



THE CR REPORT

CAESAR RODNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT BI-MONTHLY
"WHERE EXCELLENCE IS OUR TRADITION"

Your District-Wide Information Source

September 2012 Issue



Students arrive for their first day of class at the J. Ralph McIlvaine Early Childhood Center in Magnolia. MECC is the largest full-day kindergarten program in the State of Delaware.



What's Inside...

Page 2: Superintendent's Message

Page 3: Success Academy; AP Scores Rise

Page 4: New Assistant Principals; Teachers

Page 5: Stokes Custodian Receives Bronze Star

Page 6: Superintendent of the Year; Jump Rope

Page 7: Race To The Top Update; SMART Goals

Page 8: Administrative Retreat; Kindle Winner

DID YOU KNOW?

Photographs of events, ceremonies, celebrations and everyday life in all of our schools can be found on the Caesar Rodney School District website at:

<http://www.cr.k12.de.us/photos/photos.htm>

The CR Report is a publication created exclusively for the Caesar Rodney community. For questions or comment, please contact Ron Gough at:
ronald.gough@cr.k12.de.us.

What's Happening?

Board Meetings (7:00 p.m.)

September 18: Allen Frear Elementary School
October 16: W. B. Simpson Elementary School
November 13: Fifer Middle School

Special Events:

September 26: Interim Reports Issued
October 18: Allen Frear Rededication
October 19: Homecoming Weekend
October 20: Rider Pride Day



This image is a Quick Response Code (QR) for the Caesar Rodney School District website. If you have a Smartphone with a camera, just search for a QR "app" then use your phone to take a picture of this image. You will then be taken to the district website. Once you have installed the "app" on your phone, go to www.google.com and type in "QR Generator." You will then be able to create your own QR codes to share websites, videos or other information.

Message From the Superintendent

On August 22nd, the faculty and staff of the Caesar Rodney School District opened the doors of our 12 schools and welcomed more than 7700 students to the start of a new school year! Along with our students, we also welcomed 82 new teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, clerical and custodians to Caesar Rodney. It is my hope that the 2012-2013 school year will be personally rewarding to each student and each staff member.



Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, Superintendent

This year, our District is committed to the four key priorities found in our calendar/handbook:

- To close the achievement gap for all our students with a special emphasis on decreasing the achievement gap for our special needs students.
- To successfully implement the Chinese Immersion program at the McIlvaine Early Childhood Center and introduce world language opportunities in our middle schools.
- To continue the implementation of our Race To The Top Plan by:
 - a. Supporting and refining Professional Learning Communities
 - b. Supporting the implementation of the Common Core Standards in ELA and mathematics
 - c. Exploring ways to sustain programs and initiatives after the loss of Race To The Top Funding
- To implement the district's Gifted Education and Enrichment Program – a program that will provide enhanced learning opportunities to all students.

These priorities are a commitment by this district to continue to improve upon the quality education that the members of our community have come to expect.

With the start of this school year, it gives me great pleasure to announce that all four of our renovation projects have all been completed – on time and within budget. This would not have been possible without the cooperation of the faculty and staff of each of the schools (McIlvaine, Brown, Simpson and Frear), the
(continued next column)

support of our great community and the help we received from the leadership team of Dover Air Force Base. Together we were able to accomplish something many thought impossible – four schools renovated in four years!

The official ribbon-cutting event for Allen Frear Elementary is scheduled for October 18th and tours of the building will be available on October 20th as part of our Rider Pride Day activities.

While I'm proud of the work done this past year to provide our students with state of the art facilities, I am even prouder of our students and their accomplishments on the Delaware State Test – our students demonstrated growth in all of the tested areas, all of our schools met Adequate Yearly Progress and we are currently awaiting official word that Star Hill Elementary will be designated as a National Blue Ribbon School. They will become the second school in our district in the last two years to receive this distinction!

And finally, I hope to see everyone at the Homecoming parade and game on October 19th and at our fifth annual Rider Pride Day on October 20th!

