Vincent of Vincent Farms shared produce with the Delmar School District.

Delmar School District

Delaware's Farm to School program officially marked Wednesday, Sept. 12, "Watermelon Wednesday." It was an initiative to get local foods into schools, increase healthy eating opportunities and students' awareness of agriculture. The Delmar School District is no stranger to supporting local farms and having locally grown produce served as part of the daily lunch menu. Terri Addlesberger, Delmar's Supervisor for Child Nutrition said, "Our students are becoming more aware of our local farmers and by serving locally grown produce our students have an understanding of their local surroundings and can better appreciate some of the healthier things on the menu." Eight different Delaware farms supplied the watermelon for the statewide event. Delmar High School served over 400 half-cup portions of watermelon.

The Foundation for Delmar Education released \$24,000 to the Delmar schools. The foundation began as a pipe dream for the district and was initiated by Superintendent David Ring. "With funding sources becoming sparse both at the federal and state level, it's important that district leaders begin to think outside the box and look for creative ways that can help fund projects, initiatives and classroom instruction," said Ring.

Last February, the foundation hosted a fundraising gala, which was a sellout and a truly memorable and enjoyable event for the Delmar community. The foundation will host the second annual Delmar Community Gala on Saturday, February 23, 2013 at the Delmar Fire Hall. For information about the 2013 Delmar Community Gala please contact Stephanie Ring at marysring@comcast.net or Terri Addlesberger at teresa.addlesberger@delmar.k12.de.us

Colonial School District

Colonial School District's William Penn has High School has partnered with Xerox. Under the supervision of teacher Annmarie Novack, students now do a lot of the design and printing jobs that the district otherwise would pay vendors to do. For example, the school calendar, brochures, posters, fliers and school credo (which is framed and placed in every building), is all done in the graphic design and production class. Clients come in and speak to students about what they want, just like they would with a commercial business. Students have worked with Wilmington Drama League, creating the producer's campaign brochure. Students also are working with Thomas William Tear to produce print publications for the event, "A Day in Old New Castle." Other clients include various people from the district schools and parents of current WPHS students, working with students

to create promotional posters, fliers and the school playbill. The partnership with Xerox maintains that the school lease the equipment, a Xerox 700dpi digital press, while the company supplies repair services, consumable supplies and technical support.



Teacher Katelynn Scott

Appoquinimink School District

Louis L. Redding Middle School Teacher Katelynn Scott is the winner of the Appoquinimink Public Library's "Biggest Geek" contest. The honor denotes her success at encouraging more readers than anyone else in the community to sign up for a library card in the month of September. As Scott explained, "I have my seventh-grade ELA students read a different book every month. But I was surprised to find that many of them had never visited their public library. So encouraging them to take out a library card seemed like a logical idea! To make it more fun, I told them about the contest and offered extra credit for any student who requested a card and told the librarians my name – they had a special form to take with them to the library and everything. The kids really liked the idea, and I ended up winning the contest. But even more importantly, they became winners too, because it turned them on to an important new source of information and inspiration here in our community."

Kim Friberg, the public library's representative, came to Scott's class to make the announcement. She presented the teacher with a prize packet that included a certificate reading, "Katelynn Scott is Appoquinimink Library's Biggest Geek," a Geek T-shirt, balloons, bumper stickers, posters and goodie bag.

Scott ended up wearing the geek T-shirt every day for an entire week (a promise to her students if she won). The \$40 Walmart gift card that was part of the prize package went into a drawing that included the names of any student who took out a library card last month. The student whose name was drawn was given the opportunity to decide how the \$40 would be spent for Scott's classroom. Finally, all of the students filled out a red heart-shaped piece of paper stating what they "geek" (love). The hearts will be used to create a one-of-a-kind bulletin board at the public library representing the class.

It's a small world for language learners

LANGUAGES: from Page 1

program coexists with traditional instruction and includes one-way immersion, with predominantly native English speakers, as well as two-way immersion, with two language groups such as native English and native Spanish speakers.

Schools participating in the first year of implementation are: McIlvaine Early Childhood Center in the Caesar Rodney School District, where students are learning Chinese; John M. Clayton Elementary School in the Indian River School District, where students are learning Spanish; and Lewis Elementary School in the Red Clay Consolidated School District, where students are also learning Spanish.

