

THE DELAWARE EDUCATOR

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THINK? CHECK.

Cashmere Young focuses hard on his next move during chess practice at Thomas Edison Charter School. Learning the rules and strategies of chess can help students think before they act and be aware of what's going on around them. *Page 3.*

PHOTOS: JASON MINTO



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ON THE MARK

Murphy settles in as secretary of education

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Murphy is no stranger to the classroom, having begun his career as a teacher at a high-poverty school in Maryland. There, he served on the leadership teams that guided the school to both Blue Ribbon and National Title I Distinguished School status.

"He brings a teacher's heart, principal's perspective and years of data-driven experience that are all necessary to keep making progress," said Gov. Jack Markell, who nominated

Murphy for the position in April.

Murphy was sworn in as Secretary on June 1, replacing Dr. Lillian Lowery, who left to become Maryland's state superintendent of schools.

"I was honored and a bit awe-struck," said Murphy of his nomination. "I've worked with and watched systems around the country do amazing work, but it's a tremendous opportunity being able to continue my work, on a much larger scale, in a state that I've really fallen in love with."

Prior to his appointment, Murphy
See **SECRETARY** Page 2



Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Murphy is honored to take over for Dr. Lillian Lowery.

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Secretary of Education

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Celebrate past work, prepare for the future



**MARK
MURPHY**

As many of you spend the summer preparing for next school year, I hope you also take time to reflect upon and celebrate the powerful work you completed last school year. And for those of you who were not able to join Gov. Markell and me for our June teleconference town hall for educators, I also want to

share with you the exciting news we shared with your colleagues: Because of your hard work, we saw significant gains across the state in student reading and math scores.

In fact, in most categories, we exceeded the state's already ambitious Race to the Top goals. This is incredible news because it means more of our students—about 7,000 more in fact—finished this school year proficient compared to last year. We know that these gains reflect more than the work of our reading and math teachers alone—they are the result of the hard work of every educator in our state.

So thank you. Thank you for the time, energy,

patience and hard work you have put forth in the past year. I know the past year brought a number of changes to your work and that, while exciting, change also can be challenging. The implementation of changes in policy and practice—many of which stemmed from feedback you gave—took place, from establishment of common planning time with your peers to use of data coaches to facilitate your review and use of data; from adoption of more rigorous curricula in your schools to shifts in the focus and frequency of the feedback you receive from your school leaders. Through it all, you have been leading the work on the ground where it matters most—in our classrooms.

The results are very encouraging: Comparing student proficiency based on the final assessment students took last year and this year, we see proficiency rates increase by 5 to 8 percentage points across grade bands and subjects.

Perhaps most importantly, the increases in proficiency occurred across all grades, subjects and subgroups. In fact, proficiency of underrepresented subgroups often increased more than that of their counterparts, representing a narrowing of the achievement gap. For example,

in grades 3–5 reading, major achievement gaps based on race, income and disability status all narrowed 2 to 3 percentage points from last spring to the last testing opportunity this year.

This is exciting because it means students achieved more academic growth this year than they did last year, resulting in a higher percentage of students achieving proficiency by the end of the school year. Students are succeeding. Read more about the statewide results online at <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/news/2012/0614.shtml>.

We're going to spend the next few months digging into the data to identify the drivers of these gains and to look at district results. We cannot know all of the factors at play, but we do know that exciting changes have been happening across the state, driven by your efforts in our schools and classrooms.

As we take a deeper look at these results we will be reaching out to you for input and ideas on what is working well. But for now, we know that we have many more students achieving proficiency this year, and that is an outcome of which we can all be proud.

Mark Murphy is Delaware secretary of education.

Murphy sworn in as Delaware secretary of education

SECRETARY: from Page 1

served as executive director of the nonprofit Vision Network in Delaware, leading school improvement efforts with staff, consultants and educators at more than two dozen schools across the state. His work aimed to drive dramatic gains in student achievement by focusing on the strongest levers while empowering school leaders to work together to confront and solve their biggest challenges. He also targeted support at the instructional leadership team level of each school, ensuring that leadership capacity is built throughout the school and achievement gains are sustained.

"Delaware has made remarkable progress, putting forward a detailed agenda and innovative ideas to make sure more students graduate ready to succeed in work or college," Murphy said. "The biggest focus for me will be implementation. I look forward to helping move each of these efforts forward, and making sure everything we're doing is making a real difference in the classrooms."

Some of the most exciting work is happening here.

Prior to his work in Delaware, Murphy served as executive director of leadership development at New Leaders for New Schools, a national nonprofit based in New York. There, he designed and implemented cutting-edge school leadership standards and assessments. He also led the successful development of more than 200 school principals across the country and designed, implemented and led the Data-Driven Instruction Initiative for New Leaders.

Murphy began his career as a teacher, before



Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Murphy, left, visits with fourth-grade students taught by Holly Yadacus, third from left, at the Academy of Dover Charter School.

becoming an assistant principal, then principal. His work as a principal was targeted at driving high achievement gains for every student and eliminating the achievement gap in his school. He led a turnaround effort in a troubled and failing district school in Maryland, driving more than 30-point gains in both literacy and math over the course of four years.

"Having had that experience, it gives me the perspective to constantly ask, 'What does this policy really look like? How will it translate to the classroom?'" he said.

Collaboration, especially on work such as

teacher evaluation, will be of high importance to Murphy in the upcoming year.

"Some of the most exciting work is happening right here, especially the orientation toward evaluating the people who are closest to our children," said Murphy. "When you look at states like California or New York, you're dealing with much larger education systems. Here, we have 19 districts and we can get representatives of those districts around the table very easily."

Murphy and his wife, Erika, live in Wilmington with their two children, who attend Delaware public schools.



Ladavaia Green, left, and Cashmere Young in the middle of a game of chess. PHOTOS: JASON MINTO

CHECK, MATE

Thomas Edison students master chess strategy, critical thinking skills

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Chess is a game of concentrated skill, strategy and sportsmanship, and it's a game that young students at Thomas Edison Charter School in Wilmington have quickly mastered.

