

# Teachers have say in new assessments

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

As Delaware teachers transition to Smarter Balanced student assessments this year, some may have more insight as to what to expect. A number of the state's educators, such as Carie DeBaca, an elementary mathematics specialist in the Capital School District, and Waters Middle School teacher Michelle Conway, were recruited to write and review items and performance tasks for content, bias and sensitivity and accessibility.

"It was a very unique experience that offered me a chance to explore the relationship between depth of knowledge levels and claims," said DeBaca. "It also really helped me break down the standards and look at what exactly the expectation is at each grade level and how the standards connect to others, both

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Waters Middle School teacher Michelle Conway, a writer for Smarter Balanced, works with student Sophia Mullins.



Nina Larock is never far from her EDtv alter ego Wally Wordsworth.

PHOTO: JESSICA BRATTON

**McKean  
students  
learn  
broadcast  
skills**

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# Engineering success stories every day



Mark Murphy

This summer I was visiting the M.E.R.I.T. program—a DuPont-sponsored program for college-bound minority students—when I met Sara, a 2014 graduate of Lake Forest High School.

She told me she was headed to college this fall to double major in mechanical and electrical engineering, but I didn't learn how she got there until I received an email from her later that day in which she shared her story.

Sara's mother wanted her to apply to as many colleges as she wanted, but this was a financial challenge for the family. Sara decided she would limit her applications to four schools: the University of Maryland, the University of Delaware, Delaware Technical & Community College and Temple University.

"I wanted to apply to Virginia Tech, but I told myself that it was too expensive and I probably would not have been accepted anyways," Sara said.

What Sara didn't count on was Lake Forest's College Application Month, during which her school offered to pay for one college application. With her

UD application now free, she decided she could afford to apply to her dream school on her own.

"I got accepted and will be attending Virginia Tech this fall thanks to the help your organization has done in giving high school students the opportunity to apply to colleges," Sara wrote to me. The school gave her a \$6,000 scholarship.

Sara's grandparents didn't have a high school education. Her parents attended college in Puerto Rico, and she said she will be the first in her family to attend college here.

Sara's story reinforces why what we do every day matters so much. We have the opportunity to affect the lives of 130,000 students each year, one child at a time.

As we begin this new school year—in which many of you are busy getting to know the personalities, learning strategies and educational needs of your new students—I want to thank you for your commitment to ensuring the growth of each of those children.

I am proud that in Delaware every educator—those from my staff to every district office to every building administration to every classroom—has a shared focus: Student growth matters most. We put our children first as we make decisions and policies and

set goals for ourselves, classes, schools, districts and state.

We know this can be challenging. We know we are expecting more of ourselves as we expect more of our children. But we hold ourselves accountable at the organizational and individual levels because we know those goals are more than aspirations recorded on paper. They are the needs of our children. Thank you for your commitment.

The state's new assessment, Smarter Balanced, reflects these higher expectations. We anticipate initially fewer students will score at the proficient level compared to DCAS, but we also know if we are going to prepare students such as Sara for the challenges that face them when they leave our schools to enter college or careers, then we must provide them with realistic assessments of how prepared they are. As we raise the expectations for our students in our classrooms and provide them the instruction and supports they need, they will meet—and exceed—them.

*Mark Murphy is Delaware Secretary of Education.*

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## 2015 Teacher of the Year nominees

Twenty Delaware teachers have been nominated for the honor of being named Delaware's Teacher of the Year for 2015.

Selected from among the 9,000 public school teachers in the state, each of the nominees represents one of the state's 19 school districts and the charter network. The winner will be announced Oct. 21 at the annual awards banquet.

The candidates were nominated by their districts during the 2014 calendar year because of their superior ability to inspire students with a love of learning, exemplary demonstration of professional traits and strong sense of dedication and devotion to teaching.

In September, each nominee will submit a detailed portfolio exemplifying his or her teaching philosophy. Five Delaware Department of Education staff members independently will evaluate each portfolio. A former state Teacher of the Year and a member of the DOE staff also will visit each candidate's classroom to observe his or her teaching.

Taking into consideration the ratings from the portfolio review and classroom observation, another independent panel of non-DOE judges then will select the one teacher who will serve as the 2015 State Teacher of the Year. The teacher chosen to become the State Teacher of the Year will become Delaware's nominee in the national program.

The Delaware Teacher of the Year also takes on the important task of representing all teachers in the state, addressing community groups, business leaders, legislators and educational organizations to inform the public about education in Delaware.

By action of the General Assembly, the Delaware Teacher of the Year will receive a \$5,000 grant to use for the educational benefit of his or her students, as well as a personal grant of \$3,000. Additionally, all nominees will receive a \$2,000 grant from the state.

Meet this year's candidates:

<b>Appoquinimink School District</b> Lisa Spedden Everett Meredith Middle School Grade 7 Mathematics <b>Brandywine School District</b> Thomas Dean Mount Pleasant High School Music <b>Caesar Rodney School District</b> Megan Szabo Postlethwait Middle School Science <b>Cape Henlopen School District</b> Stephanie Shuttleworth H.O. Brittingham Elementary School Primary ILC (K-2) <b>Capital School District</b> Jennifer R. Heffernan Central Middle School Grade 8 Mathematics	<b>Christina School District</b> Jamett L. Garlick West Park Place Elementary School Grade 1 <b>Colonial School District</b> Lea Ann Skipper Southern Elementary Grades 1-2 Integration Program <b>Delmar School District</b> Judy Mills Delmar Middle School Grade 8 Mathematics <b>Indian River School District</b> Clarissa M. Stevenson Millsboro Middle School Grades 6-8 ELA and Social Studies <b>Lake Forest School District</b> Pamela Hobbs Lake Forest Central Elementary Grades 4-5 STEM	<b>Laurel School District</b> Kara Rawlings Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary Kindergarten <b>Milford School District</b> Judith Woods Milford Central Academy Grade 7 Science <b>NCC Vo Tech School District</b> Susan Moyer Paul M. Hodgson Vo-Tech High School Grades 9-12 Nursing Technology <b>POLYTECH School District</b> Elyse Starr POLYTECH High School English <b>Red Clay School District</b> Tami Soltow Alexis I. duPont High School Science	<b>Seaford School District</b> Kara Kirby Central Elementary School Kindergarten <b>Smyrna School District</b> Ryan Buchanan Smyrna High School Grades 10 & 12 English/Literature <b>Sussex Technical School District</b> Carolyn Maull Sussex Technical High School Allied Health <b>Woodbridge School District</b> James Wheatley Woodbridge High School Mathematics <b>Charter School</b> Cathie Kennedy The Charter School of Wilmington Language Arts
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# New vision for science education

## Teacher Leaders help to roll out national standards

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Angela Williams, principal of Mount Pleasant Elementary School in the Brandywine School District, entered the field of education because she wanted to inspire young students to love science. Today, she is hoping the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) will accomplish just that.

