



THE CAESAR RODNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT QUARTERLY "Where Excellence is Our Tradition" CR REPORT

Your District-Wide Information Source

April 2012 Issue



Left: Cast of "Annie" run through a dress rehearsal one day before a weekend of brilliant performances.
Right: Seventy-seven Caesar Rodney High School juniors during the annual National Honor Society Induction.



What's Inside...

Page 2: Superintendent's Message

Page 3: Building Teacher of the Year Nominated

Page 4: Building Teacher of the Year Nominated

Page 5: Building Teacher of the Year Nominated

Page 6: Duron Harmon Visits Brown

Page 7: United Way: Great CR Partnership

Page 8: Race To The Top; Chinese Immersion

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 2300 pictures of events, ceremonies, celebrations and everyday life in 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.)

April 17: Charlton School

May 15: W. Reily Brown Elementary

June 19: Dover Air Force Base Middle

Special Events:

May 2: Interim Reports Issued

May 28: Memorial Day-Schools Closed

June 2: CR High School Graduation



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

I want to share with you some of our accomplishments and explain an exciting new direction that the district is about to embark upon.

I am so proud of our students for their continued improvement on the DCAS. While a Caesar Rodney education is so much more than what is reflected in a test score, we cannot escape the fact that we are measured by our students' test scores.

Recently, we underwent a mid year Race To The Top evaluation conducted by the Delaware Department of Education. We were very pleased with our progress. Please see this newsletter for more information.

An area I have targeted for growth in our district has been the development of elementary and middle school World Language programs. In the last few years, we have expanded the World Language offerings at the high school to include Chinese and Arabic, to go along with French, Latin, German and Spanish. In the 2012-2013 school year, we will be piloting a Chinese Immersion program for 100 kindergarten students to be broken down into two cohorts of 50 students each.

Students will spend half of their school day in the target language learning math, science and Chinese literacy and the rest of the day students will be taught in English. While this program will be offered at the McIlvaine Early Childhood Center, kindergarten students at Welch Elementary will be provided with the opportunity to choose into the program.

We will also be providing a computer interactive course in Chinese and Spanish to 50 students at both Fifer Middle School and Postlethwait Middle School for the 2012-2013 school year with the possibility of expanding into other world languages for the 2013-14 school year. While Dover Air Base Middle currently has students involved in the interactive Chinese program, I hope to expand their offerings to include Spanish.

These are exciting times for us and tremendous opportunities for our students. While we continue to "Race To The Top" in Delaware, I know that we are truly preparing our students to be on top of the world.



Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, Superintendent

High School Plant Science Program Continues To Grow...Literally!

From evergreens to flowering plants, the Caesar Rodney High School Plant Science Program supplies the school and community with greenhouse plants year round. CRHS teacher Catherine DiBenedetto has been working the program for the past seven years.

Students who choose to participate in this program are able to apply what they learn not only in the classroom but also in temperature-controlled greenhouses where plants are transplanted from small plugs into thriving plants ready for sale.

Advanced classes also work in the greenhouses working on issues such as plant nutrition, pests and diseases. They also look at how they can sell what they have grown, take inventory of the existing crop and ensuring the crop is on schedule. "These are the types of things they would do in a business situation. So, if they were actually working in the industry, I have them doing exactly what they would be doing in that career," said Catherine.

Plant sales typically begin the last week in April. Advanced students keep a list of customers who agree to be contacted for future events. That contact information is then passed on to the following year's classes who will determine how to best market a new crop of plants.

The School Plant Science Program sells plants year round. "In December, we sell evergreen products including grave blankets, poinsettias and wreathes," said Catherine. "Also, the floral shop is always open supporting events such as Valentines Day, proms and homecoming."

All monies earned from sales goes right back into the program. This includes purchasing plants that students might not otherwise see and also supplements field trips to Longwood Gardens, etc.

There are currently six different classes with two different career pathways (horticulture/floriculture) at the high school. Although there has been a decline in the number of students participating in this career pathway, there are about 75 students currently in the program.

Spring sales for this year's annual bedding plants begin on Thursday, April 26th. During school days, hours are from 8-4 pm. Saturday hours (April 28 and May 5) are from 10-2 pm. For further information, please call Caesar Rodney High School at (302) 697-2161.



