



Brandon Auborgh, left, and Wade Wilkinson are pre-K students at the Morris Early Childhood Center in the Milford School District, which is part of the Delaware Stars for Early Success program. PHOTOS: JASON MINTO

## Early-education programs urged to join rating system

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Every child should have access to high-quality early care and education, which is why the Delaware Department of Education and the Office of Early Learning are committed to expanding the number of early learning programs participating in the Delaware Stars for Early Success.

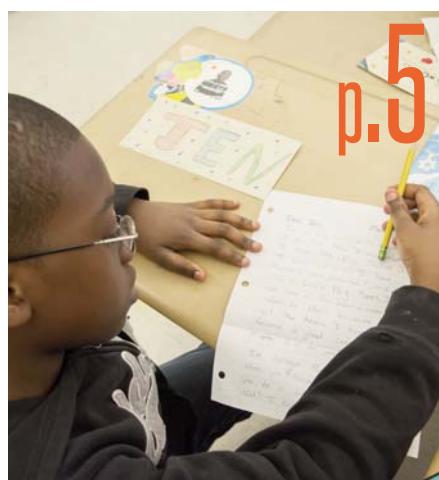
Delaware Stars is a program that promotes high-quality early learning for young children and sets the Stars quality rating that guides families seeking the best program for their child.

Revamped in 2012, Delaware Stars provides the state's framework for supporting and promoting high-quality early learning programs and is available to all types of early learning providers — public schools, community childcare and Head Start — using multiple funding streams. Stars provides standards in critical areas to support learning and development of: learning environment, professional qualifications and development, family engagement and business and management programs. In addition to providing support to build the capacity for excellence, the program also

applies ratings, with five stars the top rating available. It also provides technical assistance and financial support to programs involved in Stars as they engage in quality improvement efforts and move up the scale. Programs will receive higher reimbursement rates for students of need as they improve in quality.

More than 350 early learning providers are currently part of Delaware Stars, more than double the number of programs in Stars a year ago, and the number of programs rated between

See **STARS** Page 11



## More options available for teacher assessment

BY RICH FAHEY

One size doesn't always fit all, especially when it comes to evaluating student growth, and gauging a teacher's effectiveness in helping students meet their goals.

As part of Component 5, the student growth component of the Delaware

Performance Appraisal System II (DPAS II), teachers are being evaluated each year using a statewide educator-developed commonly called Measure B.

But that isn't the only avenue to assessment. The Delaware Department of

See **ASSESSMENT** Page 10



# DELAWARE EDUCATOR

PUBLISHED BY:

**DELAWARE DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**

www.doe.k12.de.us

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# Students share their appreciation of teachers' hardwork and dedication



**Mark Murphy**

Great teaching leads to great learning. As we work together to ensure our children graduate our schools prepared for college or career, we cannot forget the most critical component to their success: the strength of our educators who work

closest to them day-in-and-day-out.

Last year, your efforts to meet the needs of your children led to an additional 10,000 children reaching proficient levels of performance. And this year, as I visit our schools and classrooms, I am seeing your tremendous efforts. Your hard work collaborating with one another during your shared planning time and analyzing student data to inform your instruction has led to more lessons tailored to meet individual students' needs and thus greater student learning. And your hard work is what is helping your school transition to the Common Core State Standards, which provide more focus, rigor and content connections for students.

This spring we asked our students to share with us why their teachers are so extraordinary. This is the third year the

department has sponsored this student essay contest in conjunction with Teacher Appreciation Week in May.

In a way only they can, our children tell some of the great stories unfolding in our schools. While many may not know what a professional learning community is or the difference between standards and curricula, they do understand the results of your work. They talk about teachers whose creative lessons make the content finally click for them, the ones who work through their lunch breaks and stay after school to provide the extra support the students need and the educators who inspired them to work toward goals they had not before considered possibilities for themselves.

Take Tylershane Giffear, a junior at William Penn High School in the Colonial School District, who wrote about his teacher, Dr. Patrick Lloyd. Tylershane said he had taken design classes over the summer before entering Dr. Lloyd's class, but he couldn't grasp the content until Dr. Lloyd helped him understand why he was pushing those buttons and entering those numbers.

Tylershane also appreciates that his teacher leads his students to learn through application.

"He encourages us to figure things out on our own," Tylershane said. "It sort of prepares

us for the real world, because do you really think the boss of a large engineering firm is going to have enough time to attend to all of your questions and hold your hand the whole time? No. I've learned a lot of new information that I probably [would not have] understood if I hadn't looked it up myself."

Dr. Lloyd's class "makes me want to pursue my dreams even more so than before," Tylershane said.

I want to thank you, Dr. Lloyd, for inspiring Tylershane. And I want to thank all you other great teachers who are helping your students to grow and achieve. I appreciate everything you do. You see needs and you meet them because you love your students and they are your ultimate motivation and reward.

While children don't always express it as well as Tylershane, I hope you remember how your hard work is paying off where it counts the most: in the lives of our students. So I thank you, on behalf of myself and them, for all you do every day to accelerate their learning, better prepare them for life after school and in turn make our state stronger.

*Mark Murphy is Delaware Secretary of Education.*

# Top scholars honored

Top students from Delaware's public high schools were honored this spring as exemplary scholars of the graduating Class of 2013 at the annual Secretary of Education's Scholars Dinner at Dover Downs Hotel in Dover.

Each year, the state's political and education leaders gather with the honored students, their families and

their school and district leadership to celebrate the students' achievements and wish them well as they continue their education at some of the nation's top colleges and universities.

Nominated by their principals, the scholars were selected for their academic excellence and community service.



Red Clay Consolidated School District Superintendent Merv Daugherty congratulates some of his district's scholars and their families.

# The 2013 scholars are:

Appoquinimink School District: Joseph Hasse, Adrienne Johnson, and Jay Rao, Appoquinimink High School; Rebecca Gillie and Emily Price, Middletown High School • Brandywine School District: Jennifer Koffenberger and Gnanadesikan Somasundaram, Brandywine High School; Jason Hammond and Robert McAllister, Concord High School; and Quentin Dubroff and Taylor Soucy, Mount Pleasant High School • Caesar Rodney School District: Kevin Dunkleberger, Samantha Leite, Jacqueline Mihok and Max Wilt, Caesar Rodney High School • Cape Henlopen School District: Amit Nainani and Matthew Spicer, Cape Henlopen High School • Capital School District: Michael Gallo, Tayonna Ngutter and Sydney Palmer, Dover High School • Christina School District: Sophia Baluk and Hana Chammack, Christiana High School; Christina Billy and Kelsey Styles, Glasgow High School; Diana Advani, Caroline Beston and Selby Seador, Newark High School • Colonial School District: Taylor Boudwin-Jones, Jhane Campbell, Jesse Semmel, and Kasey Turner, William Penn High School • Delmar School District: Marissa Bradley and Keyana Gaines, Delmar High School • Indian River School District: Jessica Gude and Delaney McMullen, Indian River High School; Rosemond Dorleans and Katie Warrington, Sussex Central High School • Lake Forest School District: Haley Gerardi and Melanie Jackson, Lake Forest High School • Laurel School District: Samantha Dykes and Grace Wood, Laurel High School • Milford