"I'm excited to see the new standards," said Williams, who pursued a major in chemistry at the University of Maryland at College Park before transferring to the University of Delaware and earning her degree in elementary education. Her interest in science was honed in middle school and high school, while participating in summer enrichment and internship programs offered through the Forum to Advance Minorities in Engineering (FAME), a program formed by the DuPont Company.

"Those opportunities were critical to deepening my love and understanding of science," said Williams. "In a state with so many STEM careers, we have to prepare our students at a young age and help them apply what they're learning to real life. We want to give them access and opportunity to be competitive."

As Delaware approaches its first year of implementation of the standards, educators across the state—led by a team of NGSS Teacher Leaders—will pilot new curricular materials, map courses and present a new vision of science education in which students develop a progressively deeper understanding of science each year.

Wendy Turner, a second-grade teacher at Mount Pleasant Elementary, is one of the NGSS Teacher Leaders, tasked with

promoting and sustaining NGSS reform at the building and district levels. She was one of more than 100 Teacher Leaders that met for the first time in May.

"It was an exciting moment," said Turner. "You could feel the energy. We were all there because we wanted to be there."

"It's invaluable to have one of our teachers on the front lines during this shift," Williams said. "Wendy is a great leader and will certainly share the benefits with our staff and students."

The group is working collaboratively with the Delaware Department of Education (DOE), Delaware Science Coalition leaders, district and charter school leaders and building principals to assist in planning professional development, curriculum implementation and assessment development. They have been meeting every month for training. They also attended a four-day workshop, July 29-Aug. 1, led by national experts such as Brett Moulding, Roger Bybee, Nicole Paulson and Peter McLaren, all NGSS writers.

"We're hoping they walked away from the workshop with a clear understanding of the three dimensions of NGSS—crosscutting concepts, disciplinary core ideas, and science and engineering practices—and are able communicate that to parents, their school colleagues and their district boards," said Tonyea Mead, Delaware DOE science education associate.

"Working with other teacher leaders from around the state, my group mapped the new second-grade standards to a science kit we had never worked with before," said Turner. "The work was challenging, but rewarding. We'll be piloting the new kit this year and I can't wait to see it in action in my classroom. Overall, I feel more confident in my role and ability to lead in the implementation of the standards in Delaware. The work session was incredibly well run and hugely beneficial, and the collaboration was top-notch."

In her classroom last year, Turner had already begun introducing her students to exploratory learning methods: designing models, thinking about cause and effect and looking for proof in their ideas. She is excited to build on that this year.

"Next Gen teaches them to be critical thinkers and problem solvers, to think and rethink, and that's what they'll need to do to be successful on the Smarter Balanced tests as well, so it's perfect timing to roll out both," said Turner.

"The standards will really bring science to the forefront," she continued. "They're so encompassing, taking everything into consideration from engineering to life sciences, and preparing them for jobs not yet created."



Mount Pleasant Elementary student Finn Champney displays his innovative side during science class.



Seamus Clark creates a structure with markers.

PHOTOS: JESSICA BRATTON



Mount Pleasant Elementary student Malti John shows off her design to teacher Wendy Turner, an NGSS Teacher Leader.



Mount Pleasant Elementary student Piper Combs tests the strength of her structure.



BY MEAGHAN CASEY

**Y**ou might call them the MVPs of teaching.

Representing the best of district, charter and independent schools in 42 states and four countries (U.S., Singapore, the UK and Tunisia), 201 math and English Language Arts (ELA) teachers were named to LearnZillion's 2014 National Dream Team. They are united in their goal to develop themselves and each other through a collaborative process of creating, curating and sharing high-quality, Common-Core-aligned assessment tools and classroom resources to be published by digital curriculum and professional learning provider LearnZillion. They are also sharing their professional development experiences with their colleagues to further broaden their impact.

Of the more than 4,000 educators who applied for the 201 available spots, 11 were selected from Delaware: Shannon Lapinsky, Caesar Rodney School District; Karen Warner and Kate Bowski, Cape Henlopen School District; Shani Benson, Capital School District; Emily Edmonds, Charter School Network; Christina Hanna, Christina School District; Caitlin Salmon, Reach Academy for Girls Charter School; Lindsey Blum, Michelle Morton and Margaret Brady, Red Clay Consolidated School District; and Kate Libby, Woodbridge School District.

"It's a really exciting opportunity to be able to help develop tools and lessons that will support teachers implementing the Common Core across the U.S.," said Benson, a third-grade teacher at South Dover Elementary School.

"Many changes are taking place currently in curriculum due to the Common Core," said Libby, a third-grade teacher at Woodbridge Elementary School. "It's the perfect time to introduce new and invigorating materials to other teachers in our schools and community."

Christiana High School's Hanna said, "Being on the Dream Team is a chance to plan, teach and talk about learning alongside fellow Dream Team members who are going to help you devise a plan and materials to get you one step closer to reaching your classroom utopia."

Thousands of teachers use LearnZillion every day to help their students learn. Each lesson on LearnZillion has been created by a Dream Team member directly from the

language of the Common Core, so it is dense with high-quality, easy-to-understand Common Core content.

In June, the Dream Team traveled to New Orleans for a four-day conference called TeachFest, where they kicked off a rigorous summer-long collaboration. Following TeachFest, Dream Team members returned to their respective districts and have continued to work in facilitated online professional learning communities.

"Attending TeachFest in New Orleans was a professional development experience unlike any other," said Libby. "LearnZillion creates an atmosphere where teachers from all over the world come together and can feel the sense of community immediately when they walk in the room. I was humbled to work with so many amazing teachers that all had the same mindset and were there to make a difference. LearnZillion and the

products created by hardworking teachers are going to change learning experiences for teacher and students all over the world. The lessons that we are working on this summer really have strengthened my understanding of the Common Core and why we need to adjust our teaching accordingly. I can't wait to use the finished products in my classroom and challenge my students to take their learning to the next level."