In the second year of the school's chess program, the team tied for second place in the under 750 division at the National Junior High Chess Championship, held in San Diego in late April. Seventh-grader Ruth Ironkwe, captain of the team, finished second in the under 1,000 division, and was the top female in the nation in her division.

"It's intense, sometimes, but exciting," said Ironkwe. "You always have to pay attention."

The chess program was the brainchild of Head

of School Salome Thomas-El, who was previously a teacher and principal with the School District of Philadelphia from 1987–2009. He received national acclaim as a teacher and chess coach at Vaux Middle School, where his students went on to win recognition as eight-time national chess champions.

"There's just something about kids who have to overcome obstacles early in life," said Thomas-El. "They have strong critical thinking skills and are able to operate under stressful situations. When it comes down to the final stretch, the problem solver is going to win every time."

Thomas-El has brought a powerful combination of passion, caring and leadership to Edison, crafting a common-sense roadmap to help students achieve their dreams, no matter

the odds. He approaches each day with the absolute belief that every child can and will learn as long as adults in their world care enough to not give up.

"If you have high expectations and people who serve as confidantes and mentors to the kids, they will go far in life," said Thomas-El. "Routines are also important. You can do anything as long as you work hard."

No one could argue that the 50 or so students participating in the chess club do in fact work very hard. Most of the students attend practice every day after school for three hours, and gather during the summer as well. They are coached by teachers Demetrius Carroll and Nathan Dorant, who were former students of Thomas-El in Philadelphia. The two were part

of the 1997 national championship team, and for Dorant, it was a life-changing experience.

"I was in trouble when they sent me down to the club," said Dorant. "It changed my focus. Chess players don't fight with their fists; they fight with their minds."

"It's a game that allows you to think before you act and be aware of what's going on around you," said Carroll. "Those are skills that are critical in any urban environment."

In addition to the accomplishments of this year's Edison team, Abu Kamara, a Hodgson Vocational Technical High School student who began playing chess at Edison when he was in grade 8, also went on to excel at the national competition, earning the co-national championship title in the under 1,250 division.



Maddy Yates successfully captures a knight.



Captain Ruth Ironkwe prepares to move her bishop.



Othelo Predeoux contemplates his next move.



Kybria Dobson, Alyjah Callahan, Jordan Davis and Kyle Jenkins with their Exhibition presentation.

INQUIRING MINDS



Moriah Duncan, Nyhe Toston, and Tai Jones are interviewed by Cache Jones, right.

Harlan becomes Delaware's first IB elementary school

BY SHANNON CAIN ARNOLD

Harlan Elementary School in Wilmington recently became the first International Baccalaureate (IB) elementary school in the state. The IB Primary Years Program (PYP), for students age 3–12, focuses on building the knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in a globally interconnected world.

The PYP is built on a philosophy of rigorous learning—actively engaging students in their studies, giving them opportunities to develop and voice opinions, and challenging them to think critically about the issues they encounter in the classroom. The curriculum is built around a framework of five essential elements—concepts, knowledge, skills, attitude, and action—and is guided by six interdisciplinary themes: who we are, where we are in place and time, how we express ourselves, how the world works, how we organize ourselves and sharing the planet.

One of the Harlan School's key objectives in implementing the PYP is developing meaningful knowledge in its students. "What is the difference between knowing something and understanding it? The answer to this question is important to teachers and parents of children at PYP schools. The staff members at Harlan have spent many hours debating the answer," said program coordinator Julie Cassel. "Our unofficial response was that 'to know' is simply to recall something you have learned from memory but to understand something you have to be able to apply or transfer that knowledge within different contexts and situations. Understanding is a deeper form of learning, while knowledge can easily be forgotten."

The Primary Years Program has not completely altered teaching at the Harlan School; rather, it has provided a philosophy of knowledge and a set of organizing themes to help the school teach required content in a way that addresses the needs of the whole child. Harlan follows the Brandywine School District curriculum in math, reading, science, social studies and other subject areas, but it is presented to students in a unique way.

Each grade level has developed transdisciplinary (science, social studies, language, reading, writing, math, the arts, personal/social and

physical education) units centered around the six central themes and five essential elements of the IB program. The school still teaches the Common Core standards and math is often taught as a standalone subject.

Teachers at Harlan are also integrating PYP into students' daily activities through the Behavior Support Program. In addition to learning the program's social, research, thinking, communication and self-management skills in the classroom, they are encouraged to apply the same skills in the lunchroom, hallways, and the playground.

"Student initiated action is one of the essential elements of the PYP," Cassel said. She emphasized that these actions need not have immediate global impact; students should be commended for small actions as well. "Action can be described as simply checking out a book from the library on the topic they are studying in class or the larger action step of educating the community about ways to save electricity. One group [of students] learned about the importance of staying active and eating healthy. They wanted to share this information with one of our self-contained special education classes by teaching them about active games and healthy foods. They began a partnership with the class and continued to volunteer weekly on their own."

Fifth-grade students at the Harlan completed their first Exhibition, the culminating event in the PYP program designed to incorporate knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed throughout students' years in the program. Throughout the spring, students engaged in a process of identifying, investigating and taking action on a real-world issue. On May 24, students shared the results of their projects with the community.

The PYP and the manner in which it is used at the Harlan School will continue to change as time goes on. "Reflection is at the heart of the program—teacher as well as student reflection—so as the program continues, our teachers grow as well as the students," Cassel said. "As our understanding of the IB philosophy and standards grows, the program will continue to have a greater impact on our students."

For more information, visit www.ibo.org or www.bandywineschools.org/harlan.

Milford School District takes engagement efforts to parents' worksites

When administrators in the Milford School District were plotting ideas on how to engage more parents in their children's education, they were faced with the reality that a certain percentage of parents were simply not coming into the schools, despite repeated efforts to reach out to them.

"A certain segment of our parent population was not coming into the school buildings, so we thought we would go to them," said former Milford Superintendent Sharon Kanter.

Kanter and Dr. Sylvia Henderson, Director of Student Support, wanted to be able to meet with a decent number of parents at the same time, and they determined that would best be accomplished by finding a business where

many parents were employed. First State Manufacturing became the target.