School District: Henry Phalen and Megan Rossetti, Milford High School • New Castle County Vocational-Technical School District: Savannah Collas, Cassandra Ingram, Vanessa Santiago and Markia Smith, Delcastle Technical High School; Yescenia Bernal Guel and Rosymar Magana, Hodgson Vocational Technical High School; Ronald Jones and Walter Seney, Howard High School of Technology; John Haller and Samantha Immediato, St. Georges Technical High School • POLYTECH School District: Brooke DeVore and Taylor Paskey, POLYTECH High School • Red Clay Consolidated School District: Philip Fenimore Jr. and Maria Ji, Cab Calloway School of the Arts; Naiim Mason and Hannah Morgan, Conrad Schools of Science; Richard Gantt and Patrick Tang, John Dickinson High School; Carolyn Hall and Anna Jackson, Alexis I. duPont High School; Morgan Dukes and Diane Sumpter, Thomas McKean High School • Seaford School District: Bailey Hoch and Eryn Quillen, Seaford High School • Smyrna School District: Jennifer Caudill and Alyssa Lattomus, Smyrna High School • Sussex Technical School District: Kira Lyle, Priyen Patel and Dylan Varrato, Sussex Technical High School • Woodbridge School District: Matthew Ballweg, Woodbridge High School • Hailey Curtis, Campus Community Charter School • Kaitlyn Engler and Matthews Lan, Charter School of Wilmington • Matthew Higgins, Delaware Military Academy • Zierra Chambers, New Moyer Academy • Michelle Marsh, Pencader Charter School • Tony Chaisson, Positive Outcomes Charter School



# Spartan Sprouts

## Program engages young children through home visits

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

The Lake Forest School District is planting the seeds for success among its youngest learners through Spartan Sprouts, an early contact program designed to engage children and their families through home visits and group activities.

Families that sign up for the program have a trained home visitor come to their homes about four times a year – ideally following the birth of their child and continuing for the next four years – helping them to discover their child’s unique interests and explore learning opportunities.

“We all have questions about how our children develop and what we can do to help them grow in healthy ways, and our home visitors are ready to bring the tools and the fertilizer,” said Lake Forest Superintendent Dan Curry.

The program, only available to Lake Forest residents, targets those who may not be eligible for services from public health, Early Head Start and Parents as Teachers. It is being supported through Race to the Top funding for family and community engagement.

“This gives us the opportunity to introduce the family to the caring services of the Lake Forest School district and helps ensure that the child will be ready for success when they start school,” said Curry. “Why wait for kindergarten? We care about our families and want to see their children’s success begin early. We want to make them Spartans from birth.”

The program, in its second year, is being coordinated by Monica Sipes, who was hired in September 2011 to oversee recruitment and outreach, as well as the home visits.

“When Monica comes in, we’ll play games and use sensory boxes, making sure he’s where he needs

to be developmentally,” said parent Sheena Rosko, whose son, Owen, enrolled in the program last year at age 2. “He’s already learning his numbers and letters, colors, too.”

“We try to give parents out-of-the-box ideas for day-to-day activities,” said Sipes. “If you’re grocery shopping, for example, you can have them point out all of the green food they see. Entwine learning with playing at any opportunity possible. Anything that engages them to be more successful learners will help them in the long run.”

Sipes also has been able to help Rosko monitor her son for speech issues and fine motor skills.

“He’s left-handed, so it was a process adjusting to simple things like using scissors or clicking the computer mouse,” said Rosko. “It’s reassuring to see he’s where he needs to be when he starts preschool in the fall.”

In conjunction with Spartan Sprouts, Lake Forest also launched a local chapter of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, which is being funded in partnership with the district, the Friends of the Harrington Library and the Community Education Fund, with support from the Dolly Parton Foundation. Families can register their children ages 4 and younger to receive a free book in the mail each month.

“We want to get books into more homes in this community, and a literature-rich environment, combined with parenting skill development and child development education, should serve the district’s children well as we strive to close the achievement gap,” said Curry. “Research is clear that children’s parents are their first teachers, and if those parents are reading to them and taking the time to stimulate them, they’ll be more prepared when they enter our classrooms.”



Spartan Sprouts participant Owen Rosko plays a game.



Owen Rosko uses a sensory box.



Sheena Rosko and 3-year-old son Owen play games at home in Felton.

PHOTOS: JASON MINTO





Jennifer Teagle, a Co-Op teacher at Laurel Middle School, works with eighth-grade student Rylee Carter.

PHOTOS: JASON MINTO

## Co-Op program rewards teachers and supports highest-need schools

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Walking through the halls of Laurel Middle School in the Laurel School District, students are bombarded with images and reminders to “be 212 degrees.”

“That’s the temperature at which boiling water becomes steam,” said Principal Ann Lewis. “One degree cooler and it’s still just water. We want our students to take it to that extra degree and see the life-altering, positive effects of their efforts.”

And it’s not only the students who are turning up the heat, but the teachers as well.

Laurel School District is one of two districts that participated last year in the Delaware Talent Cooperative (Co-Op), designed to put the most effective educators in front of the students who need them most, and to support schools that have high populations of traditionally underserved students. The Retention Program, one arm of the Co-Op, launched with 28 distinguished educators – in Laurel and Capital school districts and several charter schools – earning a \$10,000 retention incentive from the state for committing to teach in their respective schools for at least two more years.

“This is a unique opportunity to recognize and reward our educators while supporting our highest-need schools,” said Secretary of Education Mark Murphy.

“Everyone in the building has contributed to the growth we’ve seen in terms of student achievement,” said Lewis. “The Co-Op is a reinforcement of the effective teaching practices in place and of all the hard work everyone does on a daily basis. In public service, you don’t often see rewards, but it’s wonderful to have some kind of acknowledgement.”

“It was like icing on the cake, but we were just doing our jobs,” said Jennifer Teagle, one of five Laurel Middle School teachers selected through the Retention Program. “I knew we had to improve our scores and I had a lot of conversations with my students about where they were and where they needed to go, and how close they were to their growth targets.”

“It was an honor to be recognized,” said Jazz Page, another Laurel Middle School teacher in the program.

Her students can attest that she is certainly not a teacher

they would want to slip away.