Benson, Hanna and Libby applied for the national Dream Team based on their experiences on the 2014 Delaware Dream Team. In January, LearnZillion, in partnership with the Delaware Department of Education, hosted TeachFest Delaware, a unique celebration of great teaching and an intensive, structured working session for the 34 educators named to the state's Dream Team. Along with ample time to collaborate and receive professional development on the

Common Core, they also worked with content coaches on creating assessment tools and resources, like at the national conference.

"The 2014 Delaware Dream Team created rigorous, vetted Common Core-aligned resources that every teacher in Delaware can now use as part of their instruction and have become effective ambassadors for how the Common Core can support exceptional instruction for Delaware's students," said Delaware Chief Academic Officer Michael Watson.

"[Delaware leaders] really understand that teachers are the most important factor in student learning, and that the traditional model of 'sit n' get' professional development doesn't work," said LearnZillion CEO Eric Westendorf. "They are choosing to do what all the research on talent development recommends – namely, to support professional growth by providing deep practice of do-able, bite-sized tasks. We're so energized to help make that happen."

"Hands-down, this has been the best professional development I've ever had," said Benson. "We're not just sitting and listening at these events. We're interacting and creating something that will make a real difference in the classroom."

"The concept and process of taking one item and back-mapping it and then creating some checkpoints from the student work collected was highly educational," said Waters Middle School math and science teacher Laura Conner, another member of 2014 Delaware Dream Team. "I

learned a lot about how to look at the student work through this lens and really analyze the student misconceptions."

The 34 participants were unanimous in their support of the experience, with 85 percent strongly recommending the experience and 95 percent noting that this training had positively and specifically impacted their efficacy in the classroom.

Delaware is expanding its successful partnership with LearnZillion to recruit up to 50 talented educators from across the state to join the 2015 Delaware Dream Team. Once selected, they will attend TeachFest on October 23-25. At the suggestion of the 2014 team, the 2015 Dream Team will reconvene for three half-day professional development sessions during the school year.

To learn more, or to apply for 2015, visit [delawaredreamteam.fluidreview.com](http://delawaredreamteam.fluidreview.com). The application deadline is Sept. 19.



South Dover Elementary School teacher Shani Benson, a member of LearnZillion's National Dream Team, works with student Tyron Abrams.

## Dream Team brings Common-Core resources back to Delaware



# Common Ground 2.0

In 2013, the statewide initiative Common Ground for the Common Core 1.0 launched with an ambitious goal of working with nearly 100 school-level guiding teams, central office personnel and 17 local education agencies.

Each guiding team—consisting of a building principal or administrator and teacher leaders in ELA, math and content areas—was responsible for creating a two-year Common Core implementation plan. The plans are being used to guide schools towards successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards by addressing school culture and leadership, curriculum and instruction, and assessment practices aligned to the Common Core.

The 18-month initiative ended in May with a celebration at Dover Downs, where guiding teams gathered to share best practices and lessons learned during their first year in Common Ground. Joined by their superintendents, local school board presidents, PTA representatives, State Board of Education members and legislators, they highlighted exemplary work across Delaware.

“It was an opportunity to highlight the strong work being led by educators at the classroom and building levels across our state,” Secretary of Education Mark Murphy said. “As we learn from one another through shared successes and challenges, we can find ways to replicate what is working and course-correct what is not so that more of our schools realize these successes.”

In June, Common Ground for the Common Core 2.0 launched. Whereas Common Ground 1.0 focused primarily on curriculum and instruction, the focus of Common Ground 2.0 is assessment practices—specifically the application of Smarter Balanced Consortium’s (SBAC) Digital Library of Formative Assessment Resources, SBAC Interim Bank and the SBAC Summative Assessment. Success at the end of the project will be evaluated by the degree to which guiding teams have linked Common Core-aligned instruction with assessment practices. Throughout the year, teams will participate in full-day professional development sessions, evening meetings to share evidence of implementation, and webinars to deepen content. They will also meet routinely in clinics at the school level to disseminate information school-wide.

Common Ground 2.0 consists of 26 local education agencies, which includes the addition of seven charter schools and two districts. A number of other districts expanded their involvement in the initiative. Capital School District doubled its enrollment in Common Ground by adding Booker T. Washington Elementary, Towne Point Elementary, Fairview Elementary, East Elementary and North Elementary schools. The new participants met on June 2 for an orientation on creating a Common Core implementation plan and collecting evidence to assist in data-driven plan reviews.

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GreenRibbonSchools



Brandywine Springs students Gavin Marks left, and Brynnlee Golver, right, learn about recycling and composting at lunch.



BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Green is the new gold standard when it comes to recognizing and supporting healthy, sustainable schools.

In May, Red Clay Consolidated School District and Sanford School were honored as the state’s 2014 Green Ribbon winners for their exemplary achievement in reducing environmental impact, improving health and wellness of students and staff and providing environmental and sustainability education.

“Their innovative programs have saved money, reduced environmental impacts and furthered student learning,” said Secretary of Education Mark Murphy. “This recognition provides the platform to share these best practices so other schools and districts can learn from and replicate their success.”

Red Clay was also one of only nine districts from across the country to be named a U.S. Green Ribbon winner and was honored in Washington, D.C. in July. The federal Green Ribbon Schools recognition award, now in its third year, is part of a larger U.S. Department of Education effort to identify and communicate practices that are proven to result in improved student engagement, higher academic achievement and graduation rates and workforce preparedness, as well as energy independence and economic security.

Red Clay has implemented a series of energy efficiency and clean energy projects across multiple schools, in collaboration with the Delaware Sustainable Energy Utility. The projects have helped the district save \$1 million each year in energy costs through a solar power purchase agreement, energy performance contracting and adoption of an energy portfolio

manager. The district also has a wellness committee that executes a district-wide wellness plan and strict guidelines for school meals and foods sold to students. Several elementary schools in the district participate in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which sources produce from local and regional farmers. Many also have school garden programs that integrate nutrition and science curricula, as well as

composting and recycling programs.

“It’s not just a program, it’s what we do now,” said Brandywine Springs Elementary School Principal Stephanie Armstrong. “Three years ago we started composting and we have classes to teach the kids what it is and why it’s important. We also have a small atrium outside and our Eco Club works to support that. We’ve seen these efforts filtering into students’ homes now.”

“The work this district is doing is making people take notice,” said former Secretary of Natural Resources and Environmental Control Collin O’Mara. “Red Clay has set a bar extremely high for school districts across the state.”

Sanford, a private preK-12 school in Hockessin, was recognized for replacing the roof of its math and science building with a green roof, reducing the amount of water shed by the building. A campus recycling effort also has helped reduce solid waste. Students learn through project-based learning, including in an outdoor classroom and by employing the walking trails, ponds and streams on campus. The school also has an ongoing effort to create a rain garden.

Two other schools also were recognized as honorable mention winners: Brandywine School District’s Hanby Elementary and Christina School District’s Kirk Middle.

**2014  
winner:  
Red Clay**





## Students shine in the SPOTLIGHT

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

For the past two years, McKean High School senior Nina Larock has lent her voice and personality to the popular “Alphabet Soup” character Wally Wordsworth. Each episode of the show focuses on a different children’s book and features multiple segments, including “Wally’s World of Words,” which is scripted entirely by Larock and helps children learn new vocabulary.

The half-hour show—which you might expect to air on PBS or the Disney Channel—is a regular feature on EDTv, Delaware’s first 24-hour educational channel, broadcast on Comcast 965. The channel is managed by the Red Clay Consolidated School District with a goal of challenging the students who create the programs and informing the parents and community members who watch.

“We didn’t want it to be a station that just aired school board meetings and announcements,” said Rob Markopoulos, director of operations and programming for EDTv and EDGE Radio. “We wanted the content to be entertaining and educational—what we like to call ‘edutainment.’ I stress to students it’s all about storytelling.”

The students operate out of a state-of-the-art communications center at McKean that includes a professional television studio and an expanded radio station renamed EDGE. Those in the TV and radio broadcasting program at the station are learning about all aspects of the field while taking over much of the production and management functions at the center. As Level 1 students, they learn the basic skills of broadcasting, using story boards and timelines. By Level 3, they are responsible for developing 10 installments of a radio show, a half-hour video documentary and in-house marketing projects. Level 4 coursework will present them with even more challenges.

“Level 4 is much more independent,” said teacher Khusbu Joshi. “They’ll be on air for live radio shows and create their own films. We’re treating this as an actual production company, so it’s more like a job for them than a class. And they have the latest technology at their fingertips. They can come in to the studio and make demo tapes or music videos if they want. It’s an opportunity to explore what they like.”

James Evans works the board and Kamari Holley operates the camera for EDTv.

“We’re really lucky to have these resources—the cameras to go out and shoot with and the software to edit with,” said senior Moises Velazquez. Velazquez, who plans to apply to the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, visits the studio often after school and on weekends. On average, he produces a new video each week. “It’s something I’m really passionate about,” said Velazquez. “I wanted to be a mechanical engineer or architect before but now I want to be a director. I found my calling.” “They have such creative, open minds,” said Markopoulos. “We teach them the basics and then let them do their thing. Right now it’s a student-assisted production company, but we want it to become a student-run company.”

Regularly featured EDTv programs include “Food for Thought,” a show on cooking and wellness; “Spot on Sports,” an update on athletic events; “The Forum,” an opinion-based student talk show; “Life Actually,” a documentary series that creatively presents life as it actually happens; and “Educational Bumpers,” short informative educational commercials or public service announcements. This fall, they will air a number of new shows including “Classroom Makeover,” “Families of the World,” “Annenberg Classroom Presents,” and “Numbers Bee.”

Student shows on EDGE Radio, airing on 88.1 FM, include: “News at Noon,” “The National Sports Report,” “The Entertainer,” “The Brent and Jared Show,” “Women Who Rock” and “The Zach and Eric Show.” While last year’s music format was primarily oldies and classic rock, the new and improved EDGE Radio launching this fall will feature a hybrid of genres. There will also be a greater amount of original programming, as well as live DJs to keep students up to date on the news, weather and hot topics. Senior Gavinn Gathers, who serves as the station manager of EDGE, hopes one day to work as a technical director for a news station or a film director. Through his experience with EDGE, he has produced 10 half-hour radio shows exploring the big bands of the 1960s.

“It’s really exciting,” said Gathers. “Most kids don’t get the opportunity to do things in high school that they might do professionally.” Senior GJ Parkstone, who hosts a radio show called “Meaning Behind the Music,” hopes to go into the computer science field, possibly editing or animation. “The stuff you can do on the computers here and the things I’ve learned are really preparing me for the professional skills of the trade,” said Parkstone. “It’s not just the technical side; it’s learning what to say and do, and what not to.” “They’re so into it,” said Joshi. “They’re coming to me with ideas and taking ownership of what they’re doing. It’s amazing to see how excited they are and how they’ve grown so much.”

Other students in Red Clay, and throughout Wilmington and New Castle County, also have the opportunity to submit videos for broadcast. Original programs can be viewed on the channel’s website, at [www.edtv-radio.com](http://www.edtv-radio.com).

Nina Larock of McKean High School poses with her “Alphabet Soup” character Wally Wordsworth.



GJ Parkstone, James Evans and Gavinn Gathers enjoy radio broadcasting.



Kamari Holley operates the camera.

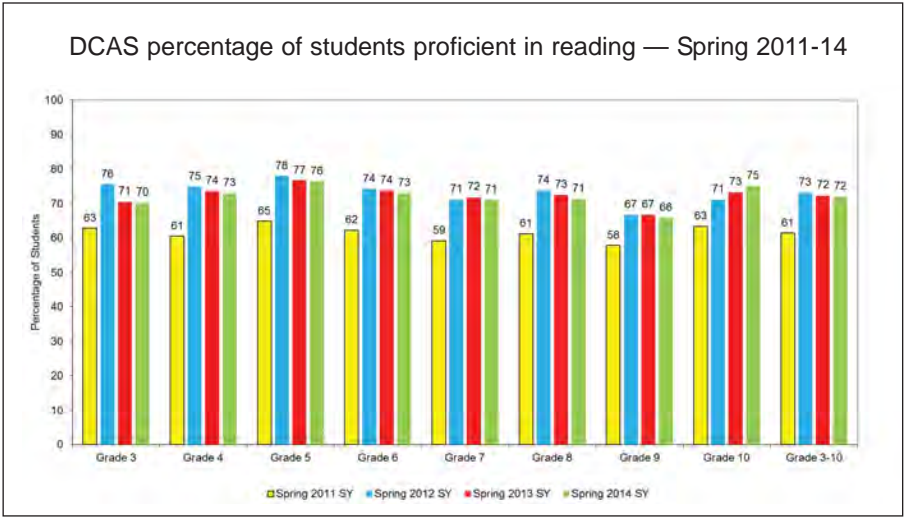
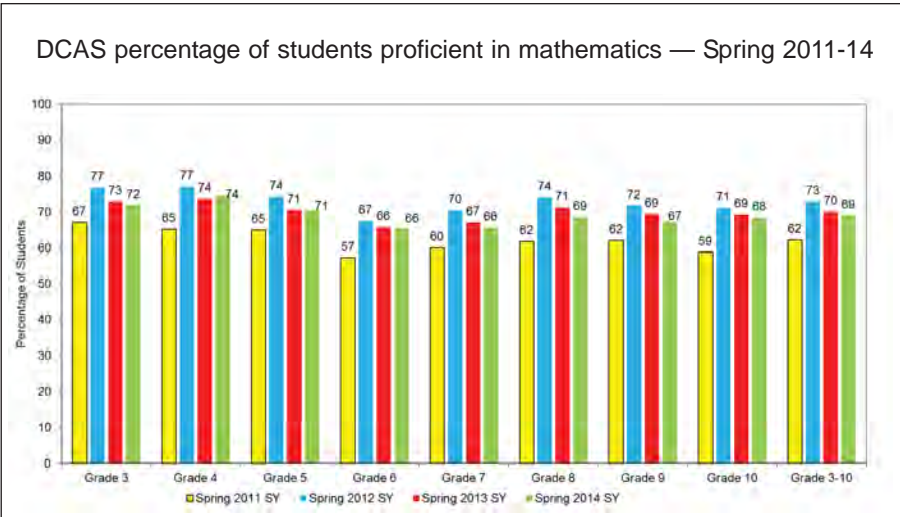


McKean High School student Moises Velazquez adjusts the sound system.

PHOTOS:  
JESSICA BRATTON

Broadcasting teacher Khusbu Joshi is proud of her students' work.





# DCAS results show sustained progress

The 2014 Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) results show that students statewide have sustained past gains, with some variations in student progress by grade and subject, while more students met their individual growth targets than last year.

Also released were results of DCAS-Alt1, the test administered to the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, which showed increases in student learning in all subjects tested. The report highlights schools and districts that have experienced remarkable increases in the percentage of students reaching the proficiency standard in math and reading and in the percentage of students exceeding their academic growth targets.

Among schools showing the most significant progress, Red Clay Consolidated School District’s Lewis Dual Language School, one of the state’s Partnership Zone schools, has made some of the strongest gains in the state over the past three years. Across all grades, the number of students scoring at the proficient level increased by 10 percentage points in math and seven percentage points in reading. Highlights include fifth-grade reading, in which 66 percent of Lewis students scored at the

proficient level this year, up from only 48.44 percent in 2013. In third-grade math, the school saw a 16.94 percentage-point increase over last year.

Other schools demonstrating particularly strong and sustained gains over this period include: Capital’s Booker T. Washington Elementary School (one of the state’s Focus schools), Red Clay’s Marbrook Elementary (another Partnership Zone school), EastSide Charter School and Family Foundations Charter School.

“We are extremely excited about the improved student growth that occurred at Lewis and Marbrook,” said Red Clay Superintendent Merv Daugherty. “It is a credit to the hard work and dedication of the teachers, school and district staff members who made the necessary changes to benefit students. These schools have established positive learning communities of collaboration and teamwork models that we will replicate in other schools throughout the district.”

Many grades saw major gains at Laurel School District, where ninth graders scoring proficient increased by 9.14 percentage points in math and 8.96 in reading. The district also saw gains of 10.52 percentage points in sixth-grade math and 5.5 in fifth-grade reading.

“These increases were the result of increased fidelity to district curriculum, instructional walkthroughs focused on instructional delivery, and ongoing support to teachers and their instructional practices,” Superintendent John Ewald said. “The district looks to continue to operationalize these practices leading to continued increases in student achievement at each grade level from kindergarten through 12th grade.”

Taking into account significant variation among schools and districts, overall student proficiency levels held steady compared to 2013. In reading, 72 percent of students attained proficiency, the same as 72 percent a year ago. In math, 69 percent of students attained proficiency, compared with 70 percent a year ago. Science scores were up slightly from last year in two of the three tested grades. The greatest gain was in 10th grade by 4 percentage points. Social studies tests, which are administered in grades 4 and 7, show a decrease of 4 percent and 1 percent, respectively, in the percentage of students scoring proficient.

Some schools making the greatest gains in the number of students scoring at the highest level (“advanced”) included Cape Henlopen’s Shields Elementary, where 90.7 percent of students in grades 3-5 were proficient in reading with 72.1 percent scoring at the advanced level. And 95.1 percent of Shields students in grades 3-5 were proficient in math, with 53.2 percent scoring at the advanced level.

Statewide, more students—particularly the lowest performing students—met their academic growth targets in 2014. Each child is provided with a growth target based on expected growth by the end of the year. This process allows for schools to better track student progress throughout the year. Change in growth target results were first reported in 2013.

- In math:**
- 57 percent of students met their expected growth target, up from 52 percent in 2013.
  - 65 percent of the students scoring at

the lowest performance level in the fall met their spring target, compared to 62 percent in 2013.

- In reading:**
- 55 percent met their expected growth target, up from 52 percent in 2013.
  - 59 percent of students performing at the lowest performance level in the fall met their spring target, which was the same as last year.

Secretary of Education Mark Murphy praised the educators whose hard work helped their students make progress and the children whose hard work led to their own success.

“We are committed to giving all students the best chance to reach their potential,” he said. “Looking at the big picture over the past few years, we have continued to raise expectations for our students across the state and we are seeing educators and administrators do more every year to rise to the challenge of preparing more students to graduate ready for success in college or career.

“But we have a lot more to do. As the work we have done in recent years starts to take effect in our classrooms, we have a responsibility to ensure every student has the supports he or she needs to be successful,” he said.

This was the last year students took the DCAS in reading and math. In 2015, the Smarter Balanced ELA (English language arts) and Smarter Mathematics assessments will replace DCAS in those subjects, offering significant improvements. Students will continue to take DCAS science and social studies exams and the DCAS-Alt next year. The new Smarter assessments, which are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, will be administered for students in grades 3-8 and 11 in spring 2015, and will provide an academic checkup by measuring real-world skills like critical thinking and problem solving.

Full results area available online at: <http://dstp.doe.k12.de.us/DCASOR/default.aspx>.

School Name	% of Fall PL-1 Students Meeting Growth Target in Math
Lake Forest East Elem	93
St. Georges Technical	92
Sussex Technical High	91
Sussex Academy	89
Banneker (Benjamin) E	89
Shields (Richard A.)	88
Howard High School of	88
Beacon Middle School	87
Milton Elementary Sch	85
Stokes (Nellie Hughes)	85
Wilson (Etta J.) Elem	85
East Side Charter Sch	84
Hodgson (Paul M.) Voc	84

School Name	% of Fall PL-1 Students Meeting Growth Target in ELA
St. Georges Technical	95
Sussex Academy	91
Lake Forest East Elem	90
Banneker (Benjamin) E	89
Sussex Technical High	86
Shields (Richard A.)	85
Howard High School of	84
Lake Forest North Ele	84
Stokes (Nellie Hughes)	83
Indian River High Sch	82
Beacon Middle School	81
Star Hill Elementary	80
Keene (William B.) El	80



Students from Sussex Central High School pledge to go to college.

# GETTING TO ZERO

## The goal is for all Delaware seniors to apply to college

The Delaware Department of Education is determined that every student in the system will graduate with the freedom to choose his or her life's course.

A study released in July 2013 by the Harvard Strategic Data Project found that 18 percent of college-ready students in Delaware did not apply to any college or university. The goal of the state's Getting to Zero initiative is to get that number to zero by providing the guidance and support needed to ensure that these students, who have shown the potential to succeed in college, apply and ultimately enroll in a post-secondary program.

"We believe that zero of our college-ready students should fail to apply and attend college," said Gov. Jack Markell.

"Our goal," said Secretary of Education Mark Murphy, "is that all of our children are prepared for college when they're finished with high school and can make that first step into college successfully."

Last fall, the state launched a partnership with the College Board to better inform low-income students of their options and provide them with information on college affordability and financial aid, materials to help them choose the best institutions for them, and application fee waivers, which have traditionally been far too complicated to obtain. Some of Delaware's highest-achieving low-income students received letters signed by all of the Ivy League schools congratulating them on their accomplishments and reminding them of scholarship and financial aid opportunities.

Through targeted marketing campaigns and increased professional development, schools are raising awareness about the importance of completing the Free Application for Federal

Student Aid (FAFSA). During the 2013-14 school year, Delaware partnered with the U.S. Department of Education and local post-secondary institutions to provide professional development to counselors. Financial aid information sessions were held throughout the state for parents and students; these efforts will be expanded for the upcoming school year.

All Delaware public and charter high schools will be participating in College Application Month this fall, with activities and technical assistance to encourage students to submit their applications. Delaware's College Application Week was piloted in two schools in 2012 and expanded to College Application Month last year in 20 Delaware schools. During that time period, 2,749 students submitted applications, and of those students, 744 would have been the first in their families to attend college, and 140 would not have applied otherwise. Celebrations were held at high schools across the state on May 1 in coordination with National Decision Day, with displays to demonstrate where students were enrolling and assemblies to recognize those students.



Students from Cape Henlopen High School prepare for college.



Looking for information you can share with your students' families about the Common Core State Standards, Next Generation Science Standards and Smarter assessments?

Check out DelExcls.org. The site, a collaboration between the Delaware Department of Education, Delaware State Education Association, Delaware Parent Teacher Association and Rodel Foundation of Delaware, includes a great deal of information in parent-friendly language.

You'll find a Principal's Tool Kit with everything you need to host a community night, including annotated agendas and PowerPoint slides, parent guides to the shifts in the standards, FAQs, links to other resources and more. You'll also find videos with Delaware teachers talking about the standards and links to practice tests so families can see for themselves what Smarter Balanced assessment questions will be like. There also is information on NGSS, including FAQs, teacher training modules and a copy of the state's implementation plan.

And be sure to check back regularly for updated posts on the news page. You'll find short articles on things such as what Common Core looks like at each grade level and links to other helpful resources. Check it out today at [www.DelExcls.org](http://www.DelExcls.org).



# Back to the basics

## State Board putting focus on literacy

To ensure more students are college- and career-ready, the Delaware State Board of Education is going back to the basics and putting its focus on early literacy.

In 2013, only 38 percent of Delaware's fourth-graders scored proficient or advanced in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The board believes the state must do more to provide students with a firm foundation in literacy and guarantee that educators have the content and pedagogy skills to teach reading and mathematics, and enable students to overcome literacy challenges.

"Students need an early literacy education that is rich not only in reading instruction, but also vocabulary development, written and oral communication skills," said Donna Johnson, Executive Director of the State Board of Education.

There are four pillars to the board's campaign: strengthening teacher preparation programs; tightening the certification and licensing of teachers and the training of teachers already in the system; launching new literacy efforts in early education centers; and reaching out to parents and the public.

"This is not an initiative the board can do alone," said Johnson.

Action to address the first two pillars was taken in June 2012 with the passage and signage into law of Senate Bill 51, an act to strengthen teacher preparation and initial licensing. This act requires all teacher preparation programs to prepare prospective elementary school teachers in age-appropriate literacy and mathematics instruction. The details of these education program components were further specified in Department of Education regulation 290, approved by Secretary Mark Murphy in July.

Next, the board will coordinate with the Office of Early Learning, Department of Education Early Childhood Office, Delaware Early Childhood Council and the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families to develop policy recommendations regarding professional training and requirements for early learning educators. It also hopes to develop birth-pre-K assessment systems to measure success and target necessary interventions for each child as early as possible.

Finally, the board will roll out a public awareness campaign, utilizing strategic partners to generate community engagement and building a team of advocates to help drive the issue through 2016.

## National funding helps advance reform work

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) awarded Delaware \$15,000 in April to advance state education reform work in the areas of School Leadership, Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and Deeper Learning.

For the first time, NASBE encouraged states and territories to develop connected plans for multiple stipends, enabling award winners to leverage increased funding for their work while promoting greater coherence across policy areas. The Delaware State Board of Education's work expands on current pursuits in the areas of CCSS, NGSS and School Leadership. The state's plan focuses on educating members about policies that support college, career and civic readiness and leadership development such as accountability, assessments and leader evaluation and preparation, and the connections between them.

With the funding, the board has been able to host a number of workshops and webinars for educators. The most recent webinar, held Aug. 4, focused on a national overview of educator evaluation systems and current research around the use of multiple measures in student achievement. Specifically, it provided a summary of the educator evaluation systems of the six states/territories to be awarded NASBE grants: Delaware, the District of Columbia, Guam, Kentucky, Maine and West Virginia. The state stipends, which total \$72,000, will support policy efforts through December 2014.

Delaware's next webinar will highlight two research firms that have been evaluating and building a model for states and districts to use. Early this fall, the board will host another workshop featuring a panel discussion and presentation from three states featured in the Aug. 4 webinar.



Waters Middle School teacher and Smarter Balanced item writer Michelle Conway with students Maddie Tolson and Joey Serafin.

## Moving forward with Smarter Balanced

### ASSESSMENTS from Page 1

within a grade level and vertically between others."

"I think I have a better understanding now of what our students have to do, where they are and how we can help them close the gap," said Conway.

Delaware is one of 23 states across the country adopting the new assessments, which will go beyond multiple-choice questions to include extended response and technology-enhanced items, as well as performance tasks that allow students to demonstrate critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to complex real-world problems and measure capacities such as depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and complex analysis, which cannot be adequately assessed with traditional assessment questions.

Both Conway and DeBaca wrote for the first two phases of item development. Their work was guided by the Smarter Balanced item and task specifications and review guidelines and then field tested.

"As an item writer, I now understand the importance of teaching a variety of strategies to students and helping them build connections between strategies and the mathematical practices," said DeBaca. "I think the Smarter Balanced assessments will truly measure how well students understand deeper ideas around topics and more importantly, ways to problem solve and apply strategies. Students not only need to be able to access information but apply it to multiple situations and have the ability to persevere."

"Smarter Balanced assessments are more rigorous and require students to be more intuitive," said Conway. "They'll need to use the evaluation tools and

thought-processing techniques we're giving them."

Conway has been working closely with Lara Crowley, Appoquinimink School District's ELA K-12 specialist, to prepare their district for the changes by increasing the quantity and quality of resources for teachers, revising assessments to be more reflective of Smarter Balanced, sharing best instructional plans and creating mini performance tasks.

"We need to ensure the way we instruct and assess aligns with Smarter Balanced," said Crowley, who was one of the state's educators recruited to review Smarter Balanced items. "It's a shift in assessing to the next level, beyond initial understanding and regurgitation. We want students to really process the material."

"We're not teaching to the test," said Conway. "But our Lexiles have to match up and we have to make sure there's that complexity there. For students, this is leveling the playing field. We need our student to match up and compete on a national and global scale."

The new assessments will be administered for students in grades 3-8 and 11 this spring. Last spring, some schools participated in a practice run of the assessment system to ensure that the tests are accurate and fair for all students. It also gave teachers and schools a chance to practice test administration procedures, and students had the opportunity to experience the new assessments.

Through a digital library of formative assessment strategies and interim assessment banks, Smarter will provide information during the year to give teachers and parents a better picture of where students are succeeding and where they need help.

To learn more about the new assessments and take practice tests for each grade and subject, visit [www.DelExcls.org](http://www.DelExcls.org).



# AROUND DELAWARE SCHOOLS

Rising juniors from public high schools across Delaware spent part of their summer gaining skills that will help them in college thanks to a free residential program that launched in June. It is the beginning of a three-year program that will ensure they have the academic and social skills they need to enroll in and graduate from a four-year university. The Delaware College Scholars Program is a partnership between the Delaware Department of Education and St. Andrew's School in Middletown. This public-private partnership is the first of its kind in Delaware and hopes to serve as a model of what can be done to better the educational future of students across the state.

The 40 students were selected for the program based on their high academic performances with preference given to those from low-income families who would be first-generation college-goers. The students spent their summer taking math and literacy classes aimed to prepare them for university-level work. They also learned human development and general organizational and study habits that will help them succeed in college and participated in college tours to learn about the college admissions and financial-aid process. SAT preparation also was taught.

The students will return the next two summers to continue in their studies and preparation. Each summer will have a different focus in preparing students for the college selection and transition process. Students will learn about college life from college students and gain the experience of being away from home by staying in dorms at St. Andrew's.

Rachel Wagner, a junior at Appoquinimink High School, was elected National President of Business Professionals of America (BPA), Secondary Division. With 43,000 members in 23 states, BPA is America's premier career and technical organization for students interested in business, IT and finance.

Wagner was elected by popular vote at the BPA National Conference in May - an event attended by more than 5,000 delegates. She is serving as the National President during the 2014-15 school year. Her duties will include participation

in local and national efforts to promote BPA and student participation in its programs. She now has an opportunity to travel on behalf of the organization, and will be a key member of the planning team responsible for developing the 2015 National BPA Conference in Anaheim.

"I have dreamt of becoming a National Officer since I was in 7th grade, simply to make a difference within this amazing organization," she said. "I believe in the Business Professionals of America; I know this will be a life-changing year."

The Delaware Department of Education awarded four state merit scholarship programs for the 2014-15 academic year. Merit scholarships are competitive and awarded based on a student's academic performance, participation in school activities and service to the community. Students may apply for Delaware merit scholarships in their senior year of high school. All four awards are renewable. Three of the programs are memorial scholarships that honor state legislators and provide full tuition, fees, room, board and books at the public universities in Delaware. Those scholarships and their recipients are:

- The B. Bradford Barnes Memorial Scholarship, in honor of the former Speaker of the State House of Representatives, is awarded to one student each year enrolling full-time at the University of Delaware. Zachary Scott Jones of Appoquinimink High School in the Appoquinimink School District is this year's recipient.
- The Herman M. Holloway, Sr. Memorial Scholarship, in honor of the first African-American state senator in Delaware, is awarded to one student each year enrolling full-time at Delaware State University. Crystal Burbage of Howard High School of Technology in the New Castle County Vo-Tech School District is this year's recipient.
- The Charles L. Hebner Memorial Scholarship, in honor of the former Speaker of the State House of Representatives, is awarded annually to one full-time student at the University of Delaware and one full-time student at Delaware State University who are majoring in the humanities

or social sciences. (Preference is given to political science majors.) Brian Spicer of Cape Henlopen High School in the Cape Henlopen School District and Chyvante Floyd of POLYTECH High School in the POLYTECH School District are the recipients this year.