"They're like sponges, picking up language so easily at this age," said Wendy McCabe, kindergarten teacher at Clayton Elementary. "As a parent of a 4-year-old, I can appreciate the advantage of preparing them for college and career and getting them ready for the future. It's important and necessary, and I'm glad to be part of it."

McCabe, who is in her 15th year teaching at Clayton, is teaching two kindergarten classes with Cristina Cordoba. Students transition each day after lunch from one classroom and one language to the next. Cordoba, who hails from Madrid, has 12 years of experience teaching second grade in Spain, and also taught middle-school Spanish in London. It is her first time in a language immersion program.

"I always wanted to teach Spanish," said Cordoba. "I was an English teacher in my own country, so this was an exciting, new challenge."

The immersion teachers have committed to at least three years, and are already putting together recommendations for the second year of the program. They participate in professional development activities all year long, and every month, talk to their colleagues at McIlvaine Early Childhood Center and Lewis Elementary to trade ideas.

The program, which will receive an annual investment of \$1.9 million, targets to reach nearly 8,000 students in K-8 immersion programs by 2020 and 10,000 by 2022.

At Clayton, one-third of the 45 students in the program come from homes where English is a second language.

"For our students that come from Spanish-speaking backgrounds – our heritage students – there's an added advantage that they're developing literacy skills, both reading and writing, in their birth language," said Assistant Principal Dr. Sharon DiGirolamo.

"The kids have tried to help each other," said Cordoba. "There's good interaction, both ways. They're still mixing the languages right now, but that's a normal way to get into a new language."

The kindergarten cohorts will stay together through grade 5, and the plan is that they will continue in the program through high school and be able to achieve Advanced Placement credit by ninth grade. They will be encouraged to begin study of an additional world language, such as Arabic, that could also culminate in additional Advanced Placement credit by graduation. Delaware students also may be able to participate in dual-credit options with Delaware institutions of higher education to further their language abilities and enter college with a number of world language credits that could easily count toward a minor or major in the language.



Cristina Cordoba teaches Spanish at Clayton Elementary.



Culinary student Niyanna Murphy mixes ingredients in the state-of-the-art kitchen at McKean High.

McKean has modern kitchen

CULINARY: from Page 12

instructor Julius Rosato. "It's terrific for these students. This is the equipment they'll be using in the real world."

In his second year teaching, Rosato, 43, began his career in the food industry business when he was 17, primarily working in hotels.

"I always wanted to teach," he said. "It's a great feeling when you see the kids who are really into it. A lot of them are visual learners, so when they see the

results of their work, they get that gratification and you can see it in their eyes."

This year, Rosato is teaching six classes, ranging from Level I to Level III. His approach is half lecture, half applied skill work in the kitchen, teaching students to keep up with the demands of contemporary food selection, menu choices, line cooking and baking.

"It's amazing, so much fun," said sophomore Niyanna Murphy. "I like that it's hands-on."

"Chef Rosato always puts a

smile on everyone's face," said Karlee Boyd, a sophomore, who hopes to go on to culinary school and open her own bakery in the future.

To celebrate the opening of the new kitchen and café in September, Jennifer Behm, winner of season two of Fox show "MasterChef," Chef Dana Herbert, winner of "Cake Boss: Next Great Baker" on TLC, and Chef Julio Lazzarini, contestant on the Food Network's "Chopped," visited with students and participated in a friendly culinary competition.

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THE JOY OF COOKING

McKean High students benefit from state-of-the-art kitchen

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Culinary students at Thomas McKean High School in the Red Clay Consolidated School District can certainly take the heat, because they can't stay out of the newly renovated, \$895,000 kitchen, which was unveiled this fall.

Designed first and foremost as a learning center, the Culinary Arts Center includes a commercial teaching kitchen with modern, full-service restaurant equipment and a 32-seat café open to the public. The café also serves as a theory classroom complete with state-of-the-art technology, including multiple flat screens for televised culinary instruction. The space was transformed as the school began

transitioning its offerings from home economics to a more modern culinary arts program. The room was outfitted with electric ranges and microwaves and the upgrade included professional-grade stoves and convection ovens.

"To go from our former work space to this, it's just a great learning experience," said junior Gene Davolos, who is one of 150 students in the program. "I was a freshman starting out with this kitchen."

"It was like going from a Volkswagen Bug to a Ferrari," said chef and culinary education

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George Kafkalas, left, and Kyle Hart prepare meat for grilling.