“She pushes you to try and she doesn’t let you give up on yourself,” said eighth-grader Bailey McCausland. “That’s what sets her apart – she doesn’t let you give up.”

In February, the Delaware Department of Education announced that Brandywine School District, New Castle County Vo-Tech School District and Seaford School District will also participate in the Co-Op, along with nine eligible charter schools, bringing the total to 18 schools: Brandywine School District’s Harlan Elementary; Capital School District’s South Dover, Towne Point and East Dover elementary schools and Dover High; Laurel School District’s Laurel Middle; Seaford School District’s West Seaford and Blades elementary schools; New Castle County Vo-Tech School District’s Howard High School of Technology; and charter schools Positive Outcomes, Thomas Edison, EastSide, Prestige, Academy of Dover, Delaware College Preparatory Academy, Kuumba Academy, Moyer and Reach.

The program is open to highly effective educators across all grades and subjects who work in one of the participating schools. Highly effective principals, assistant principals and ELA and mathematics educators in grades 3-10 will also be eligible for the second arm of the initiative, the Talent Attraction Program, which seeks to attract select, top-performing educators to the participating schools. Schools and districts have final authority to determine whether to hire an educator participating in the initiative. The interview process for the next round of awards is already underway, but new applicants are still being urged to apply.

In addition to rewarding individuals, the Co-Op also provides opportunities for additional support for participating schools. Each building can apply to receive a one-time grant for school-wide improvement efforts.

The program complements other state initiatives to support and strengthen teaching, including the new state-led Teacher Advisory Councils (TACs), statewide Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and the Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey (TELLDelaware).



Michelle Flynn, a Co-Op teacher at Laurel Middle School works with eighth-graders Janae Oney, left, and Akeeya Drummond.

### Advisory councils meet

New this year, Teacher Advisory Councils are meeting regularly with the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) to weigh in on the most pressing educational issues for students and schools. A total of 50 teachers have been selected to sit on six councils – three of which have already met, and three which will be meeting before summer. The goal is for each council to meet three times a year.

“It’s very much like having focus groups,” said Angeline Willen, director of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit. “When we formed an Advisory Council through the Delaware Talent Cooperative, we saw that teachers who were actually in the classrooms weren’t always getting the information we wanted them to receive, and that they had a lot of ideas and suggestions that weren’t on our radar. There have been misconceptions over issues such as attendance rate and how that should be interpreted at the district level, and it’s been very rewarding to hear their feedback.”

All spots on the councils are currently filled, but there may be new opportunities to sign up in the future. Council members are responsible for sharing the information discussed at each meeting with their respective schools and districts.



# Pleasantville students enjoying new pen pals

By MEAGHAN CASEY

In an age when emails and text messages reign supreme, the art of letter writing has been dangerously teetering on the verge of extinction.

Students at Pleasantville Elementary in the Colonial School District, however, are doing their part to revive the pen-and-paper correspondence. The 25 students in Lisa Mims' fifth-grade class have partnered with the women's basketball team at Wilmington University as pen pals and are enjoying every moment of it.

Mims, who has taught for 28 years, formed the partnership last year, hoping to build literacy skills and promote college readiness among her students.

"I like to give them the opportunity to write," said Mims. "I've seen such a difference since we started this. It definitely builds their writing skills. And they love it, because they get to actually see the letters arriving and open them up – it's not something to read on the screen – and they eventually get to meet their pen pals."

All 14 Wilmington University players are participating, and most have been assigned two students as pen pals. Students receive letters every month, delivered to the school by one of the team's coaches.

"If they could write every week, they would," said assistant coach Colin Smith. "They really enjoy it."

The coaches also have visited the school on holidays with goodie bags from the players, and in December, the students made a field trip to the university to attend the Lady Wildcats' game, watching them capture their second win of the season.

"The kids were the loudest ones in the stands," said Smith.

Before the game, the students met the players for the first time and received Wilmington University fan gear such as



Fifth-graders in Lisa Mims' class at Pleasantville Elementary School take a photo with Colin Smith, assistant coach of the Wilmington University's women's basketball team. The students are pen pals with the players.

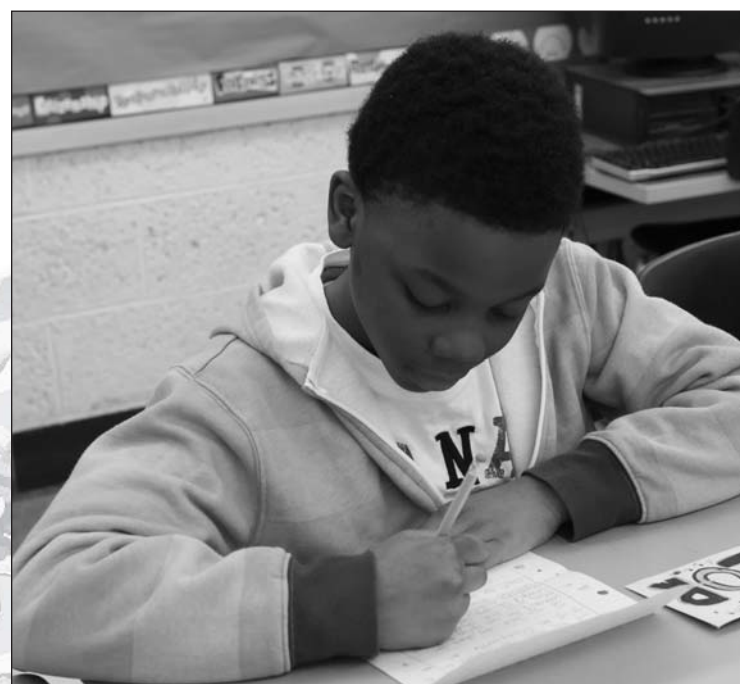
foam fingers and pom poms to make them visible during the game.

"It was so exciting for them to visit," said Mims. "In a lot of their letters, they're asking them about college. It's wonderful to bring them to a college campus and give them that exposure at this age."

"The game was fun," said student Kaylah Hayman. "We made posters with all their names on them and got to cheer for them. It's been fun to write and find out what they like to do, what their favorite things are, where they've traveled."

"I like getting the letters," said Tyler Ware. "My pen pal writes about basketball and college and what's going on in her life."

"You get to learn about each other and events that are coming up," said Korayma Rojas. "I usually ask her if she's doing well in college, and she tells me to do well in school so I can get in to a good college."



Pleasantville Elementary School fifth-grader Henry Murphy writes a letter to his pen pal who is a member of Wilmington University's women's basketball team.



Pleasantville fifth-grader Julian Medora shows off his letter to his pen pal at Wilmington University.



Michael Thomas writes a letter to his pen pal.