Teacher Catherine DiBenedetto tends to greenhouse plants at CRHS.

Building Teachers of the Year Announced

District Teacher of the Year to be Announced in April

Laini Bernard

Laini Bernard currently teaches ninth grade Algebra/Geometry at Caesar Rodney High School. She has ten years teaching experience, all at CRHS. Laini received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Delaware. She is looking to earn her Masters degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies this spring.

“Working with both students with disabilities and without, exclusively in the area of mathematics, I have discovered that every student has an area of difficulty in learning,” said Laini. “Success is a word that is defined differently for each student. My philosophy is to hold every student to a higher level that encourages independent thought, responsibility, and a productive work ethic.”



Kerri Carr

Kerri Carr is a second grade teacher at Star Hill Elementary School. With nine years experience, Kerri has been in her current position for the past five years.

Kerri earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Wesley College and a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction, also from Wesley.

“There were several factors that influenced me to become a teacher,” said Kerri. “One reason was that I wanted a meaningful and rewarding career. Another reason was because I struggled with reading in elementary school and algebra in middle school. I remember the teachers that helped me overcome those hurdles. What could be more rewarding than that? I have a passion for learning and love to work with kids. I knew in high school the career path that I wanted to take. I wanted a career in which I would feel rewarded every day. Teaching has provided me that feeling.”



Mark Crossley

Mark Crossley is the band and chorus teacher for grades 6-8 at F. Niel Postlethwait Middle School. With ten years of teaching experience, Mark has been at Postlethwait for the past five years. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from West Chester University in Pennsylvania.

“As a music teacher, I strive to inspire my students the way I was by my band teachers, said Mark. “When we perform music, we share a little of ourselves with the audience and with each other. As I teach my students, they get to see my heart, my passion, and my love for music. Helping students to reach their musical potential is the most satisfying feeling I have ever experienced.”



David Kaltenbaugh

David Kaltenbaugh is a science teacher in grades 7-8 at Dover Air Force Base Middle School. David has 20 years teaching experience with all but one of those years at DAFBM. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Earth/Space Science Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Science degree in Science Education from Delaware State University.

David is also a National Board Certified Teacher. “The most important aspect of my job is when a student tells me that, because they were in my class, they now love or understand science,” said David. “Whether students realize it or not, science is an integral part of their daily life and it needs to be respected and understood. To know I had a hand in this for someone else is fulfilling.”



Building Teachers of the Year Announced

District Teacher of the Year to be Announced in April

Kathryn Klebart

Kathryn Klebart is currently a Grade 4-5 Special Education teacher at Allen Frear Elementary School. With seven years teaching experience, all at Allen Frear, Kathryn began her pursuit of a Bachelors degree in Elementary Education from Utah State Uni-

versity before completing her requirements at Delaware State University.

"As a teacher, I am in a position that enables me to help another human

being obtain basic life skills," said Kathryn. "I have been given the gift of reading and now I simply need to pass that gift onto another. Helping people at the most basic level is what drives me to stay in teaching." Added Kathryn, "My reward in teaching is this: 'I can't do it. I don't want to do it. I don't care about it. Oh look! I CAN DO IT! I want to show everyone! Can we do that some more? SMILE! That is the reward...period!'"



Lynn Knable

Lynn Knable is a teacher of Exceptional Children at the John S. Charlton School. With 25 years teaching experience, she has been teaching in her current position for nine years. Lynn received a Bachelor of Science

degree in Occupational/Vocational Education from Delaware State University. "The greatest influence of becoming a teacher came from my mother," said

Lynn. "She believed in me. When I was little, even if I cut out very crooked cookies, she liked them just the same. What I really discovered each time I rolled out the dough was that everything is a process that eventually leads to believing in one's self and having the courage to keep at it until something delicious and meaningful comes to pass." Added Lynn, "She gave me the gift to believe in myself, believe that I could make a difference, and believe that I can help others to believe in themselves too."