"There are not a lot of large companies in Milford, and we were looking for a business where 20-30 parents are employed," Henderson said. "We spoke with the owners (Eli and Sherri Valenzuela) and they embraced the idea. They opened their doors to us."

Starting last fall, representatives of the school district, including a Spanish-speaking translator, conducted six sessions for parents at First State, which provided space for the meetings and had a staff member attend. The sessions were attended by up to 15 parents who work at First State.

"We talked to them about the type of issues

their kids were having in school," Henderson said, "and we built the visits around their concerns." Those included eyeglasses for children, a dental clinic at school and bullying situations.

There were also reading activities in Spanish and discussion about physical fitness and nutrition.

"They don't feel comfortable coming into the schools and explaining their concerns because of the language barrier," Kanter said. "The ultimate goal is for them to come into the building."

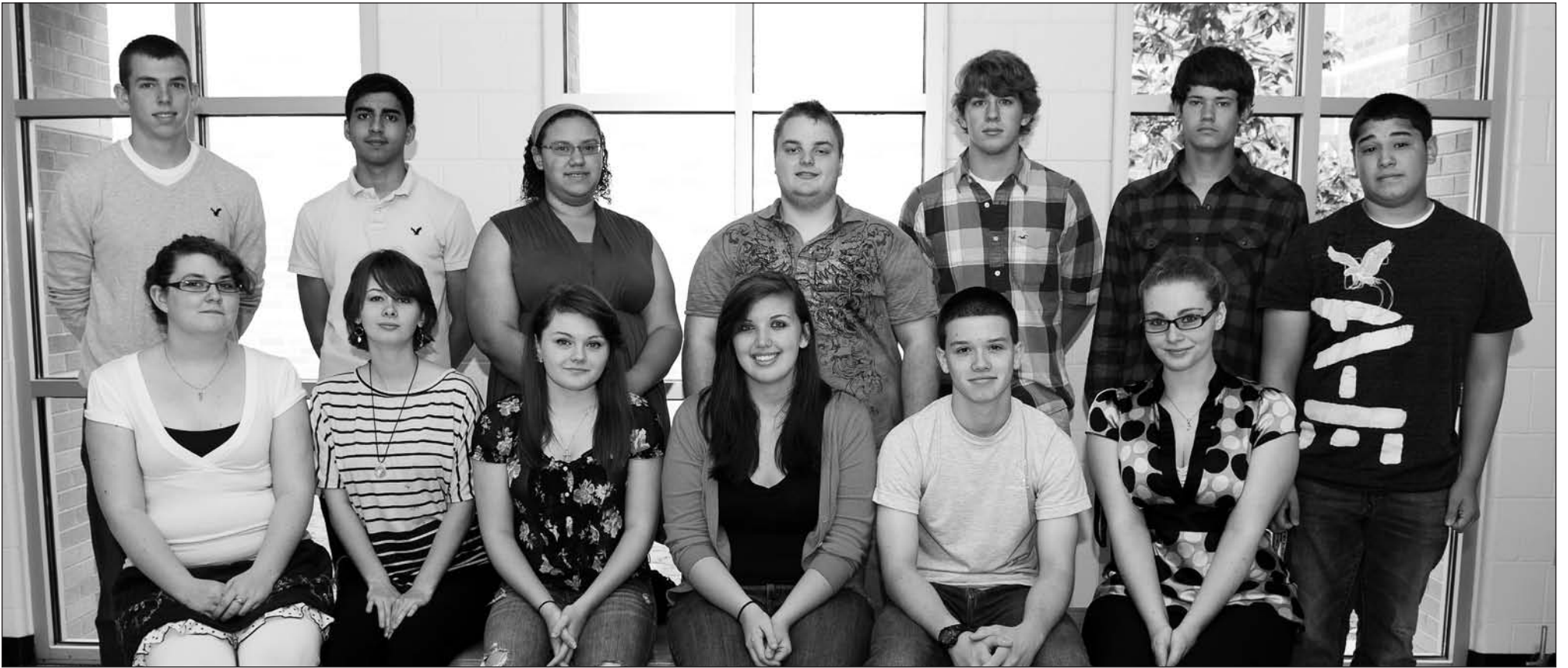
As a starting point, the district identified key contact people—bilingual—in each building for parents to call with any questions or

concerns. "We made those connections for them and opened the lines of communication," Kanter said.

District staff that participated in the sessions with parents at First State included: Richard Biscayart, ELL teacher; Erin Blecki, pre-school teacher; Xitali Castellanos, first-grade teacher; John Lobiondo and Jim Kucharzyk, physical education teachers.

"The cooperation of First State made this possible," Henderson said. "They were so willing to work with us."

Additional work will be done over the summer to prepare to continue and hopefully expand the program starting in the fall when school reopens.



Polytech students attended the National SkillsUSA this summer. Front row from left: Shannon Mullin, Sandra Henning, Brooke Fogell, Emily Schultz, Patrick Coleman and Jamie Case; back row from left: David Maloney, Saad Shafique, Christina Gottfried, Robert Murrian, David Souza, Jorden Taylor and Anthony Comacho.

Students' technical skills will assist them in the future

By MEAGHAN CASEY

More than 5,400 outstanding career and technical education students came out to demonstrate their workforce-ready skills and compete against the best in the country at the 48th SkillsUSA National Leadership and Skills Conference in Kansas City, Mo., June 23-27.

Among them were 104 Delaware students who were this year's state champions. They represented the following high schools: Polytech, Sussex Tech and New Castle County Vo-Tech School District's Delcastle, Hodgson, Howard and St. Georges.

"It's an amazing competition to see, and they learn a lot that will help them in their real lives and better prepare them for

college and their career," said Richard Carter, Polytech student activities coordinator.

Students learn a lot that will help them in their lives and better prepare them for college and careers.

A multi-million-dollar annual event, the conference occupies space equivalent to more than 16 football fields and attracts thousands of business partners and recruiters. It showcases skills in 94 different trade, technical and leadership fields that include air conditioning/refrigeration repair, auto mechanics, computer systems, cosmetology, commercial baking, industrial motor controls, leadership, plumbing, preschool teaching, community service, web design, audio/radio production and carpentry. Contests are run with the help of industry, trade associations and labor organizations, and test competencies set by industry.

Polytech sent 14 students to this year's competition, including Christina Gottfried, who will begin her senior year this fall and plans to study pre-law or political science in college and go on to law school.

"It's an opportunity to compete against people who you know have worked as hard as you," said Gottfried, who was required to demonstrate official police duties, including traffic stops, in the criminal justice category. "It gave me a sense of authority and put me in that real-life situation of what police officers go through day after day on the job," she said.

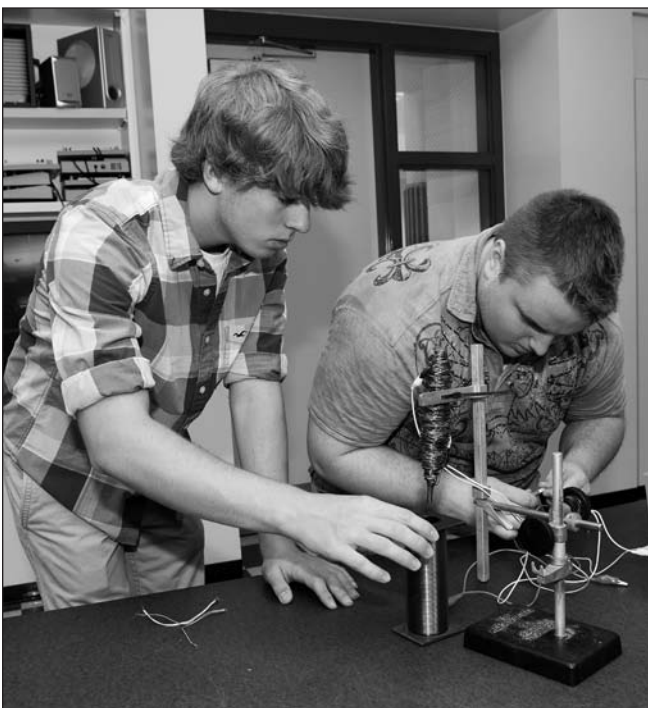
"After three years of trying to get to nationals, I was so pumped to finally go this year," said Robert Murrian, who

graduated from the Polytech electronics technology program. Murrian will attend the University of Delaware, where he will pursue a degree in sports medicine. He hopes to use his electronics background to improve the field.

Classmate Jorden Taylor, a welding student who also graduated from Polytech, has already been offered a job at a local steel company, producing hospital sinks.

"I never thought I'd be offered a job right out of high school, and they've agreed to pay for college too, so it's a win-win situation," said Taylor.

Taylor competed at the state level last year, but this was his first time going to nationals. "It's fast-paced and you have to be patient with the metal you work with," he said. "It's a good learning experience."



David Souza, left, and Robert Murrian work on their project to demonstrate wireless electricity.



Jamie Case works the camera for Emily Schultz as part of their video production project.



Stubb's Principal Merridith Murray with kindergartners in the school's outdoor garden.

PHOTOS: JASON MINTO

Stubb's Elementary becomes first STEM model in Christina School District

By MEAGHAN CASEY

This past school year, Stubb's Elementary School became the first elementary Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) model in the Christina School District, providing its students with a strong foundation to innovate and compete.

Broadly defined, a STEM education helps youth gain the skills to think critically, solve complex problems, and drive advancements in science and technology.

It lets our kids explore high-level thinking skills while preparing them for future careers.

"It gives our kids the opportunity to explore high-level thinking skills and engage in hands-on activities, all while preparing them for future careers," said Stubb's Principal Merridith Murray.

The timing for that preparation could not be better. According to the U.S. Commerce Department, STEM occupations are expected to double in growth in comparison to non-STEM occupations by 2018.

Murray, who previously served as director of special services for Christina, is in her first year as principal at Stubb's. She has nine years' experience as a school administrator, including two years as principal at Jones Elementary School in Newark and seven years as principal or assistant principal in the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

Stubb's was one of four schools chosen in 2010 when the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) launched a Partnership Zone (PZ) to dramatically improve the lowest-achieving schools in the state. The school's reform plan is officially a transformation model and reflects the needs of the schools' individual students, including targeted strategies to improve student performance.

As part of its plan, Stubb's implemented a Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach to create a more student-centric instructional method, connecting academic instruction with real-life activities. An extended instructional day—8 a.m.—4:10 p.m.—is providing students with more learning opportunities, including 30 minutes each day of math intervention in small groups. With the increased STEM focus, nature has become the students' classroom, with wildlife such as chicks and butterflies to observe and care for, and an outdoor garden oasis to enjoy. Murray hopes to build upon some of the local partnerships already in place, potentially bringing in programs offered through NASA and the Baltimore Aquarium.

The school's new STEM emphasis falls in line with the goals of the Delaware STEM Council, composed of 26 educators, school administrators, technology employers and government officials from throughout the state. The council is aiming to expand the number of Delaware students who ultimately pursue advanced degrees and careers in STEM; create, grow and attract STEM-related businesses to Delaware; and increase STEM literacy for all Delaware students, including those who do not pursue STEM-related careers, but need STEM skills. This past spring, the council launched the site www.stem.delaware.gov, devised an ongoing list of funding resources for STEM initiatives, and established a database of highly effective, nationally practiced STEM programs. This fall, it plans to launch the STEM Institute for teacher training and create STEM mentorships and internships for middle and high school students, among other initiatives.



Second-grader Michaeja Chamblee shows off her finished project on the life cycle of a chicken.