# WIZ KIDZ

## Enrichment program exposes Red Clay students to a variety of activities

By Meaghan Casey

As the final hour of the school week at Warner Elementary School approaches, students are anything but anxious to head home. Instead, they are bounding down the halls, raring to participate in their enrichment club of choice as part of the school's WIZ program. The program, in its inaugural year, provides fourth- and fifth-grade students with the opportunity to join one of nearly a dozen clubs meeting every Friday afternoon from 2:15 to 3:30.

"Diane (Mahotiere) and I talked about wanting more out-of-the-box, hands-on activities," said Alice Conlin, academic dean at Warner, located in the Red Clay Consolidated School District. "When the idea was shared with Principal Marcia Johnson, she was very supportive and encouraging."

"We want students to be able to apply knowledge to the real world," said Mahotiere, teacher coordinator of the program. "When we started a LEGO league at the school, I saw how fascinated they were. That was my hallelujah moment, when I knew we should build and expand on that."

One of the new clubs Warner is offering through the WIZ program is called Bricks 4 Kidz. Working with LEGOS and a partner, students experience the hands-on fun of model building, from concept to completion.

"It's fun. You get to build things like amusement parks or birds out of LEGOS and sometimes we write stories about it," said fourth-grader Iyaire Lilly. "It's my favorite part of the week," said Jamil Willis, also in fourth grade.

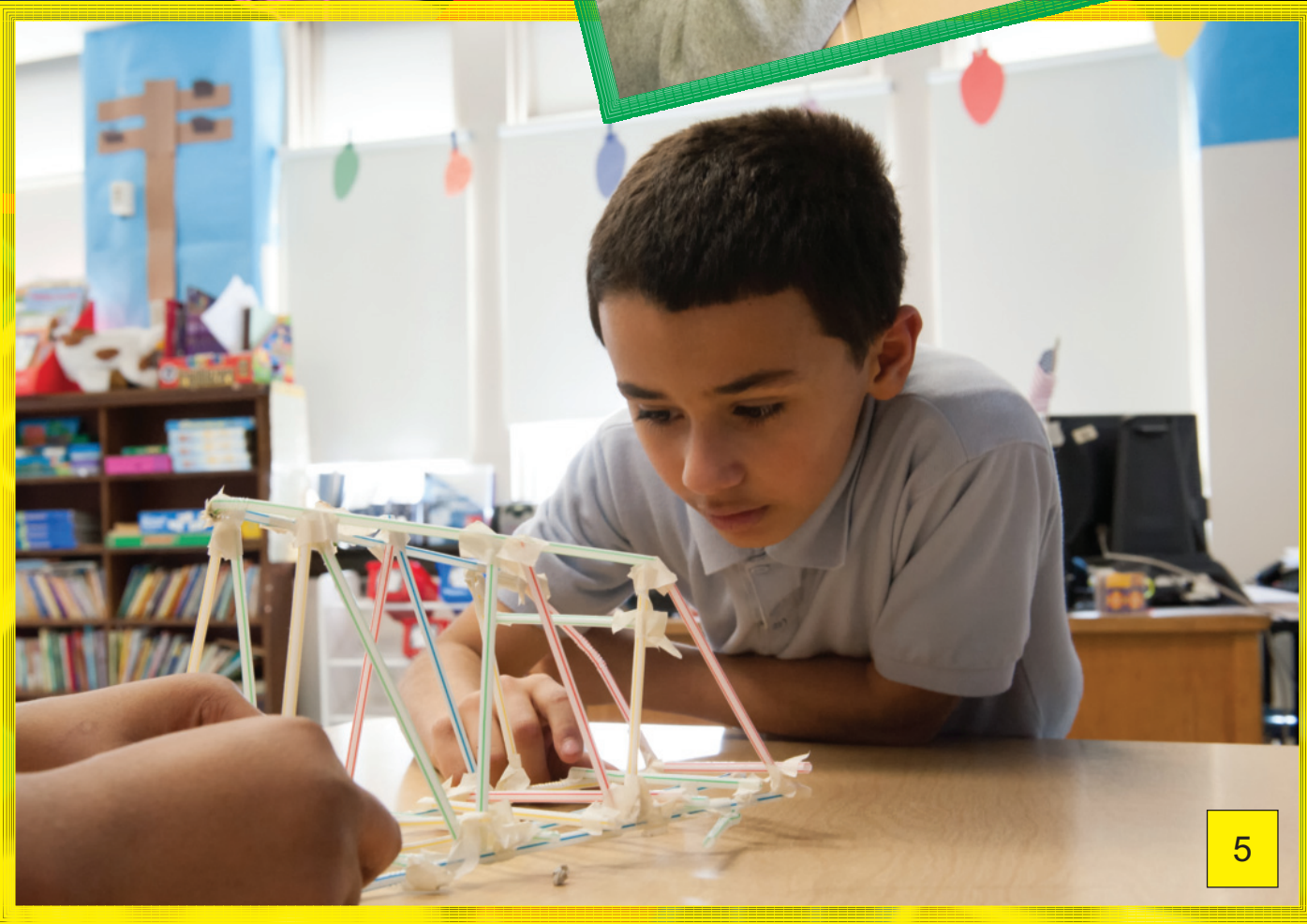
Other clubs include poetry, Science Olympiad, U.S. travel, gardening, newspaper, math, Spanish and community service.

"I like writing," said fifth-grader Zabiah Dillard, who is a member of the school newspaper. "I've been telling my mom I want to do this."

"We've published our first school newspaper this year as a result of this program, and our math club participated in a district-wide competition," said Conlin. "The kids are really enjoying it, but they're also getting a lot of exposure to different opportunities. It's setting the framework for our students to join a lot of these clubs in middle school."

"They need a creative outlet, and it's something they really look forward to," said fifth-grade teacher Monique Campbell, who leads the poetry club. "We've incorporated a lot of creative writing skills. The students are really opening up and sharing personal things, and I can see an improvement in their reading and writing."

Next year, the school has plans to launch two separate sessions of the WIZ program, allowing students to join two different clubs.



1. Angel Medenilla, left, and Darius Hall, fifth-graders at Warner Elementary, work on their projects in Bricks 4 Kidz, which is part of the WIZ program. 2. Warner Elementary students study geography as part of the U.S. Travel Club. 3. Fifth-grader Paige Westgaph reads her poetry. 4. From left, Charles Dunn, Zhalir Holmes, Albert Ashe and Devin Ravenell work as a team on building their bridge to see if it can hold the weight of a type C battery. 5. Fourth-grader Roberto Rivera works on building a bridge to see if it can hold the weight of a chalk board eraser.

PHOTOS: JASON MINTO



# Survey says: Delaware a good place to teach

The majority of teachers feel their schools are a good place to work and learn, feel trusted and recognized for their expertise, have the time they need to collaborate with peers and believe their school environments are safe, according to the more than 6,000 Delaware educators who responded to the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) Delaware survey.