Ashlee Miller

Ashlee Miller is a second grade teacher at George Welch Elementary School. This is Ashlee's third year teaching, having received a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from the University of Delaware. When asked what were some of

the factors that influenced her to become a teacher, Ashlee responded, "Because of my own experiences in school, I wanted to ensure I could do my part to make school a



positive experience for children. I knew that if I was in a classroom, I could help children celebrate their strengths, identify and work on their weaknesses, as well as foster intrinsic motivation to learn and apply new concepts." Added Ashlee, "I can think of no greater honor than educating and learning with students."

Michelle Pearson

Michelle Pearson is currently a kindergarten teacher at the J. Ralph McIlvaine Early Childhood Center. With 24 years experience, all in the Caesar Rodney School District,

Michelle received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary and early Childhood Education from Millersville University of PA., and a Master of Instruction from the University of Delaware. "I remember my first teaching position and each of the subsequent years, the children taught, the relationships formed, the lives touched," said Michelle. "I think of the awesome responsibility of my chosen profession, the trust placed in me. I recall the countless smiles, looks of wonder and pride, squeals of delight, and even the tears. I think about how I have the privilege of helping children take their first steps along their educational journey. As my reflection time comes to a close, I know kindergarten teachers are the luckiest people in the world."



Building Teachers of the Year Announced

District Teacher of the Year to be Announced in April

Kimberly Simmons

Kimberly Simmons is a first grade teacher at W. Reily Brown Elementary School. Kimberly has spent all seven years of experience at Brown Elementary. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Commerce from the University of Virginia

and a Masters in Elementary Education from Wilmington University. When asked what she considered to be her greatest accomplishments in education, Kimberly



replied, "The successes and achievements of my students each year." Their successes are my successes. The greatest contribution I can give to my students are the tools they need not only to succeed in the classroom but to succeed in life." Kimberly also stated she loves being a teacher and that teaching is her passion. "My husband fears the district will find out I would do this job for nothing!"

Sandra Tinsley

Sandra Tinsley is a fourth grade teacher at W.B. Simpson Elementary School. With ten years teaching experience, Sandra has taught at Simpson for the past three years. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary



Education from Salisbury State University in Maryland. "As a teacher, the role encompasses much more than lessons, assessments and homework," says Sandra. "It involves the ability to make each student feel special and feel like they are getting a personalized education, specialized to their wants and needs as a learner. This connection then allows the child to take chances and strive, stretch and reach for the stars while making the education process a fulfilling and rewarding experience." Added Sandra, "I open the door to learning and help students walk through."

Kevin Truitt

Kevin Truitt is a fourth grade teacher at Nellie Hughes Stokes Elementary School. With 12 years teaching experience, Kevin has been in his present position for the past three years. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Wesley College in Dover. "The factors

that influenced me to teach are my mom and my experience at the Wesley College Boys and Girls Club," said Kevin. "My mom always wanted to be a teacher. However, life

never gave her the opportunity. She was always hard on me as a student growing up." Added Kevin, "C's were not allowed in our house. However, as you get older you understand why she was that way. Nobody on my mother or father's side of the family graduated from college. She wanted me to be different from my other relatives. She knew I had potential and refused to allow me to do nothing less than my best. Although the battles with her were tough, they were worth it."



Kelly Wutka

Kelly Wutka is a sixth grade math teacher at Fred Fifer III Middle School. She has eight

years experience teaching, all at Fifer Middle. Kelly has a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from the Uni-



versity of Delaware and a Masters of Education from Wilmington College. "Each day I step in the classroom, I hope I can make a positive difference in a child's life," said Kelly. "Many students do not list math as their favorite subject on the first day of school. My goal is to change their point of view or at least increase their confidence in doing the math. Nothing is more rewarding than seeing a child who struggled in the beginning of the year walk out at the end of the year confident and proud that they did well in my class."



Former CRHS Football Player Gives Back To Brown Students

Students in grades 3-5 at Brown Elementary School recently received a surprise visit from Duron Harmon, a former CRHS football player who was a nationally-recognized Gatorade State Defensive Player of the Year in 2008. Duron was an all-state running



Duron Harmon searches for volunteers looking to catch a football from the former CRHS student/athlete.

back and safety who helped bring a state championship to Caesar Rodney High School, the first title in 18 years.