- The Diamond State Scholarship assists full-time students attending regionally accredited, nonprofit colleges in any state. Winners of the Diamond State Scholarship receive \$1,250 per year. For the 2014-15 academic year, 70 students were awarded Diamond State Scholarships. This year's winners, listed by school, can be found at [www.doe.k12.de.us/dheo](http://www.doe.k12.de.us/dheo).

Students from across Delaware represented the First State as part of the Delaware Technology Student Association at the 36th annual National Technology Student Association Conference in Washington, D.C., this summer. The delegation of 151 participants competed in 101 individual and 93 team events that were focused on technology, innovation, design and engineering. Delaware students competed in events such as architectural renovation, CAD 3D, career preparation, dragster design, electrical applications, fashion design, flight endurance, geospatial technology, green manufacturing, inventions & innovations, manufacturing prototype, on-demand video, open source software development, promotional graphics, structural engineering, system control technology, technical design, technology problem-solving, vex robotics, video game design, website design and more. At the July 1 awards ceremony, the Delaware high school and middle school students received honors for placing in the Top 10 of several national events. Also, Ashley Gold and Tessa Stone of Brandywine School District's Mount Pleasant High School were recognized with the Gold TSA Achievement award and admitted into the National TSA Technology Honor Society. Jeff Epting of Christina School District's Gauger-Cobbs Middle School and Charles Cooper of Appoquinimink School District's Appoquinimink High School were named Chapter Advisors of the Year and for Chapter Excellence.

Eighteen Delaware health science students brought home Top 10 finishes from the HOSA-Future Health Professionals 37th annual National Leadership Conference in Orlando. In addition, Bansri Patel of Sussex Technical High School was recognized as a National Technical Honor Society scholarship recipient. More than 50 Delaware HOSA students from Indian River School District's Indian River and Sussex Central high schools, New Castle County Vo-Tech School District's Hodgson Vo-Tech and St. Georges Technical high schools, POLYTECH School District's POLYTECH High School and Sussex Technical School District's Sussex Technical High School participated in competitive events along with more than 7,000 students from around the country.

The Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association (DIAA) honored schools for exceptional sportsmanship, as measured by a set of 10 standards. The process is demanding and requires that the entire school community be involved. Member schools submit an extensive application book that is judged by a committee that evaluates each application to determine if the school has successfully met the standards. Eighteen schools were named DIAA State Champions in Sportsmanship this year. A total of 28 schools have won this award at least once in its 17-year history, including first-time recipients: Christina School District's Christiana and Glasgow high schools, Indian River School District's Sussex Central High School, private Saint Marks High School and Red Clay Consolidated School District's Charter School of Wilmington.

Repeat winners included: Smyrna School District's Smyrna High School; Sanford School; Appoquinimink School District's Appoquinimink High; Woodbridge School District's Woodbridge High and Phillis Wheatley Middle School; Red Clay's Conrad Schools of Science and Al duPont High; Caravel Academy; New Castle County Vo-Tech's Hodgson Vo-Tech; Sussex Tech's Sussex Tech High; Brandywine's Concord High; and Private Tower Hill School. Colonial's William Penn High School has earned the title of State Champion in Sportsmanship for the 17th consecutive year.

## Air Force Base prepares students

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kids are exploring science, art, drama and community service while they're here."

"It's really cool to do experiments in the science room, and to grow plants and tomatoes," said Asaiah Jones, a fourth-grader at Welch.

The center also runs a 10-week summer program and a membership program is available to students in middle school and high school. The site is open on weekends too.

For Master Sgt. Mimi Kramer, who has been stationed in Dover for 13 years, the school-age program has

been invaluable.

"They've raised my babies," Kramer said. "It really is like a family. They know our kids and their whereabouts and they're invested in their futures. Education-wise, my kids are able to get their homework accomplished before they even get home. And in the mornings, they can also go in and get that extra help if they need it."

Her son, Ryan, is at the middle school and her daughter, Megan, is at Caesar Rodney High School. "It was an easy transition for her, going from on-base to off-base," Kramer said. "They've been well prepared."



Gioielle DelVecchio enjoys base activities.



Sisters Azaniah and Asaiah Jones learn to garden.





Alisha Navarro with  
her daughters  
Azaniah and Asaiah Jones.

# HOME BASE

## Dover Air Force programs prepare students in and out of the classroom

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

For military families and their children, a place to call home may not remain fixed for very long.

At the Dover Air Force Base, School Liaison Officer Sonya Dyer works with families to ensure a smooth transition as they adjust to their new community and school system. Dyer serves as the point of contact for school-related matters between commanders, military families and the local school districts; initiates partnerships with both on- and off-base organizations; provides special needs family support services to families; and provides post-secondary preparation.

One family she has worked with, MSgt. Christopher and Kimberly Comeau, relocated to Delaware in August 2010. Their son, Alex, is a fourth-grader with high-functioning autism at George S. Welch Elementary School, part of the Caesar Rodney School District and located on-base.

"Sonya has helped me tremendously in terms of transitioning here and finding special needs groups and resources," said Kimberly. "If I need anything, I just call."

In addition to Welch, the base also houses Dover Air Force Base Middle School. A majority of students then move on to Caesar Rodney High School. Dyer says the Common Core State Standards are helping students in their transition within the district and from state-to-state.

"Long-term, it will definitely level the playing field for our students moving in and out," said Dyer.

The Air Force Base also runs before- and after-school care for students in grades K-5. The school-age program, housed at the Youth Center, is designed to meet students' emotional, social, cognitive and physical needs. The staff plans a variety of learning activities and field trips that encourage growth and learning through play. Students participate in extracurricular clubs as well.

"Learning doesn't stop here," said Bonnie McGill, coordinator of the school-age program. "The staff is highly qualified and we're not here to be babysitters. The

See **AIR FORCE** Page 11