Those are a few of the highlights of the results, available at the school, district and state-level at [www.telldelaware.org/results](http://www.telldelaware.org/results).

But the survey also revealed that more work is needed to improve teacher leadership opportunities, differentiate professional development to individual educator needs, reduce the amount of routine paperwork and improve educator induction and mentoring across the state.

Each school and district now has the ability to closely review its data, engage in rich conversation and identify strengths and areas for growth in the coming weeks and months.

This was the first time Delaware conducted the TELL survey. Public school educators across Delaware had the chance to share what they believe they need to do their jobs in an anonymous online survey taken between Jan. 22 and Feb 25 this year. In total, 6,153 educators (59.2 percent) responded, and 173 of 225 schools (77 percent) met the minimum participation threshold (50 percent) to have their school-level data released. The responses of those educators whose schools did not meet the threshold are included in the aggregate district and state data.

The results showcase many of the positive things that the state's educators feel about their teaching and learning conditions statewide, including:

**Educators feel their schools are good places to work and learn:** 80 percent of respondents agreed that their schools are a “good place to work and learn” and 77 percent indicated they plan to remain teaching at their respective school.

**Educators value collaborative planning time:** Schools across Delaware implemented 90 minutes of weekly shared planning time for core content teachers. Some of these sessions are led by data coaches, who guide educators in how to analyze and use student data to inform their instruction. Also, 88 percent said teachers work in PLCs to develop and align instructional practices, and almost the same percentage said teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction. About 92 percent said their school's leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.

**Educators feel safe in their schools:** 88 percent of respondents said they work in an environment that is safe with 84 percent saying that their students understand their schools' expectations for conduct. Three out of four feel school administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline.

**Educators believe they are respected for their skill and expertise:** 76 percent said teachers are recognized as educational experts and 75 percent said they feel trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.

The survey results also identified several key areas for statewide discussion.

**Educators feel they are not being fully leveraged given their expertise:** While more than four out of five educators (84 percent) agreed that teachers are



Julie Davis is a seventh-grade math teacher at Laurel Middle School.

encouraged to participate in school leadership roles, only 53 percent agreed that teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision-making in their schools. And 63 percent said teachers have the autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery, a number that the state would like to see even higher as the state moves to the Common Core State Standards. More than half (52 percent) feel that they have no role, or a limited role, in school improvement planning.

**Many new educators expressed that they are not receiving the support they need during pivotal years of their development:** 88 percent of new teachers reported they formally were assigned a mentor — this is a concern given that mentoring is statewide requirement. And there seems to be significant variation in the quality of the mentoring and induction experiences of new teachers across Delaware: 40 percent said they never were observed teaching by their mentor and 52 percent said they never observed their mentors' classroom teaching.

**The majority of educators believe that**

**professional development is not differentiated or evaluated and does not receive follow-up attention:** 68 percent feel sufficient resources are available in their schools for professional development and 60 percent feel professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge.

**However, coaching and training opportunities could be refined to better meet individual educator needs:** Only 44 percent believe professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers and only 42 percent feel professional development is evaluated with the results being communicated to teachers. Further, only slightly more than half (55.8 percent) of educators noted that “follow-up is provided from professional development.”

**Educators stressed that “time” is an issue on several questions:** On most questions related to time allocation, educators feel their time is not protected or sufficient. Less than four out of 10 educators (39 percent) agree that efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork they are required to do. Fewer than half of educators believe that the non-instructional

time provided for teachers is sufficient (47 percent). And just over half (56.7%) of teachers feel that they are “allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.”

Governor Jack Markell thanked educators for taking the time to share their thoughts.

“These are the voices — the more than 6,100 voices — of educators who work closest with our children. We need to continue to hear from teachers if we are going to shape policy and programs that support our educators and drive student achievement,” he said.

The Delaware Department of Education will use this invaluable feedback alongside the state's other rich data sources to examine and evaluate state policy and programs for improvement.

“The state also is sharing local data so that district and school leaders can analyze what educators feel is working well or what can be improved upon at the local level,” Secretary of Education Mark Murphy said.

In the coming months, this feedback will be used to help drive and shape several statewide efforts.



# Pilot program is putting focus on behavioral health

BY RICH FAHEY

For some students, the middle school years bring issues that are unwelcome intrusions and can affect their health, well-being and self-esteem.

They may face issues such as bullying, dealing with substance abuse, or having unprotected sex that could result in a teen pregnancy. They may be at risk for suicide, or be dealing with a home life that is unsafe and violent and includes domestic abuse. Depending on the student and the situation, the issues could be life-threatening.

For the past 18 months, a pilot program has put three behavioral health consultants — licensed, professional mental health clinicians — in middle schools.

The budget proposed by Gov. Jack Markell would provide \$3.3 million for 30 counselors in middle schools across the state. In interviews, Markell said he hopes the proposals will be part of an effort to address gun violence in the wake of the Newtown, Conn., school shooting, as well as a series of adolescent suicides in Delaware.

The proposal was included in the governor's budget released in January. In February, a report from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) noted that during a four-month period in 2012, at least 28 attempted suicides were linked to a so-called "cluster" in Kent and Sussex counties. Eleven youths between the ages of 12-21 took their lives between Jan. 1 and May 4, 2012, seven of whom had known mental health issues.

Researchers also said 28 of the 116 nonfatal suicide attempts were made by people who knew the students who died, attended the same school or had heard of their deaths through other connections.

Eight of those suicide attempts were by students who were between the ages of 12 and 13, making the case for middle school mental health professionals all the more urgent.

There are already family crisis therapists at about 50 elementary schools and wellness centers are based in every high school.

Agencies that deal with youth and families say that the middle school program requires trained professionals.

"Quite simply, we're dealing with more complex issues at the middle school level," said Steve Yeatman, deputy director of the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services.

Yeatman said the decision to expand the middle school program came after requests from education professionals and that the counselors would engage in "short term," confidential, one-on-one interventions.

He stressed that the program is voluntary, requires permission from a student's family to participate, and there are no sanctions against a student who may be referred to the program but decides not to participate.

He said the counselors are not doctors or psychiatrists and would not be prescribing drugs, instead assessing whether a student might be at risk for suicide, for instance, and referring students who need additional help to outside resources and community providers.

As part of his plan, Markell has also proposed that the state's Medicaid and CHIP programs, which provide health insurance for low-income families, reimburse for consultations between pediatricians or family doctors and child psychiatrists.

Yeatman said the school counselors would also consult with teachers and principals on strategies on dealing with students who are acting out, many times because of issues happening at home. Counselors could meet with students and families in their homes as well as at school.