Second-grader Shatir Butler enjoys bringing nature into the classroom.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING & MATHEMATICS



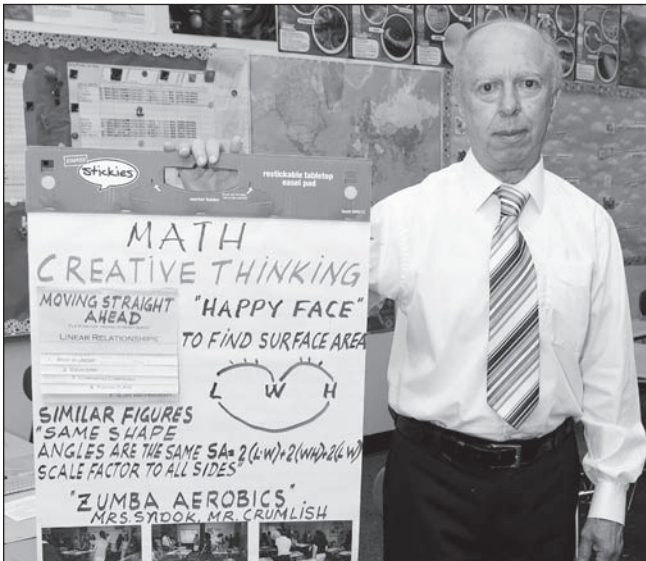
Joseph Hollman, left, and Jeriya Toston take care of baby chicks in their classroom.



STEM has become an integral part of the curriculum at Stubb's Elementary.



Hernando Blanco works with ESL students Aneli Reyes, left, and Victor Elizondo on math and English.



Hernando Blanco, paraprofessional at Gauger-Cobbs.

Gauger-Cobbs paraprofessional chronicles journey

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

It was a long journey to the Gauger-Cobbs Middle School classroom for Hernando Blanco, who used to walk two miles each way to school in his native Colombia, in hopes of one day charting his own path in America.

Blanco, the Christina School District's paraprofessional of the year, immigrated to the U.S. in 1967, enrolling in Los Angeles Trade Technical College.

"It was the American Dream," said Blanco. "I had to start from the bottom up, but after college, everything started getting better. I never regret coming here. It's been a better life."

Blanco chronicled his story in a book, published in Colombia in 2008, which he is currently translating to English. It is in its second draft now, and he hopes to be able to share it with his

middle school students. In addition to telling the story of his life, including his childhood struggles, Blanco goes into detail in the book about his experience at Gauger-Cobbs Middle.

"Going every two days to eight different classes has given me a unique perspective of the wonderful work teachers do and the almost infinite patience that they need to have, not only to teach 30 students at a time, but to understand the complexities of working with children from different backgrounds and diverse races," Blanco writes.

Before becoming a paraprofessional, Blanco was employed by the DuPont Company for 20 years, working with process engineers in the design of polyester, nylon and Teflon products. When the company downsized, Blanco retired early and entered the educational arena. At Gauger-Cobbs Middle, where he has been since 2005, he is responsible for helping English as a Second Language (ESL) students with math and English.

Education Insight Dashboards make data work for teachers

BY SHANNON CAIN ARNOLD

As part of its Race to the Top initiative, the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has developed the Education Insight Dashboards, a system designed to put informative, usable data at educators' fingertips. The Dashboards, which use public domain design documentation developed by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, will aggregate data from many different sources into a clear, easy-to-interpret picture that will allow teachers, principals and administrators to make evidence-based decisions.

According to the DDOE, "This system of dashboards allows educators to monitor student performance, see warning signs as well as growth opportunities early, and intervene appropriately, thus ensuring every student avoids failure and reaches his or her full potential."

Delaware collects a wealth of student data, most of which is available to educators. However, the data was previously dispersed

throughout different systems and was therefore difficult for educators to access in a useful way. Reese Robinson, the DDOE's Education Insight Project Manager, said the Dashboards project was developed to make this data easily accessible and usable for educators.

"Teachers and other educators have precious little time to devote to data analysis. [The Dashboards] save valuable teacher time by presenting a unified view of logically related information contained in a variety of disparate student, teacher and assessment data sources. The integration of this data in a single Dashboard allows teachers to make at-a-glance connections and inferences without the need to access many different systems and reports," Robinson said.

The Dashboards also address uncertainties educators might face over how best to interpret student data. "The Dashboards present information in the form of pre-defined, predictive metrics based on research and Delaware education policy," Robinson said. "Rather than require educators to analyze the data and draw

their own conclusions, the visual presentation of the metrics makes it extremely easy to identify problems, patterns and areas of concern with a district, school or classroom and take action."

The pilot release of the Education Insight Dashboards, completed in April, was designed to provide student data to classroom teachers. These Dashboards allow teachers to see both an overview of their classrooms and information on specific students. The typical student page displays information including the student's biography, class schedule, attendance, assessment scores, grades, credits and special services the student receives or programs he or she participates in. There is also a section that generates prose statements about areas in which the student needs most attention.

The second release of the Dashboards, due out at the beginning of the 2012-13 academic year, will focus on summary metrics for principals and administrators. These Dashboards will be based on the same framework as the teacher version but will focus on aggregated perfor-

mance data for schools and districts.

The Education Insight Dashboards and the data used will be maintained by the DDOE technology workgroup. All services will be provided free of charge to school districts and charters throughout the state. The DDOE is also providing training to help schools best implement the program. Training begins with a meeting with school administrators to plan the logistics of implementation. This is followed by training administrators to use the Dashboards, a "train the trainer" session for individuals who will train users at each school, and finally a session for individuals who will provide local support for Dashboard users. The DDOE also plans to produce a series of training videos for use with the next release of the Dashboards.

Additional releases of the Education Insight Dashboards are planned for January 2013 and for the start of the 2014-15 academic year.

Additional information and sample Dashboard pages can be found at <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/EdInsight>.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS

By SHANNON CAIN ARNOLD

Delaware's recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) provides teachers, parents and students a clear, consistent picture of what students are expected to learn in school. The new standards also challenge teachers to shift their instructional focus in a way that better prepares students for college and career.

The CCSS are research-based standards for math and English language arts that were developed with education and business leaders, parents and other experts from across the United States. The standards are internationally benchmarked and outline what should be learned in every public school in every state in the country. Students must meet each year's grade-specific standards while also retaining or further developing skills and knowledge mastered in preceding grades.

Delaware adopted the CCSS in the summer of 2010. Since then, the state has trained 9,000 teachers and 350 trainers in the new standards.