Duron spoke to the students about "The Importance of Making the Grade." With the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) state testing now underway, Duron spoke of his testing experiences and how he prepared when he took the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP). He also offered advice to the Brown students on how to prepare for their upcoming tests.

Duron currently attends Rutgers University in New Jersey as both a student and as a football player. This year, as a junior, Duron continues his academics and playing football. As a starting free safety, he intercepted a conference best five passes, returning one for a touchdown.

Additionally, Duron helped lead his team to a victory over Iowa State in The First New Era Pinstripe Bowl. As a result of his outstanding play, Duron was named "First Team All Big East Conference Free Safety."

Duron is a role model example of how both academics and athletics can work side-by-side in order to become successful in life. We wish Duron the best as he pursues his academic and athletic dreams.

Representative Blakey meets with Caesar Rodney Students

More than 60 people came to Nellie Hughes Stokes Elementary School to interact with their state and local elected leaders at a forum sponsored by State Representative Don Blakey.

"Two students from Caesar Rodney High School as well as district superintendent Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald were invited to discuss developments in



L to R: Superintendent Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, CRHS senior Abigayle Dillard, and State Rep. Don Blakey.

their language program," Rep. Blakey said.

One of those CR students, Marcianna Green, told the crowd that language can break down barriers. "If you can speak to someone in their native tongue, it means so much more. It's just a wonderful thing," she said.

Also speaking at the event was Abigayle Dillard, a senior at Caesar Rodney High School, who is studying Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, and Latin.

Dr. Fitzgerald said the district has been excited to expand its foreign language education – a move he says was needed given the changing nature of the global economy. "We want our students to understand what it means to be an American, but we also want them to compete globally."

Rep. Blakey, who speaks Swahili, has offered to visit CRHS to conduct sessions introducing students to the language now spoken in a dozen African countries.

GO RIDERS!

Fourth Generation Walton Enlists in DNG

A Caesar Rodney High School junior recently enlisted in the Delaware National Guard and may have set history in doing so. Brandon Walton became the fourth generation in direct descendents to enlist since his great-grandfather, George R. Walton, Sr., enlisted.

"This enlistment ceremony is truly a historic event," said Maj. Gen. Frank Vavala, Adjutant General. General Vavala has served with all three previous generations of Waltons. "It is my honor to be administering this oath to the next member of a family I have been serving with for four decades."



Major General Frank Vavala swears in Brandon while his father, Lt. Col Bruce Walton looks on. (DEARNG photo courtesy of Lt. Nathan Bright)

George R. Walton, Sr. who retired as a colonel from the Delaware National Guard and was promoted to the state rank of Brigadier General, was on hand for the ceremony as was his son, Bruce Walton, Jr., who both watched as Brandon was sworn in to the Guard as a satellite operator/maintainer. He will leave for Basic Combat Training next year.

Third Annual "No Fear Frear" 5K Run/Walk To Be Held in May

The third annual "No Fear Frear" 5K Run/Walk will be held on Saturday, May 19th beginning at Silver Lake Park in Dover. This event benefits the Ethan Max Williams' Memorial Scholarship Fund and the Allen Frear Wellness Program.

Ethan Williams was a courageous and inspirational 3rd grader at Allen Frear Elementary School who lost his battle with brain cancer in January of 2010. To carry on the memory of Ethan, and his passion for learning, this event was put together to benefit graduating Caesar Rodney High School seniors who are looking to continue their academic journey in mathematics, engineering, science or education.

Please go to www.trisportsevents.com for more information about the race and registration.



Ethan Max Williams

UNITED WAY: A GREAT PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CR COMMUNITY

The Caesar Rodney School District has been a partner with the United Way organization for many years. However, most people have no idea what this unique organization offers to our students and community. "United Way's mission is to maximize the community's resources to improve the quality of life for all Delawareans," said Deborah Armstrong, Assistant Community Relations Director for United Way.

For instance, with the downturn in the economy and an increase in the number of CR families at the poverty level, CR partnered with United Way to assist with an afterschool feeding program.