New AFJROTC Senior Instructor at CR High School

Colonel Mitch Berger, a retired USAF colonel with 32 years of military service, has become the Senior Aerospace Science Instructor for the Caesar Rodney High School AFJROTC program. Born in Monticello, NY, Colonel Berger first enlisted in the Air Force for seven years before completing his degree then applying for Officer's Candidate School. Upon graduation, he became a navigator on the KC-135 and RC-135 aircraft.



In the late 90's, Colonel Berger learned about the AFJROTC program and knew that when he retired, he wanted that to be his next career. "I knew this is what I wanted to do," said Colonel Berger. "I was being offered high-paying civilian jobs in Washington D.C. However, I wanted to work with students in a small community environment. Hopefully, in the AFJROTC program, I can be a positive influence on their lives so they can eventually make the right life choices."

Second Annual Success Academy a Huge “Success”

More than 300 incoming freshman gave up two weeks of their summer vacation to participate in Caesar Rodney School District’s *Success Academy*. The two-week program allows volunteer students to become acclimated to their new high school environment. Meeting their fellow classmates and assigned teachers before the opening bell of the 2012-2013 school year helps to alleviate the anxiety of transitioning from middle school to high school.

This year’s *Success Academy* was once again a huge success according to feedback received by students, staff and parents at Caesar Rodney High School.

With this year’s focus being on space, students took trips to the Mount Cuba Observatory in Greenville, the Delaware Aerospace Education Foundation in Smyrna, Killens Pond in Felton, Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely, Md., and Junior Achievement in Wilmington.

“The *Success Academy* has once again become a great experience for our incoming students,” said Jeff Visalli, assistant principal of the Freshman Academy. “There were no tests, no grades and no pressure, but rather a bonding of students working together, getting to know each other and instilling teamwork and pride.”



As part of this year’s *Success Academy* theme on space, students were able to launch self-propelled rockets.



Students use teamwork (and a lot of hands) to stop the flow of water down a rather leaky water pipe.

AP Exams, Scores Continue To Rise

In a five-year trend report released recently by the College Board, the Caesar Rodney School District continues to see growth in the number of students taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams, the number of exams taken and the number of students who are scoring 3 or more. A



score of 3 or higher is usually accepted as credit at most colleges and universities.

In 2008 the total number of AP students at Caesar Rodney High School was 263 compared with 317 in 2012. The number of AP exams administered in 2008 was 368 compared to 506 in 2012. The percent of CRHS students receiving a three or higher went from 40.3 percent to 51.4 percent.

“We are pleased to see a steady growth in the number of students enrolled in AP classes as well as an increase in the number of students earning a 3 or higher,” said Dr. Scott Lykens, Director of Instruction for the Caesar Rodney School District. “We will continue to work on ways to expand access to our AP programs for all students in our high school.”

Did You Know?

Caesar Rodney High School is the largest high school in Delaware with a current enrollment exceeding 2100 students. Also, the J. Ralph McIlvaine Early Childhood Center is the largest kindergarten program in the State with nearly 500 students enrolled. Now, that’s a lot of Riders!

Go Riders





New Assistant Principals and Teachers For a New School Year



Leah Anderson, Assistant Principal,
Caesar Rodney High School



Nicole Kurz-McDowell, Assistant
Principal, W.B. Simpson Elementary



Darisa Everett, Assistant Principal,
Nellie Hughes Stokes Elementary



The Caesar Rodney School District has hired 41 first-year teachers and re-hired 41 other teachers who were on temporary contracts; 49 paraprofessionals, three administrators and four secretaries/clerks for the 2012-2013 school year. Pictured above are the newest teachers of the Caesar Rodney Rider community.

Did You Know?

Last year, more than 3800 pictures of Caesar Rodney students and teachers were posted online at the district website. For photographs, go to:
<http://www.cr.k12.de.us/photos/photos.htm>

Newest Member of School Board Sworn In

William Bush IV is the newest member of the Caesar Rodney School Board. Mr. Bush received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Finance from the University of Delaware and a Doctor of Jurisprudence from Widener University School of Law. He currently works as an attorney in private practice.