Marian Wolak, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development for the Delaware Department of Education, said the CCSS will make it easier for parents to understand what their children are expected to learn each year. "The standards represent a vertical progression of knowledge and skills in which the student must have one prerequisite skill to achieve the next one. They build on foundational skills, adding a few words on to each standard each year," Wolak explained.

With the new standards, parents can be more confident their children will have the tools they need for success after high school. The standards have a sustained focus that prepares students for higher education and aims to reduce the number of students who require remedial classes or drop out in their first year of college. The CCSS are also designed to address the career challenges of the modern world.

"The standards are preparing students for a more global economy and society in which more students are going to have to compete with others for jobs," Wolak said.

The CCSS also solve a problem many families previously faced when moving from state to state. "For students who are transient, the standards will be the same across states. This makes it easier for students to assimilate back into the classroom," Wolak said.

For teachers, the new standards offer clear guidelines for what students should know coming into and finishing each grade. As CCSS focuses on required achievements, teachers and school administrators can determine the best methods for teaching skills and content knowledge based on their students' specific needs.

The new standards do, however, pose some challenges for teachers. Efforts to align existing curriculum are ongoing. Wolak said this poses a particular challenge, as most published textbooks—even those claiming alignment—are not yet fully aligned with the new standards.

In English language arts in particular, the standards require teachers to shift more focus to nonfiction texts. Districts are being asked to align their curriculum and increase the complexity of texts students read—a key component of the CCSS—and teachers are being asked to teach books that are grade-level appropriate according to the Lexile Measures, a framework for determining text complexity.

Wolak said many texts currently being taught are significantly below grade level according to these measures and, as a result, students are passing through grade levels and ultimately on to college unprepared for the texts they will encounter.

The new standards also require teachers, particularly at the elementary level, to improve their content knowledge and focus on teaching students how to read informational texts. "The CCSS lend themselves to shared responsibility. All teachers, not just English language arts teachers, are going to have to teach students how to read social studies and science texts to gain information," Wolak said.



Sussex Tech Principal Dr. John Demby gets help from development coach Sue Dutton.

ALWAYS DEVELOPING

Principals become students with support from development coaches

By MEAGHAN CASEY

It's never too late for even the most seasoned educators to assume the role of pupil.

A number of the state's principals and assistant principals learned just that as they were paired with development coaches this past year, to help as they assess and support teachers in their buildings.

The program was created by the Delaware Department of Education in partnership with the University of Delaware's Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL). Nine development coaches were selected and trained, each of whom was assigned to work with approximately seven schools intensively to help improve the consistency and rigor of educator performance appraisals and better link these appraisals to feedback and professional-development opportunities.

"When you look at sports, every high-level player still has a coach," said Dr. John Demby, principal of Sussex Technical High School. "In the same way, every person desiring to perform at a high level in any field, particularly in education, should have a coach. I'm a prime candidate for this resource. Talking to someone can give you that one idea that's a game-changer."

Demby has been paired with development coach Sue Dutton, a retired teacher and administrator who has more than 30 years of experience in the field. She is also working with six other principals in Capital and the Cape Henlopen school districts, and typically spends about three hours each week with each principal.

"I remember the first observation I ever wrote," said Dutton. "It would have been so much easier had I had someone to bounce things off of. Seeing successes and seeing the process

work has made me a much better evaluator at this stage."

The development coaches have been trained in assessing performance, providing feedback to facilitate critical conversations and identifying opportunities for teacher development. They are providing coaching to assessors to improve the quality and accuracy of performance appraisals and, ultimately, instructional planning and delivery. Development coaches are not conducting performance appraisals themselves, but rather they are supporting assessors as the state transitions to a more rigorous and transparent performance appraisal process. They also meet monthly or bi-monthly with each other to share ideas and best practices.

We all have different backgrounds and strengths. The more we can share, the better.

"We all have different backgrounds and strengths — whether that's reading or special education — and the more we can share, the better," said Dutton.

The 24-month development coach program will span two full academic years. In the upcoming year, in addition to providing the one-on-one coaching to 75 schools, the state-wide initiative will also include regional and district training on aspects of the state's DPAS-II evaluation process to select groups of principals and assistant principals who may or may not have their own coach.

Around Delaware Schools

Districts



Colonial School District hosted a Technology Night for the community on May 14.

The evening was designed to show parents and students how schools: use iPod touches, iPads and iPods to improve reading and math fluency; Skype with a children's book author; use Smart board tools and educational games; tell stories digitally using Photostory3 software from Microsoft; use Google Documents; engage with Edmodo, a social networking educational tool; and how they use RealityWorks Babies, a computerized program that allows students to experience what it is like to care for an infant. They also showed off graphic design and production work from **William Penn High School** students.

Milford School District presented honorary diplomas in May to 11 former students who were denied access to an education in 1954 after the *Brown vs Board of Education* decision. The students had to finish their education in all-black schools outside of Milford. Those receiving honorary diplomas were: Kenneth Baynard; Alex Leo Blue (deceased), accepted on his behalf by daughter Caroline Brookes; Orlando J. Camp, who co-authored a book titled *Milford Eleven*; Charles

P. Fleming Jr.; Eugene F. Harris; Annie Ruth Thompson McDaniel, who was represented by sister Vynella Thompson because of illness; Irene Pettyjohn (deceased), accepted on her behalf by nephew Robbin Van; Edna M. Sharp; Lillian Simmons (deceased); Ronald Vann; and Madalene Staten Young (deceased), accepted on her behalf by daughter Debbie Young.

U.S. News & World Report's annual rankings recognized **The Charter School of Wilmington, Red**

High

Clay Consolidated's Cab Calloway School of the Arts and **Woodbridge's Woodbridge High School** with respective top honors. Also receiving bronze medals were: **New Castle County Vo-Tech's Delcastle Technical**; **Indian River's Indian River and Sussex Central**; **Milford's Milford**; and **Sussex's Sussex Tech**.

Delcastle Technical High School's Digital Media program held its second annual DM/AM/PM Film Festival in April. The festival includes 12 films developed, shot, produced and animated with original music composed in 24 hours. Students in grades 10–12 shot footage from 8 a.m.–8 p.m. on a Saturday in March, then came back into school studios and completed post-production until 8 a.m. on Sunday. More than 12 teams totaling 60 students were involved. The films were shown at the school on April 19 in the auditorium to more than 400 viewers who paid \$1 admission.

Proceeds from the ticket sales were donated to a charity. The concept of the films was of a provocative nature about social issues that teenagers experience. *Films can be viewed online at <http://dmampm.com>.*

On May 18, three agriscience students and FFA members—Melanie Jackson of **Lake Forest High School**, Bree Wilkens of **Milford High School** and Caroline Hutchison of **Dover High School**—joined State FFA Advisor Dr. Karen C. Hutchison at the third annual Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security in Washington, D.C. Speakers at the conference ranged from President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to Bono. The students also had the opportunity to meet with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, who invited the students to observe a meeting he was holding with leaders from Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana and Benin as they discussed how the United States could aid their countries in improving their agriculture production and practices.

More than 500 students and advisors from 30 chapters across the state attended the **2012 Delaware Technology Student Association State Conference** this spring, many bringing home honors. This year's conference had a record registration, including six new schools and more than 900 entries in the competitive events. Students from across the state competed with each other in events such as CAD, Digital Video Production, Engineering Design, Flight, Inventions and Innovations, Magnetic

Levitation Vehicles, Rocketry, Structural Engineering, System Control Technology, Technological Problem Solving and more. Each TSA competitive event requires students to apply technology, solve technical problems, conduct research, and invent solutions. Additionally, Sussex Central High School was recognized for its outstanding spirit and honored with the 2012 Chapter Spirit Award. *A list of all event finalists can be found online at <http://detsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Event-Results-2012.pdf>.*

Statewide

Delaware, awarded almost \$50 million in federal Early Learning Challenge Race to the Top grant funds, has hired **Harriet Dichter** as director of Delaware's Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge. Dichter previously served as vice president at the Ounce of Prevention, where she led their national policy

work, providing substantive and strategic consultation on early childhood in 17 states, drawing on practice, innovation and research to advance the needs of at-risk children, families and their communities. Her previous work included serving as the national director for the First Five Year Fund where she directed national strategy and implementation aimed at improving federal public policy in early childhood learning and development. She also established the Early Learning Challenge Collaborative to support states in planning applications, advance systemic reform in early learning and child development, and inform state and federal policy in Washington, D.C. She also served as the secretary of Public Welfare and deputy secretary for the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) in the Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare.



Student leaders of **Delaware's Career and Technical Student Organizations** (BPA, DECA, FCCLA, FFA, TSA, HOSA) visited Legislative Hall on May 15 for Legislative Appreciation Day. Each organization's state president spoke and then presented legislators with a geranium.

Delaware granted waiver from NCLB requirements

BY SHANNON CAIN ARNOLD

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has approved Delaware's application for a waiver from some of the requirements of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), formerly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

While some elements of ESEA were useful to states and school districts, the one-size-fits-all standards and reforms have often made it difficult for states to address problems specific to

their schools. In response to this weakness in the law, last year the U.S. Department of Education invited states to apply for waivers from the law's 2014 deadline for students to reach 100 percent proficiency in English language arts/reading and mathematics.

In exchange for this flexibility, states were required to propose comprehensive plans to improve student outcomes, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. Duncan pointed out that many state-level accountability systems capture more students at risk, including low-income students, students with disabilities, and English language learners: "States must show they are protecting children in order to get flexibility. These states met that bar," he said.

Delaware submitted its request for flexibility under the law on Feb. 28 after a series of town meetings in which officials collected feedback from stakeholders and members of the public. The waiver clears the way for the state to move

forward with its plan for school accountability and support. States requesting waivers were given three options for state-directed reforms, of which Delaware chose the first: reduce by half the percentage of students in the "all students" group and in each subgroup who are not proficient within six years.

Outgoing Delaware Secretary of Education Dr. Lillian M. Lowery and new Secretary Mark Murphy both lauded the decision, saying Delaware's plan will allow the state, districts and schools to differentiate interventions and support to better meet student needs.

"The state will now be able to implement a plan designed by Delawareans to meet the needs of Delaware students," Lowery said. "This plan gives us the flexibility to allow data—not just whether a school meets the ESEA definition of making adequate yearly progress—to drive our decisions on what kinds of interventions and supports or requirements our schools receive."

Delaware has developed a plan focusing support and reforms on "priority schools"—the state's lowest-performing overall schools—and "focus schools"—schools in which a subgroup of students faces particular challenges.

The state will also implement a tiered system of district support based on the performance of schools within a district. All districts will receive a basic level of assistance from the state, while those most in need of interventions will receive assistance through one-on-one support and quarterly monitoring.

Brian Curtis, Education Associate for Local Education Agency (LEA) and School Success with the Delaware Department of Education, said "Through the Delaware Education Support System (DESS), the DDOE will work more closely and collaboratively with those local education agencies needing more intense supports and interventions, in order to better identify and to tailor our joint efforts to assist the LEAs in building capacity at the LEA and school levels."



From left, Mary Kreger, Mogan Bomhardt, John Arent, Tiffany Ince, Nathan Buethe and Michael Scarborough.

Students show teacher appreciation in essays

Three students—one each in elementary, middle and high school—and their honored teachers were named winners in the Delaware Department of Education’s Teacher Appreciation Essay Contest during the state’s celebration of National Teacher Appreciation Week in May. Former Secretary of Education Dr. Lillian M. Lowery visited each winner’s classroom to deliver a \$50 gift card to each student writer along with \$100 for each honored teacher.

The winners were:

- Fourth-grader Morgan Bomhardt and classroom teacher, Mary Kreger, at Lord Baltimore Elementary in the Indian River School District.
Kreger “makes learning fun,” Bomhardt wrote in her essay. “We do a whole bunch of activities. One activity we do is our book reports, which most people would say are boring, but she makes the projects fun for us. We recently did the ‘living history museum,’ where we dress up as the famous people that we researched.”
- Fifth-grader Tiffany Ince and her classroom teacher, John Arent, at Pleasantville Elementary in the Colonial School District.
“A few years past I was failing math, but with Mr. Arent’s help, I understand fractions and decimals very

clearly,” Ince said. “I also think Mr. Arent deserves to be noticed because he always encourages us to give 100 percent. Mr. Arent runs a lot of marathons and when he is tired and wants to give up he doesn’t and gives 100 percent and he uses that as an example.”