"The Boys and Girls Club, another partner agency with United Way, has a huge footprint in the CR community," said Crystal Timmons, Community Relations Associate. "Also, the YMCA partners with CR in running a summer camp. Last year, United Way brought in more than 70 backpacks to CR children."

United Way was also on hand at CR's annual "Rider Pride Day" providing information on their services, programs and partners under their ever-growing umbrella. More than 100 agencies now partner with United Way. "United Way is also



L to R: Crystal Timmons, John Moore and Deb Armstrong

fortunate that we have partnered with Delaware Autism. We have worked with the Charlton School and now have one of their transition students on our staff," added Armstrong.

"It is our goal to help those who need help the most," said John Moore, vice president of Resource Development and Strategic Partnerships at United Way. "We could not meet our goals without the incredible support and collaboration from the CR community including the volunteerism, leadership support of CR Superintendent Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, teachers and staff and the generosity of the CR community. During the 2010 Campaign a total of \$41,442.50 was raised by the CR community."

"The generosity of the Caesar Rodney School District will be used to fund programs in our local community of high need," said Moore.





District “On-Track” with Race To The Top

A mid-year performance review, as part of the Federal Race To The Top grant requirements, was recently held with the Delaware Department of Education and the Caesar Rodney School District. Some of the representatives of the Caesar Rodney School District included one local school board, the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Instruction and the Caesar Rodney Education Association. The purpose of this review was to determine the “status” of the district activities related to the plan that was submitted and approved in June 2011 and to also examine student achievement results at the close of the winter DCAS testing session.



Highlights from this review include:

- Reading and math proficiency in grades 3-8 was higher than the statewide proficiency, with more students proficient this winter than last winter. Reading showed a 9% gain from last winter and a 13% gain from this past fall. Math had a 6% increase from last winter and an 18% increase from this past fall.
- Subgroup (African-American, Hispanic, Special Education and low-SES) proficiency in grades 3-8 reading and math outperformed the state across the board. Caesar Rodney’s achievement gaps for those subgroups are significantly smaller than statewide achievement gaps. Of particular note, grade 6-8 showed the most growth in almost every category. Low-SES in particular, showed a 15% higher achievement than last winter and 9% greater growth than last year from fall to winter.
- College Enrollment and Retention: Post high school enrollment and retention rates are higher than the state with 62% enrollment in a two or four year college and 82% completing more than one year of college. The state averages were 60% and 78%, respectively.
- College Readiness: The percentage of students meeting or exceeding the “college readiness benchmark” for grade 11 SAT school day was four percentage points higher than the state (23% vs. 19%). Fifty percent of Advanced Placement (AP) test takers in CR passed an AP exam vs. 46% statewide. **(continued next column)**

As we look forward to spring and summer, we are committed to surpassing all expectations in our continued work in Race To the Top. The Caesar Rodney School District will have one more performance evaluation in June of 2012. This second meeting will be at the close of the spring DCAS testing session and will once again evaluate student achievement data. Additionally, we will receive notification that funding will be continued for the 2012-2013 school year. With this, we can continue to build upon the goals we have outlined to lead to better schools with higher achieving students. This will lead to a reflection and re-prioritization for new goals and even higher levels of learning and achievement for the 2012-2013 school years.

CHINESE DUAL IMMERSION PROGRAM TO BE OFFERED

Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, a Chinese Dual Language Program will be offered to kindergarten children of varying backgrounds and abilities attending the McIlvaine Early Childhood Center (MECC). Kindergarten students at Welch Elementary will be provided with the opportunity to choose into the program. The following year, the program will expand to grades



K-1, and each additional year will add another grade.

Chinese is the most widely spoken first language in the

world. According to the U.S. Census, Chinese is the third most spoken language in America.

Students in immersion programs develop greater cognitive flexibility, demonstrating increased attention control, better memory, superior problem solving skills as well as enhanced understanding of their primary language.

The Dual Language Program seeks to enroll students of varying backgrounds and all abilities. However, it may not be a wise choice for children experiencing significant communication delays in their primary language.

Applications are now open to children who will be enrolling at MECC for the 2012-2013 school year. For further information, call the MECC at (302) 335-5039.