With his family looking on, Mr. Bush signs his Oath of Office following his swearing-in ceremony.

Fitzgerald Named Superintendent of the Year

Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, Superintendent of the Caesar Rodney School District, has been chosen by the Delaware Association of School Administrators as Superintendent of the Year for 2013.

Dr. Fitzgerald has been in public education for the past 34 years beginning as a Social Studies and English teacher in Maryland in 1978. After 13 years in the classroom, Dr. Fitzgerald moved to Delaware in 1991 to become Caesar Rodney High School's assistant principal until 1998, then principal until 2007 when he was selected as superintendent.

In 2002, Dr. Fitzgerald was selected as Delaware's Secondary School Principal of the Year.

Dr. Fitzgerald holds a Doctorate of Educational Leadership from the University of Delaware, a Master of Arts from St. John's College and a Bachelor of Science degree from Frostburg State University.

This honor automatically allows Dr. Fitzgerald to be considered for the 2013 American Association of School Administrators (AASA) National Superintendent of the Year.



Twenty-four students from the McIlvaine Early Childhood Center recently surprised Superintendent Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald with congratulations by way of a living T-shirt display, spelling out "Superintendent of the Year."

"I am humbled to have been selected by my peers for this honor," said Dr. Fitzgerald. "I am very fortunate to work with an amazing group of teachers, students and staff as well as being able to represent the Caesar Rodney community."

Jumping Her Way Into The Hearts Of Others

Recently, Nellie Stokes' third grader Sydney Cunningham raised more than \$2000 for the American Heart Association during a "Jump Rope for Heart" event with the help of her older sister, Bailey. Stokes students sought out "sponsors" who would then pledge or make donations based on the amount of time a student jumped rope during the charitable event.

Both Sydney and Bailey spent hours on the phone calling friends and family and also walked door to door with their mother to collect pledges and donations in memory of both her brother Brendon and Grandpa Irey and in honor of family members, as well.

Receiving nearly 200 sponsors and approaching the \$1000 mark which was the highest prize level, Sydney vowed to surpass that mark since it wasn't about the prizes. The Stokes third grader wanted to gather as many donations as possible "...so other kids wouldn't die from heart problems like my brother did," said Sydney.

According to the American Heart Association (AMA), their records for individual fundraising date back to the 2003-2004 school year. Since that time, the highest amount of money raised by a Delaware student is \$2,755.00. Sydney raised \$2,015.00, the third highest amount ever raised!

"This was such an amazing accomplishment by an amazing student," said Corey Miklus, former principal at Stokes. "We have school-wide fundraisers that don't raise as much money as Sydney did with her sister. All of the money raised went directly to the AMA. I applaud Sydney and her sister on a job well done!"



Sydney Cunningham

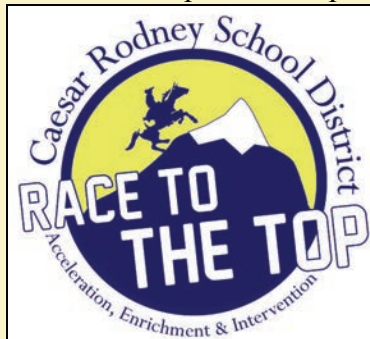
Go Riders





Race To The Top Efforts Paying Off

The Caesar Rodney School District is committed to improving all students, teachers and leaders through the Race To The Top (RTTT) grant, which is also the district improvement plan. The district-wide focus for all schools continues to be Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Learning Focused unit and lesson frameworks. Additionally, the primary focus continues to be our secondary schools as we



support grades 6-8 and 10-12 around the Freshman Academy and the two-week summer Success Academy.