He said that if the current figure survives the budget process, the department would immediately begin recruiting, screening and interviewing candidates for the contracted positions, but that the timetable for getting the positions filled is uncertain.

Andrea Wojcik, community relations coordinator for the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families, said the 18-month pilot program has provided a valuable template upon which the newly-hired counselors can build. "I can imagine their duties will mirror those for the pilot program already in existence. 'It's important they get a picture of what's going on in a student's life,' she said.



Craig Warrington, mentor coordinator for the Milford School District, holds a training session.

## Milford mentors connect students with community

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

The high school journey is not one that is meant to be traveled alone. That is why Milford High School has established Milford Motivation — a mentoring program that pairs mentors from the community with high school students to form strong, supportive bonds.

The mentors' primary role is to support the youth, helping them to achieve their full potential.

"The goal is for the mentors to get to know them on a personal level, establish a relationship, and then work with them in terms of academics and career-readiness," said Craig Warrington, mentor coordinator for the Milford School District. "We're seeing immediate results in terms of academic growth, improved attendance and a decrease in discipline referrals."

Last year, 58 percent of students in the program improved by at least one letter grade in math, science, language arts or social studies. Additionally, 79 percent had improved attendance and 61 percent had a decrease in discipline referrals. According to Shawn Snyder, Milford High librarian and on-site coordinator of the program, it is also helping to prevent participants from dropping out of school.

"If you have no connection to your school, you probably won't make it through," said Snyder. "But if students have someone who is an advocate for them, they'll be less likely to drop out. It can be life-changing."

Snyder, who is in his ninth year at the school, also coaches basketball and volleyball and advises the Student Council.

Milford Motivation is in its fourth year and is

available to students in grades 10-12 — of which there are about 950.

"We want any students who may be struggling to have a role model to turn to and get help from if needed," said Warrington.

The ultimate goal is to provide every student in the building with access to a mentor. Next year, it will open up to freshmen, bringing the overall pool of eligible mentees to more than 1,200.

Nearly 200 mentors are participating this year, including about 50 volunteers from Dover Air Force Base.

"If I can help out at least one person, it'll be a success," said Maurice Spencer, who joined the Air Force two years ago. "It took me a while to get where I wanted to be, and it would have been nice to have that person who was a mentor when I was their age."

"For me, it's the opportunity to bring hope to someone's life," said Antwan Piper, also a member of the Air Force.

More than a dozen other organizations have also provided support and volunteers as mentors and the program has received grant funding through the Delaware Mentoring Council. In addition to the community volunteers, about 25-30 Milford High staff members are actively involved as mentors.

Mentors visit with the high school students they have been paired with, one-on-one, for at least one hour each week. They may meet with the students at school, at home or in a public setting. They also communicate on a regular basis through phone calls, text messages or emails and participate in group activities.



# Around Delaware Schools

**Appoquinimink School District**

Third-grade students from Bunker Hill Elementary traveled to nearby Appoquinimink High School this spring to be paired in groups with a teenage mentor studying animal science. Together, they chose from a selection of fiction titles about animals including chickens, guinea pigs, and rabbits. After reading stories like *Super Guinea Pig to the Rescue*, the elementary students got the chance to meet the animals in person when their teen mentor took them on a guided tour of the small animal lab located in the school.

This animal science “show and tell” provided the teen mentors a chance to demonstrate their knowledge of animal husbandry while engaging and exciting the elementary students about the connection between reading and science. For many of our elementary students, this was their first up close encounter with these and other mammals in the lab.

“Watching my teenage students share their knowledge and enthusiasm with younger children was one of those special moments in teaching,” Appoquinimink High AgScience educator Karen Wiener said.

**Colonial School District**

Competing in a School Lunch Cooking Challenge at the Partnership for Healthier America’s “Let’s Move” annual summit, Renee Elliott, cafeteria manager at George Reed Middle School, and Paula Angelucci, district child nutrition supervisor, were paired with James Beard Award Winning Chef Jose Garces and charged with creating a school lunch menu that met all of the USDA meal pattern requirements on a school lunch budget.

Chef Garces visited Colonial School District to speak with students and work on the menu with Renee and Paula. Then, in Washington DC they took the stage to compete against Houston! The tables were all set with Delaware and Texas flags and White House Assistant Chef Sam Kass moderating the event. Judges included well known food critics and bloggers. At the end of the 30 minutes the votes were cast – and Colonial was the winner!

**Christina School District**

Thurgood Marshall Elementary School has a

unique collaboration with the University of Delaware, called Project MUSIC (Music Uniting Students Inspiring Communities). Together they put on an opera each year with university students playing the lead roles and Marshall students playing minor roles, dancing and singing in the chorus.

Last year they produced *The Wonderful Land of Oz* with university students playing Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Wizard and other characters, while general and choral music teacher John G. Mayer’s students were Munchkins, Flying Monkeys and Poppies.

Many parents get involved by creating costumes and props. Project MUSIC has won several awards as a community service project. This spring they produced *The Big Bad Musical*, about the Big Bad Wolf on trial. Witnesses include Little Red Riding Hood, the Three Little Pigs and the Boy Who Cried Wolf. The audience serves as the jury, so the cast prepared three alternate endings.

**Brandywine School District**

For the third year this spring, Springer Middle School participated in Challenge Day as part of the school’s anti-bullying efforts. This year for the first time, students from Brandywine High School joined the middle school students.

Challenge Day is an award-winning program that teaches compassion and respect to teens. The experiential workshop is designed to break down barriers and promote school and community environments based in understanding, acceptance, and love.

At a Challenge Day, teenage students, teachers, school counselors, parents, and members of the community are challenged to step out of their comfort zones, open their hearts, and build connections with others. Two trained Challenge Day Leaders guide participants through a carefully-designed series of games, activities, and trust-building exercises that break down the walls of separation and create new levels of empathy and respect. The Challenge Day program reduces teasing and bullying, teaches tools for peaceful conflict resolution, and inspires teens and adults to work together as forces for positive change in the world.

**Statewide**

More than 700 educators from 143 Delaware schools gathered in Dover on a Saturday this spring to learn strategies for deepening their schools’ implementation of the **Common Core standards**. Common Ground for the Common Core is an 18-month project designed to support the implementation of the Common Core standards by building capacity through a network of guiding teams from Delaware’s schools.

The conference included keynote speaker Dr. Tim Shanahan, professor of Urban Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he is director of the UIC Center for Literacy. Shanahan, a former first-grade teacher, spoke about “The Common Core: A Nation-Wide Vision that takes a School-Wide Effort.” The day also included breakout sessions where educators dug into sessions differentiated by grades (elementary and secondary), subject area (English language arts and mathematics) and level of implementation (awareness building, deepening understanding).