- Eleventh-grader Nathan Buethe and Michael Scarborough, history teacher at Delaware Military Academy charter school.
Buethe wrote about how Scarborough runs his classroom similar to that of a college course and always looks for ways to improve his teaching style, asking for student input to help him. He also makes learning a lot of fun, Buethe said. “He incorporates his humor into his lessons every day. For example, when demonstrating the new type of photography used during the Civil War that emphasized dramatic situations, he sprawled out onto the ground, acting as if he was shot then proceeded to display the placement of the soldier’s bodies in dramatic poses on the battlefield to help sell the papers,” he said.

The full winning essays as well as the other entries, categorized by school, are posted online at <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/essays/winners.shtml>.

2013 TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Katie Martinenza Olive B. Loss Elementary Grades 1–5 Music	Crystal Ellison Laurel Middle School Grade 8 Mathematics
Sarah Rusk Hanby Elementary Grade 5	Laura Amidon Seaford Central Elementary Grade 4
Karen Hruz Kirk Middle Grades 6–8 Social Studies	John Sell Sussex Technical School Grades 9–12 English
Julie Alexander Harry O. Eisenberg Elementary Grade 3	Constance Bean Woodbridge High School Grades 9–12 Physical Education
Donna Poore St. Georges Technical High Grades 9–11 Social Studies	Kimberly P. Simmons W. Reily Brown Elementary Grade 1
Emily Burnham Pencader Charter High School Grades 11–12 Sociology/ Psychology	Jennifer O’Keefe South Dover Elementary Grades K–4 Reading Specialist
Patricia Dallas Richardson Park Learning Center Pre-School	Clara B. Conn Lake Forest Central Elementary Grades 4–5 Reading Specialist
Susan Passwaters Milton Elementary Grades K–4 Special Ed	Michele McKinzie Lulu Ross Elementary Grade 5 ELA/Math
Thomas Slavens Delmar Middle School Grade 8 Social Studies	Sean P. Kenney POLYTECH High School Grades 9-10 Algebra/ Geometry
Cynthia Baker Millsboro Middle School Grade 8 Social Studies	Stefanie Ralph Smyrna Middle School Grades 7–8 Agriculture

2012 Scholars Dinner

Top students from Delaware’s public high schools were honored this spring as exemplary scholars of the graduating Class of 2012 at the annual Secretary of Education’s Scholars

Dinner at Dover Downs Hotel in Dover. The state’s political and education leaders joined the students and their families 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.



Delaware Military Academy senior Tanner Kurz and his family are greeted by Sen. Dave Sokola, chair of the Senate Education Committee



2012 Secretary Scholars, from left, Newark High’s Cynthia Bai, Glasgow High’s Andrew Binning and Caesar Rodney High’s Alexa Andaya celebrate their honor.



2012 State Teacher of the Year Amber Augustus and 2011 State Teacher of the Year Joseph Masiello serve as master’s of ceremony for the evening.

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PROGRAM FOR SUCCESS

Robotics is now on the curriculum at Glasgow High

By DOM NICASTRO

Don't trash those LEGOs in your child's playroom just yet. If they're off to high school in Delaware in the future, they may come in handy in the classroom.

Students enrolled in a new Glasgow High School technical program in the spring semester of 2012 worked LEGOs into their curriculum in order to build robots and program them with software to perform different tasks. About 30 students, ranging from freshmen to seniors, participated in the school's program — 15 in each of the two classes, according to Nate Clarke, who along with Major Barry Horton are instructors for the exploratory robotics program.

The groups worked with LEGO Mindstorms robotics kits. In the first half of the course, instructors had the students build different robots according to building instructions provided by LEGO to "give them an idea of how to make robots that can perform different tasks," Clarke said.

Further, students also learned how to program using LEGO's NXT Graphic programming software.

"During the second half of the course I create challenges to which the students must build robots of their own design and then program them to meet the challenges," Clarke said.

Students design, build and program their own robots.

The robotics program is an element in the Delaware Department of Education's new Partnership Zone (PZ) initiative, launched in 2010 in order to dramatically improve the lowest-achieving schools in the state. Under the PZ, Glasgow formed the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

(STEM) Academy, one of three academies at Glasgow intended to enhance students' learning experience.

The STEM Academy is led by Dr. Gina A. Moody; other academies include Arts and Humanities (led by Krystal R. Greenfield) and Business and Entrepreneurship (led by Darin Knically).

"The STEM Academy uses an integrated approach to teaching and learning that draws on the foundations of the STEM subjects," said Wendy Lapham, public information officer for the Christina School District, which includes Glasgow High School. "It is one of three academic academies in the school, so students are part of a smaller learning community within the larger context of a traditional high school."

And they are exposed to professionals such as Clarke and Horton, each of whom "has a strong science background and an interest to extend students' learning," Moody said. "Our teachers have worked tirelessly to help our students reach and exceed their goals, and our students have worked diligently to meet their personal goals."

Clarke said he hopes to make the technical robotics program even stronger. He envisions instructors such as himself and Horton attending training in order to learn how to use more advanced kits and possibly obtaining a robotics curriculum.

"I also hope we can expand to include some of those more advanced kits so that students who have been through one semester of the robotics can move onto a second semester using the advanced kits that are required to compete in some of the robotics competitions that are offered in our area each year," Clarke said. "For now we are communicating with staff at DuPont who are working with students from various high schools in the area as they compete large-scale *FIRST* Robotics Competition. It is our hope that some students from Glasgow High School will be a part of that team."



Ryan Gallagher, left, and Nick Rife of Hodgson Vo-Tech demonstrate their basketball-shooting robot for Glasgow High students. Glasgow High hopes to join Hodgson and other Delaware schools that make up *FIRST* Robotics Competition Hall of Fame team #365, Miracles of Engineering (MOE).