As we enter the third year of the federal grant, we are pleased to announce that the district has met 52 of our 59 of our RTTT targets from year two and continue to show strong gains in student learning. In June, a performance review was held with the Delaware Department of Education. Their analysis of program and performance strengths include:

Program Strengths

“From the district office to the school, classroom and individual teachers, the district’s focus on data has led to deep understanding of current performance levels, goals, and a stronger sense of the path towards reaching those targets. There is an interest and appreciation for PLC time spent on analyzing this data and collaborating around instructional strategies tied to student needs. The ninth grade academy continues to serve as a model both within and outside the district across the state. During the spring progress review, teachers and administrators cited a number of benefits of the Academy, including increased collaboration between middle and high school teachers to ensure a successful transition from 8th to 9th grade, and earlier and more frequent access to data and scheduling.”

Performance Strengths

“The districts proficiency rates for all students in grades 3-5 in both reading and math for all groups was above the state average. This includes nine percentage points above the state average in reading and eight percentage points above the state in math.

Middle schools (grades 6-8) saw tremendous growth with a 13 percentage increase in Math and 14 percentage points for Reading in the spring, all of which are above the state average as well. High school grades (9-10) showed a six percentage point growth in Math from the spring of 2011 to the spring of 2012 and an eight percentage point rise for Reading during the same time period.”

SMART Goals Focus Instruction on Student Learning in Professional Learning Communities (PLC’s)

One example of a refined practice that has been established through Race To The Top is an intense focus on long-term and short-term goal setting. This focus on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound) goals frame all student learning around data and the results that determine our success within and outside our community.

Furthermore, these goals can also drive the district priorities from the district office to the individual teacher through the district, building, PLC and teacher alignment process. This is accomplished by starting with the district SMART goals which are:

1. Meet whole group and subgroup targets for student all students in 2013
2. Meet graduation rate requirements for ALL students and ALL subgroups
3. In grades k-8, maintain average daily attendance to 90% or greater.

These goals are then adapted to each building, to each PLC and to each teacher.

For instance, each building must have four SMART goals and two of them should be aligned to the district goals. PLC’s should then create goals and they should align to building goals and so on.

This is the second year of using this process and we are now refining this for use in PLCs with the notion that: “According to research, goal setting is the single most powerful motivational tool in a leader’s toolkit. Why? Because goal setting operates in ways that provide purpose, challenge, and meaning. Goals are the guideposts along the road that make a compelling vision come alive. Goals energize people. Specific, clear, challenging goals lead to greater effort and achievement than easy or vague goals do.” (Blanchard, 2007, p 150)

Max Thompson Discusses "Exemplary Practices" at Administrative Retreat

What makes some school districts and schools across the country "ordinary" and what makes them "exemplary"? What are the future challenges students and teachers face with the Common Core Standards and the assessments of the future? These are some of the questions answered at the district administrative retreat in mid-August in-part by Dr. Max Thompson, owner and Project Director of Learning Focused, a nationally recognized school improvement company.



Dr. Max Thompson

As a professional educator as well as a presenter, evaluator, and publisher of educational research, Dr. Thompson described the "connections" that exemplary school districts make in the alignment of resources, implementation of their vision and the specific instructional practices districts can use to raise student achievement. "Adapt, don't adopt" is his slogan, meaning that not all strategies work in every case. It is up to the individual buildings and leaders to "connect practices together" for their uniqueness student population.

An example of some of these exemplary practices across districts includes:

- 1) Setting clear priorities, timelines, plans and goals to support district and building improvement
- 2) Setting clear expectations for what students should learn, do and be able to demonstrate at each and every grade level and content
- 3) An intense literacy focus using reading stamina and summarization writing
- 4) Ensuring grade level rigor and common instruction and assessments for all students through PLCs.

The second part of Dr. Thompson's presentation centered on the Common Core state standards and the assessments that students will need to take in the future as a result of almost every state adopting these national standards. Although these "shifts" in the student learning playbook are not going to be assessed until at least two more years, the preparation for them has to begin now.

Some of these preparations include developing unit and classroom lesson plans, teaching strategies, classroom assessments and aligning resources to match the future questions that have a "high cognitive demand". These are the

(continued next column)

types of questions that cannot be assessed with a multiple choice question as we currently know it. These include multi-day, multi-part problems that focus on real world problems the modern working world solves everyday.