Common Core Standards are clear standards for math, English language arts and literacy that outline what should be learned in every public school in every state in the country. The research-based Common Core Standards were a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers and were developed with education and business leaders, parents and other experts from across the nation. The standards outline what should be covered; decisions about how the content is taught remain at the school and classroom level.

A state effort recently was honored for its work to better connect Delaware’s families and professionals to nature through schools, parks, communities and health services. The **Governor’s Children in Nature Initiative** won the Delaware Recreation & Parks Society’s 2013 Friends of Recreation Award, given to a person or organization that “has made important contributions toward the advancement and development of parks and open space or the advancement and development of recreation, educational or cultural programs or facilities in the state of Delaware.”

The Delaware Department of Education and Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental worked with nonprofit and private partners on a taskforce to address the opportunities afforded by the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as well as a concern that children lack enough time to learn and play outdoors.

After meeting regularly for more than two years and collaborating with 150 other professionals, the taskforce developed recommendations to combat increasing rates of childhood obesity, provide more opportunities for children to experience nature and integrate outdoor experiences into school curricula.

Delaware has won a national award for innovative education policy that is making systematic changes to improve student outcomes across the state. The Education Commission of the States will officially honor Delaware in June for winning the **2013 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation**, which recognizes “states and territories for enacting innovative education reforms or implementing innovative programs that go beyond marginal or incremental changes to improve student outcomes on a large scale.”

The governor’s plan for strengthening Delaware schools laid the foundation for Delaware’s 2010 first-place win in the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) and 2011 win in the federal Early Learning Challenge grant competitions.

The nomination cited significant progress underway in Delaware. This includes: higher standards and online growth measures for students, new evaluation systems for educators, focused supports and new strategies to improve the lowest performing schools, significant investments and quality initiatives for early learning programs.

The award highlights several initiatives in Delaware that “have broken new ground, are yielding results, are replicable, and are scalable,” including one of the best data infrastructures in the country and a statewide system to provide support and time for all educators, which includes 90 minutes per week to work in professional learning communities.

# More options available for teacher assessment

**ASSESSMENT:** from Page 1

Education (DDOE) has given districts, administrators and teachers the option of submitting district approved, “home-grown” Alternate Measure (B) assessments for approval in lieu of the statewide educator-developed process.

“There are several reasons why a district may choose Alternate Measure (B) assessments,” said Diane Donohue, the DDOE’s special assistant for student effectiveness. “For whatever reason, the assessment didn’t meet the educator’s needs.”

The DDOE has issued a set of guidelines for districts choosing this option. The Internal Measure Rubric will serve as a guide to provide feedback about the district measure.

The state will provide an analysis of the submitted assessment and technical assistance, if needed.

Districts, administrators, or teachers can visit [www.doe.k12.de.us/csa/dpasii/default.shtml](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/csa/dpasii/default.shtml) for a copy of the Internal Assessment Rubric and the Alternate Measure Request Form.

The rubric, which was used to develop the statewide-developed measures, will be used as the basic criteria to review the assessment.

Districts will be provided with initial notification within 30 days of submission and be notified by the DDOE no later than July 29, 2013 as to whether a measure has been approved. Upon approval, district teachers

can then administer the alternate internal measure in lieu of the statewide educator-developed measure beginning in the 2013-2014 school year.

DDOE’s Donahue works with an outside partner, Research in Action (RIA), which reviews submissions, determines any areas for additional development, and provides technical assistance to local districts as needed and/or requested. RIA may also elect to simply not recommend an assessment.

Donahue said the process has worked well since it was initiated in September and October 2012, and, to date, almost all of those beginning the process have been successful.

“About 99 percent of the submitted

assessments have been approved,” she said.

Donahue said the DOE is currently accepting submissions until June 28, but may extend the deadline.

“I think people are happy we have the alternate process in place,” she said.

She said the process does take some time and some might be intimidated by it, but once they look into it, it’s not quite as intimidating as they feared.

Donahue said the DOE is in the process of rewording the language involved in submitting assessments to make it more “teacher-friendly.”

“We hope to have the revisions in place as soon as possible,” she said.



# Department of Education picks essay contest winners

Secretary of Education Mark Murphy named three students — one each in three age categories — and their honored teachers as winners of the Delaware Department of Education's Teacher Appreciation Student Essay Contest. The announcement came May 6 as the state celebrated National Teacher Appreciation Week.

The winning essays, along with hundreds of others submitted from students across the state, are available on the state's website ([www.doe.k12.de.us/essays/](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/essays/)), sorted by school.

## The winners were:

Second-grader **Suhani Bhatt** and teacher Claudia Martin of Thurgood Marshall Elementary School in the Christina School District.

"My teacher really helps children. She believes people who struggle and believes those who need help should get extra help and people who already succeed the levels she is teaching deserve to be in higher challenging groups. She has already done that for some of my classmates and it is really helping them," Bhatt wrote. "The children who are great at reading or math don't get bored all day and get things that are their level and people who need help can start to get to the level they should be at so they can learn awesome techniques my teacher teaches."

Seventh-grader **Scot Nordmeier** and his talent development teacher, Katherine Bin-Yusif, of Gauger-Cobbs Middle School in the Christina School District.

"There was a point in my life that I felt as if I should have given up, I should have ended it all, but she helped me get through it," Nordmeier said. "She may not have noticed but the thing she said and done changed me a lot. She helped me to get help and change my perspective on what I have to do in life."

Eleventh-grader **Callahan Smith** and science teacher Cristin Brown of Conrad Schools of Science in the Red Clay Consolidated School District.

Smith has taken two years of classes taught by Brown. "She has not only taught me a lot about biotechnology, she also taught me a lot about life," said Smith. "She told me that I could be somebody and I could go to college .. (I now want to be) a teacher and to be the positive influence that Mrs. Brown was for me for other young adults in the future."



Secretary of Education Mark Murphy, left, Tonyea Mead, science education associate for the Department of Education, and DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara, far right, present the award to Conrad Schools of Science Principal Mark Pruitt.

## Green Ribbon schools named

**GREEN:** from Page 12

napkins, paper products and liquids are composted, significantly reducing the amount of solid waste.

"We used to have trash pickup every day, and now we've cut it down to three days a week," said Martin, estimating the net savings is \$36 per week. Conrad Schools of Science estimates its net savings from composting is \$72 per week.

For the schools' educators, the true value is in the eco-friendly habits the students are learning.

"It's been quite a challenging but exciting process for our students," said Gail Humphreys-Mackenzie, principal of the Richardson Park Learning Center, which serves K-5 students with identified special needs. "They're practicing everyday tasks that they can carry over to their own homes. It's important to teach them real-life tools beyond the classroom."

"If you teach them while they're young, they can teach their parents," said Frances Avena, nurse at the

Learning Center.

The Learning Center's after-school programming has also expanded to feature more outdoor learning opportunities, such as running, fly fishing and hiking the Appalachian Trail. At Richardson Park Elementary, students have installed two raised garden beds, where they plant, water and harvest fruits and vegetables under the direction of school nurse Cathy Whelton. Whelton is also launching a bike club and oversees the school's Girls on the Run® program, which combines training for a 5k with healthy living education.

"Kids are pretty easily adaptable and they've really taken ownership of the projects," said Richardson Park Elementary School Principal Eric Mathis.

At St. Andrew's, 44 percent of the school's 2,200 acres is devoted to ecologically beneficial uses and much of the rest is farmed in ecologically responsible ways. The school manages a rain garden by the school boathouse, swales by the tennis courts and several naturalized areas next to Noxontown Pond.

# Incentives boost early childhood programs

**STARS:** from Page 1

3 and 5 stars jumped from 28 to 88 this year and is still growing. New incentives encourage programs to participate in Stars, such as the CORE (Compensation, Retention and Education) Awards to individual early learning educators based on educational advancement, and the Infrastructure Fund, designed to fund building or technology improvements to help a program advance in quality and Star rating.

Next year, the Red Clay Consolidated School District will be one of the newcomers to the program. The district has been running a half-day pre-K program for the past two years and will be launching a full-day program with financial assistance from Delaware Stars next year. The program will be offered at three sites: Baltz, Mote and Warner elementary schools. The number of students enrolling in pre-K is expected to expand from 100 to between 200 and 225.

"Our data for the past two years showed remarkable progress in the vocabulary and social skills of the students entering kindergarten," said Red Clay Consolidated School District Superintendent Dr. Merv Daugherty. "It was the request of our teachers to expand to the full day and accelerate growth in reading. It was a great opportunity to get involved with Stars and it falls into our strategic goal of ensuring that all students are reading at or above grade level by third grade."

Delaware Stars is funded by the Delaware Department of Education and the Office of Early Learning, and operated by the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) at the University of Delaware. The program received a major boost with \$22 million earmarked for early childhood education in 2011 and \$50 million in federal funds won by the state in the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge last year.

"We know that children don't wait until they're five years old to start learning," said Governor Jack Markell. "And if we want to create an educational system that produces young adults equipped to succeed and compete in a global economy, we have to start at the beginning. We have to get it right the first time. We know our investments will help more students achieve better results, in part by providing additional incentives and accountability for early childhood education programs."

Programs that have applied and are accepted to Delaware Stars begin their quality improvement journey by completing an online orientation and six hours of professional development and they create an initial Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) linked to Delaware Stars standards. Programs at Star 2 have begun their active pursuit of continuous quality improvement and are implementing a QIP. To reach a Star 3-5, a program must demonstrate further improvement, as determined by classroom observation.

The Early Childhood Assistance Program at Project VILLAGE (Verbally Intensive Literacy and Learning Activities for Growth in Education), a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate early childhood educational program, initiated by the Indian River School District, is one such program that has reached Star 4 status and is on the road to achieving Star 5. The program provides a comprehensive, developmentally-appropriate, quality early childhood educational program for economically challenged, qualified 4-year-olds in the underserved Selbyville, Frankford, Millsboro and Georgetown areas through the Early Childhood Assistance Program. Due to the success of Project VILLAGE, the Indian River School District has since opened four additional pre-K sites.

"Years ago, we were seeing economically challenged students who were curricularly disabled — they hadn't been read to, didn't know their ABCs," said Indian River School District Superintendent Dr. Susan Bunting, who was instrumental in Project VILLAGE's implementation while director of instruction for the district. "Many of the children speak no English and this is their first time out of the home. Our goal is to teach them the language, along with the math readiness and social skills they need to enter kindergarten, acclimated to the culture and not having to go into an ESL classroom."





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# GOING GREEN

## State announces three Green Ribbon Schools

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

It may not be easy being green – at least according to the late Jim Henson – but the momentum of going green is on the rise.

Three schools have been named the state's first Green Ribbon award winners, becoming Delaware's nominees for the national award.

The Green Ribbon program, launched in 2011 by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, recognizes schools for exemplary achievement and considerable progress in three areas: reducing environmental impact and costs; improving the health and wellness of students and staff; and providing effective environmental and sustainability education by incorporating Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), civic skills and green career pathways. It is the first comprehensive federal program addressing the environmental impact, health and education of the nation's schools and a major milestone in the Green Schools Movement.

"Science, environmental and outdoor education play a central role in providing children with a well-rounded education, helping prepare them for the jobs of the future," said Duncan. "Green Ribbon Schools demonstrate compelling examples of the ways schools can help children

build real-world skill sets, cut school costs and provide healthy learning environments."

The 2013 Delaware Green Ribbon winners are:

- Conrad Schools of Science, Red Clay Consolidated School District
- Richardson Park Elementary School in partnership with the Richardson Park Learning Center, Red Clay Consolidated School District
- St. Andrew's School, Middletown (private)

The winners were honored in March at a ceremony at Richardson Park, where two other schools also were recognized with honorable mention: Red Clay's Baltz and Heritage elementary schools. St. Andrews was also named a national winner in April.

"Congratulations to the educators, students, families and communities who are supporting each of these buildings for working to reduce their building's environmental impact while championing student learning," said Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Murphy. "Their collaboration has resulted in innovative initiatives that we hope other schools across the state will learn from and build upon."

The Red Clay Consolidated School District partnered with Sieberlich Trane and the Delaware Sustainable Energy Utility to install energy-efficiency upgrades district-wide, which will reduce electric use by 28 percent and save more than 7.5 million kilowatt hours of electricity, nearly 200,000 therms of heating fuel and 10 million gallons of water annually. The project is the first of its kind in Delaware.

"It's a more controlled and efficient system," said Richard Martin, chief custodian at Richardson Park. "We can survey every room in the school building in a matter of minutes, determining and regulating room temperature."

As part of the district's partnership with Sieberlich Trane, students at Conrad Schools of Science have had the opportunity to learn about careers in energy efficiency and take part in lessons about reducing energy consumption.

Both Conrad and Richardson Park are also embracing recycling and composting programs. All leftover food,

See **GREEN** Page 11

First-grader Brian Nelson Jr., left, and Yerison De Los Santos-Medina at Richardson Park Elementary carry their classroom recycling bin.



Kara Lynch's second-grade class at Richardson Park Elementary prepare the soil for the planting.



Second-graders Shane Pusy and Gabby Sorbora at Richardson Park Elementary spin their compost.



Paraprofessional Jodi Lloyd helps first-grader Edwin Mena sort his school lunch waste.