For example, a middle school math student might be asked to design a park in their community. This would include evaluating a survey, planning out the park, evaluating bids among four contractors and justifying their decisions for each step. Additionally, in order to solve these problems, students will require perseverance, reading stamina and the ability to process multiple parts to solve a problem that may not have one "right" or "wrong" answer.

In light of these changes, the message is clear: we must (and will) prepare for these changes to continue our strong tradition of student success in the Caesar Rodney School District. It is through the dedication of our staff and by bringing in educational researchers like Dr. Thompson, we will continue to stay ahead of the curve.

Simpson Student Wins Kindle For Reading

At the end of the school year, all students at Simpson Elementary were given a summer activity journal to help them keep their reading and math skills sharp over the summer. For every four activities completed, each student had their



Left to Right: Simpson Principal Mike Kijowski, Matthew Scullo, teacher Cherie Bergold and assistant principal Nicole Kurz-McDowell following the Kindle drawing.

name put into a drawing for a brand new Kindle. A drawing was held at the beginning of the new school year where fifth grader Matthew Scullo's name was picked. It goes to show that it really does pay to read!

Go Riders





Stokes Custodian Receives Bronze Star... 21 Years Later

Dwayne Wilson is the custodian at Nellie Hughes Stokes Elementary School in Dover. However, to the students attending Stokes, he is more than just Mr. Wilson. He is also their hero. A decorated war hero. A hero who waited 21 years to be presented the Bronze Star, our nation's fourth highest military decoration for bravery.

Twenty-one years ago, in 1991, then-Private Wilson was serving in the U.S. Army and was on the front lines in the opening days of Operation Desert Storm.

For "...exceptionally meritorious achievement in support of military operations against a hostile force..." Private Wilson air assaulted into Iraq during the first days. Said Dwayne, "We came down and did what we had to do. I was just doing my job and had no intention of receiving medals for the work I needed to do to



Sergeant First Class Dwayne Wilson shakes hands with Brigadier General Scott Chambers after being presented with the Bronze Star.

get the job done."

Private Wilson's courage, resolution and devotion to duty earned him the respect of his peers and the sincere gratitude of his superiors. "He put personal safety aside when tasked to clear a minefield of unexploded bomblets..."

After completing his combat role in Iraq, he returned to his base in Germany and was honorably discharged eight months later. Private Wilson returned to Delaware and would eventually join the Delaware National Guard where he currently holds the rank of Sergeant First Class.

(continued next column)

Mr. Wilson never knew he had been recommended for the Bronze Star until one day he received a package in the mail. Upon opening it, he was surprised and humbled to see he had been awarded the Bronze Star.

Private Wilson's loyalty, diligence and selfless service are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect distinct credit upon him, VII Corps and the United States Army.

Upon seeing the Bronze Star, Dwayne's father Donald said, "Do you see this? This is the Bronze Star. You are a war hero."

However, no ceremony, no handshake, no salute, no recognition in front of his fellow soldiers. Not for the past 21 years. That would soon change.

Last November, when it was learned that the medal had simply been mailed to his house, the Caesar Rodney School District began planning a surprise assembly on Veterans Day to honor the Stokes custodian. However, just days before the ceremony, it was learned that his military records had a huge hole in them in that there was no record of Dwayne receiving the medal or that he had even been in Iraq!

The ceremony had to be called off and Dwayne had to be told of the gap in his records that had to be fixed immediately.

With support documentation provided to the Department of the Army, Dwayne was able to prove that he had served in Operation Desert Storm and had been awarded the Bronze Star.

At the Georgetown Armory in early August, in front of the men and women who serve with him, Sergeant First Class Dwayne Wilson was presented with the Bronze Star, 21 years later, by Brigadier General Scott Chambers, Assistant Adjutant General, Delaware National Guard.

Sergeant Wilson...Mr. Wilson...our custodian and...our hero!

The Caesar Rodney School Board



Front Row L to R: President Kathleen Haynes; Vice President Dave Henderson. Back Row L to R: William Bush IV; Cheryl Precourt; Melody Heavner, Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald