

CELEBRATING

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK



2024



American Education Week

November 18–22, 2024

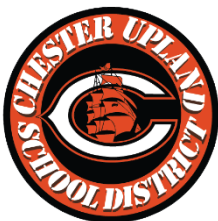
Together for Safe, Just & Equitable Schools

This American Education Week (AEW), we celebrate the many individuals—educators, students, families, and community members—whose collective efforts make our public schools places where safety, justice, and equity thrive. First observed in 1921, AEW is a time to highlight the power of public education, recognize the achievements within our schools, and honor those who are making a meaningful difference in ensuring every student receives a high-quality education.

This special edition newsletter, published by the Delaware County Intermediate Unit (DCIU), highlights the remarkable work happening across our county's school districts, where excellence in education is a daily commitment. Each district has contributed a unique story, offering a glimpse into the vibrant, inspiring initiatives that exemplify the heart and soul of their schools. These stories reflect only a fraction of the amazing efforts taking place across the districts and DCIU—each deserving of recognition and celebration.

At DCIU, we deeply value our partnerships with administrators, school boards, parents, students, and community members. Together, we are committed to creating safe, just, and equitable learning environments that empower all students to succeed. Through this spirit of collaboration, we find our greatest strength—working side by side to make a positive, lasting impact on the lives of students and families across our communities.

Happy American Education Week!



CHESTER UPLAND

Dr. Latrice Mumin, Superintendent

Walking for Hope: Main Street Elementary's 'Walk for a Cure' Inspires Compassion, Education, and Community Support



The Chester Upland School District is proud to recognize American Education Week and highlight the remarkable contributions and efforts of our schools and community.

As part of our American Education Week celebration, we are especially proud to recognize Main Street Elementary School's 'Walk for a Cure' initiative, which marked its 7th year this year.

Main Street Elementary School held its annual 'Walk for a Cure' event on October 25, 2024, bringing together students and staff to show their support for breast cancer awareness and those affected by the disease.

Students and staff proudly walked along the school grounds in Upland, holding signs of encouragement to provide hope and support to those battling breast cancer. The walk concluded with everyone forming a human ribbon in front of the school, symbolizing the iconic pink ribbon associated with breast cancer awareness.

Recently, Main Street staff presented this year's donation recipient, Aimee Guzowski, a local Pre-K3 teacher at SonShine Christian School, with a check for \$1,100. Aimee recently completed her final chemotherapy treatment, and this heartfelt donation was raised entirely by Main Street students through a month-long lollipop fundraiser, contributions from a special pink dress-down day, and additional donations from staff and families.

"Seeing our students and staff come together for this cause is incredibly moving," said Darnell Medley, Main Street's Principal. "The children look forward to this event every year, and it's a wonderful display of solidarity in supporting breast cancer awareness. It's a testament to the strength of our school and district communities."

The 'Walk for a Cure' event has become a cherished tradition at Main Street, focusing on awareness, community support, unity, and fostering a spirit of compassion. Connie Sierra, a third-grade teacher at Main Street who helped organize the event, was inspired to start 'Walk for a Cure' after losing her sister to breast cancer at age 54. "I wanted to keep her memory alive and give back to those who are still fighting," Sierra shared. "Whatever is needed, Main Street has made every effort to ensure these women receive support during their time of need."

Now in its seventh year, Main Street's 'Walk for a Cure' has supported seven women in their battles against breast cancer, offering assistance in meaningful ways, including cash donations, gift cards, and even providing a month of groceries to help ease the burdens they face.

This annual event not only raises awareness for an important cause but also exemplifies the dedication of our students, families, and staff to making a positive impact. Together, we unite to celebrate our collective commitment to public education and to the well-being of our community.





Chichester

Dr. William Haws, Superintendent

Chichester School District: A Season of Growth, Gratitude, and Community



As the autumn leaves fall, exciting developments are unfolding within the Chichester School District. This season has brought an outpouring of support, community engagement, and memorable events that truly exemplify CHI Pride.

From securing significant funding to hosting vibrant community events, Chichester is thriving and looking forward to an even brighter future. Here are some highlights from this school year:

\$5 Million in Additional Funding: A Transformative Boost for Chichester Schools

The Chichester School District will be receiving an additional \$5 million in aid from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This significant support comes thanks to the collaborative efforts of State Representative Carol Kazeem. “Big things are happening in the Chichester School District,” says David Bartholf, Chichester School District Board President, who expressed his appreciation for Rep. Kazeem’s partnership. “The funding will undoubtedly enhance educational programs and resources for our students.”

Fall Fest 2024: Fun, Friendship, and Community Spirit

Chichester Middle School’s (CMS) PBIS Fall Fest was a resounding success, bringing together 120 students for an afternoon filled with games, crafts, and snacks. The crisp autumn weather set the perfect stage for outdoor fun, including football games that brought smiles all around. Special thanks go to Mrs. Mehl for organizing the event, the dedicated teachers who volunteered, and the CMS Home and School Association for their generous donations of soft pretzels, juice boxes, and water. With Fall Fest in the books, plans are already in motion for a lively Spring Fest 2025!

Marcus Hook Elementary Visits the Firehouse

The spirit of exploration and learning was alive as second-grade students from Marcus Hook Elementary had the opportunity to visit the Marcus Hook Fire House. They were welcomed by a team of firefighters who provided an engaging tour of the fire station and fire trucks. Students learned important fire safety tips, leaving the firehouse inspired and informed. It was an unforgettable experience that brought lessons to life outside the classroom.

Trunk or Treat: A Spook-tacular Community Celebration

In the spirit of Halloween, Chichester Middle School’s PBIS team hosted its first annual Trunk or Treat event, drawing over 100 families. With more than 17 creatively decorated cars, participants enjoyed trick-or-treating, face painting, and pumpkin painting. The event was a hit, uniting students, families, and community members in a festive celebration. Plans are already underway to make next year’s event even bigger and better!

Back to School Store: A Community United for Students’ Success

Community spirit shone brightly during Chichester High School’s first Annual Free Back To School Store. Student Council officers distributed over 700 essential classroom supplies to families in need, ensuring students were well-prepared for the academic year. This initiative wouldn’t have been possible without the generous support of Chef Pack from Full Plate Culinary and the tireless efforts of Mr. Ciemania, who helped set up and break down the event. Thank you to all who contributed to making this event a success!



Garnet Valley

Dr. Marc Bertrando, Superintendent

Collaborative Classrooms: How Garnet Valley's IITs are Shaping Student Success



In a continuing effort to enhance its already highly effective learning environment, the Garnet Valley School District has launched Building Instructional Impact Teams (BIIT) — teacher-led groups that collaborate with fellow educators and building administrators.

The BIIT teams focus on identifying key areas for effective instructional practice, utilizing insights gathered from classroom visits, educational research, and collegial discussions.

The Journey of Improvement

This initiative builds on the work that began last year with the formation of the District Instructional Impact Team (DIIT). Comprising around 50 district and building administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches, the DIIT explored what effective teaching and learning should look like across classrooms. They discovered that while many strong practices were already in place, greater communication and collaboration across classrooms and schools would amplify student success and further the sharing of innovative strategies.

To better understand and share best practices, DIIT members embarked on a learning journey. They read research and explored the PDE Framework for Teaching. As teams of mixed administrators and teachers, they visited different classrooms, crossing grade levels and subject areas. For instance, high school math teachers and administrators visited kindergarten classrooms, while first-grade teachers and administrators observed middle school science lessons.

These cross-grade visits allowed everyone to reflect on both the similarities and differences in instructional strategies, and to consider how they might adopt and adapt these practices in their own schools.

A district-wide “Playbook” was drafted from these observations, serving as a starting point for the BIITs.

From District to Building-Level Collaboration

This year, the DIIT’s work has expanded to include Building Instructional Impact Teams (BIITs), which operate within individual school buildings. These smaller teams of teachers and administrators have plans to visit each other’s classrooms, observe instructional methods, and collaborate to identify universal strategies that can be applied across the district. Through PLCs and team meetings, teachers and administrators engage in meaningful conversations about high-impact teaching practices, with the ultimate goal of enriching the student learning experience.

One of the key benefits of this initiative is the opportunity for teachers to observe and learn from their peers in different grade levels or subject areas. This broader perspective allows them to bring fresh ideas into their own classrooms, fostering continuous improvement. The initiative also strengthens the district’s collaborative culture by emphasizing the importance of PLCs, where teachers and administrators come together to support one another in refining their instructional practices.

Impact on Student Learning

The work of both the district and building teams directly addresses areas of instructional practice that impact student achievement. The strategies outlined in the



Garnet Valley

District's draft Playbook focus on enhancing key aspects of teaching, leading to improved student engagement, understanding, and academic performance.

On October 14, 2024, during an in-service day, the work of the BIITs began to take shape. At Garnet Valley High School, teachers discussed six key instructional practices that emerged from classroom visits and PLC discussions: Pacing and Timing, Classroom Routines, Learning Space, Movement, Language, and High Expectations. Teachers were able to choose three of these practices to learn about, with most sessions being teacher-led, which is a key component of the initiative. This peer-led approach, rather than relying on outside professional development experts, was highly appreciated by teachers.

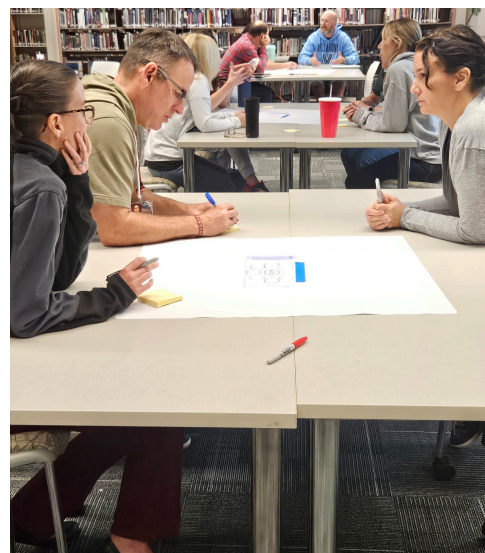
In the afternoon, departments reconvened to share insights from the sessions, promoting further collaboration and learning among colleagues. This approach not only encourages consistency in teaching practices but also enhances the overall learning experience for students across the district. While each school took a personalized approach to adult learning on the in-service day, everyone engaged with the goals and collaborative, teacher-led work championed by the Instructional Impact Teams.

A Student-Centered Approach

A significant aspect of this initiative is its focus on elevating student voice. By refining instructional practices, students are encouraged to advocate for themselves, express their opinions about their learning experiences, and engage in meaningful discussions about how they are being prepared for the future. This helps create a learning environment where students feel heard, supported, and actively involved in shaping their educational journey.

Alignment with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

The work of the IITs is closely aligned with the district's expanding Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework, particularly in the development of Tier 1 interventions. By strengthening instructional practices and increasing collaboration, the district is better equipped to meet the diverse needs of all students.



“

A teacher leader thinks beyond the walls of their classroom to what their impact can be.

- Unknown

Exploring the Wonders of Science: Community Science Days Ignite Curiosity for All Ages



This November, over 1,500 students, staff, and community members gathered at Haverford High School for DISCOVER Day (Dive Into Science and Coding: Observe, Verify, Explore, and Reflect!). This popular science event offered hours of hands-on exploration, all led by students for their peers.

Since 2017, the Haverford Science Academy and the Science National Honor Society have hosted the DISCOVER Day event, which has become a cornerstone of the community's science outreach. It transforms classrooms into vibrant learning labs, allowing participants of all ages to engage in exciting scientific activities.

In the event's early years, most activities were planned and organized by the science teachers at Haverford High School, with support from high school students. In 2020, when in-person activities could not occur, the event was adapted by distributing prepackaged science kits and a live YouTube video. This allowed elementary students and their families to follow along and participate in science experiments from home. In the subsequent years, the event returned to the high school building and expanded to include participation from both the computer science and math departments. More recently, there has been another shift, with high school students taking charge of planning and leading the activities, supported by the teachers rather than the other way around.

During DISCOVER Day, students and families are invited to conduct experiments and explore interactive presentations created by high school students. Science classrooms come alive as each space is transformed with activities designed to spark curiosity and encourage hands-on learning. Attendees can participate in various engaging projects, such as creating their own science crafts, excavating fossils in a classroom dig, and exploring the wonders of space in an inflatable planetarium.

The day is filled with exciting opportunities, including getting up close with unique creatures at a bug show, dipping their hands into marine touch tanks, learning about DNA, and even being surrounded by floor-to-ceiling bubbles.

DISCOVER Day is designed to inspire curiosity and excitement about science and math, encouraging every student to view these subjects from a fresh perspective. High school students take on more than just guiding elementary students through STEM activities; they also research and design these activities, tailoring them for various ages and ability levels. Their enthusiasm and passion genuinely embody the spirit of DISCOVER Day, serving as a model for the younger children in the community. By the end of the event, students gain new insights and develop a stronger interest in scientific inquiry, ideally fostering a lasting enthusiasm for the wonders of science. Meanwhile, the high school students leave with a renewed commitment to sharing their love for science and find reward in witnessing the excitement reflected in the elementary community.

Jeremy Tomaszewski, Ph.D., a Physics teacher and the Science Department Chair with 21 years of teaching experience (16 of those years at Haverford), alongside Becky Mortland, a teacher of Anatomy, Physiology, and Biology with 25 years at Haverford, organizes DISCOVER Day and the Science Academy. The Science Academy also hosts Elementary Science Days at the district's elementary schools. They plan to expand their offerings by introducing an All Abilities DISCOVER Day in the upcoming spring.



Interboro

Bernadette Reiley, Superintendent

Empowering Future Leaders: The Role of Workforce Coordinators at Interboro High School



At Interboro High School, we are excited to announce the establishment of a new position dedicated to enhancing our students' career readiness: the Workforce Coordinators, led by Dan McGrath and Dan Meli.

The Workforce Coordinators initiative is designed to go beyond simply meeting regulatory requirements; the goal is to ensure that every student graduates with the skills and tools necessary for success in post-secondary education or the workforce.

In today's rapidly evolving job market, it is crucial that work-based learning (WBL) programs are not just a checkbox on a graduation requirement list. Whether through Chapter 339 or Act 158 Graduation pathways, the district is committed to providing its students with meaningful experiences that equip them for the future. Our vision is to develop a robust internship program for seniors, tailored to their individual interests and career aspirations.

To achieve this, we have already begun forging partnerships with local businesses to create job shadowing opportunities for our students. These experiences will be offered in various formats: large group sessions, small group interactions, and individual shadowing. By allowing students to observe professionals in their work environments, we aim to provide them with firsthand insight into potential career paths, helping them make informed decisions about their futures.

In addition to job shadowing, the district plans to revamp its program of studies to align with a career pathway model. This strategic shift will offer students a clear roadmap of courses that correspond to their career interests, ensuring that they are not only engaged in their education but also prepared for the next steps in their journeys. This alignment will help students understand the relevance of their coursework and how it relates to their career choices.

Furthermore, we recognize the importance of providing students with credentials that enhance their employability. As part of our initiative, we will embed micro-credentials and nationally recognized credentials into both current and new courses. These credentials will not only make the content more relevant but will also empower students by offering tangible proof of their skills and knowledge. With these credentials, students will be better positioned to secure gainful employment upon graduation.

The introduction of Workforce Coordinators at Interboro High School represents a significant step forward in our commitment to student success. Dan McGrath and Dan Meli bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to their roles, and their leadership will be pivotal in shaping our WBL programs. By prioritizing authentic learning experiences, we aim to equip our students with the tools they need to thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape.

In conclusion, our focus is not merely on compliance with educational mandates but on cultivating a culture of career readiness that genuinely prepares students for life after high school. Through strategic partnerships, aligned curricula, and credentialing opportunities, we are dedicated to ensuring that every Interboro High School graduate is not only ready for their next steps but is also confident in their ability to succeed. Together, we are paving the way for the future leaders of our community.

“Careers are a jungle gym, not a ladder.

- Sheryl Sandberg



Marple Newtown

Dr. Tina Kane, Superintendent

From Classrooms to Community: The Impact of Service in Marple Newtown School District



In the Marple Newtown School District, a commitment to serving others is a core value shared by students, staff, and families. We are immensely grateful to the families and faculty who support our schools and their children in carrying out these impactful service projects.

Through their dedication, we foster a spirit of giving and compassion that not only impacts those in need but also enriches our community by nurturing the values of empathy, responsibility, and leadership. From our youngest learners to our seasoned student leaders, every service initiative strengthens our collective commitment to making the world a better place.

Each February, Culbertson Elementary students come together for their annual **Read for the House** fundraiser, benefiting the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Philadelphia. Students obtain sponsors who pledge donations based on the number of pages they read throughout the month. This initiative not only encourages a love for reading but also raises funds to support families with critically ill children staying at the Ronald McDonald House. Over the past 10 years, Culbertson students have proudly raised nearly \$60,000 dollars for this cause, demonstrating their dedication to making a difference beyond the classroom.

At Loomis Elementary School, the annual pajama collection service project continues to provide new pajamas, books, and donations to children facing adversity. Partnering with the national Pajama Program, Loomis helps children in need, including those within our own school, to receive the comfort and security that a warm pair of pajamas can bring.

These small yet thoughtful gestures foster better bedtime routines, healthier sleep, and ultimately brighter days for the children served. For the students at Loomis, this project goes beyond providing physical items, it instills values of empathy and responsibility, teaching them the power of giving and how their actions can bring comfort and joy to others.

At Russell Elementary School the fifth graders take part in a rewarding experience through their annual partnership with Kids Against Hunger. Every winter, students join forces to pack thousands of meals for local families in need. Last year, students, teachers, and volunteers worked together to assemble 7,000 meals, an outstanding achievement funded through the school's Penny War fundraiser, which raised \$2,300. This project not only addresses immediate food insecurity but also teaches students the impact of their efforts on both a local and global scale.

Worrall Elementary School takes pride in the leadership demonstrated by their Fifth Grade Student Leader Council. Twice a year, students are selected based on their potential for leadership and their commitment to respect and responsibility. These young leaders play a key role in coordinating the school's many collection drives, from holiday toy and food collections to candy donations for shelters and baby item drives.



Marple Newtown

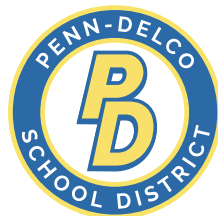
Not only do they organize, sort, and package donations, but they also take on the responsibility of promoting these drives to their peers and community. Through this program, Worrall's students learn firsthand the importance of service and how leadership can positively influence their school and beyond.

At the middle school level, the Paxon Hollow Service Squad brings together students, parents, and teachers to work on a wide variety of initiatives that benefit both the school and the larger Marple Newtown community. The Service Squad is committed to making a difference. Last year, the group organized school-wide recycling events, wrote letters to veterans, and celebrated the 103rd birthday of a WWII veteran. Their efforts extended to maintaining the school's courtyard and participating in a Kids Against Hunger event, where students packed thousands of meals to support those facing hunger.

At Marple Newtown High School, the Sophomore Class Project10 annual event has become a cornerstone of service, now in its 16th year. The goals of Project10 are to promote community service, kindness, and sophomore class unity. Last year, the class of 2026 raised \$2,675.30 for the Eagles Autism Foundation, continuing a legacy of giving that has seen Project10 raise \$45,777.75 over 15 years for charities such as charity: Philabundance, Waterboys, Ronald McDonald House, Alex's Lemonade Stand, Shriners Children's Hospital, and many more. This initiative not only serves vital causes but also unites the students, fostering a culture of service, empathy, and connection.

Each of these service projects, whether large or small, teaches our students the value of community involvement, empathy, and the positive change that comes from working together. We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the families and faculty who make these efforts possible, your support empowers our students to reach out and make a real difference. As we are preparing for another year of service, we are reminded that these projects not only help those in need but also shape the next generation of compassionate, responsible citizens who understand the impact of giving back to their communities.





Penn-Delco

Dr. George Steinhoff, Superintendent

Empowering Young Leaders: Penn-Delco Launches New Elementary Curriculum



Last year, Penn-Delco School District piloted the *Leader in Me* curriculum at Parkside Elementary School, aiming to foster leadership skills, personal responsibility, and self-growth in students from a young age. Rooted in the 7 Habits of Highly Effective Students, the curriculum equips students with essential tools for personal, academic, and future professional success.

Parkside Elementary teachers found the principles of *Leader in Me* naturally integrated into their classrooms. “The teachers and I had been searching for ways to empower our students to recognize their own leadership and potential,” said Parkside Principal Tara Young. “*Leader in Me* has become the journey that is helping our students understand their worth and what they have to offer the school community as a whole.”

To prepare for the pilot, all Parkside staff participated in training in October 2023, which emphasized applying the 7 *Habits* in both professional and personal settings. By the start of the current school year, the Parkside community was well-acquainted with the concepts, and a kickoff assembly set the tone for the year. A dedicated Lighthouse Team, including Parkside teachers and Action Team leads, oversees monthly themes and special events. Students actively participate in school decisions and model leadership through goal-setting boards, milestone celebrations, and schoolwide jobs, supporting their academic and personal growth.

To encourage family involvement, the school sends a parent newsletter with resources, activities, and updates from the Parent Teacher League (PTL), and parent meetings foster a supportive network for the curriculum at home.

Building on Parkside’s success, Penn-Delco expanded the *Leader in Me* curriculum across all district elementary schools this school year, aligning with its mission to enable students to “achieve, succeed, and excel” in academics,

life skills, and personal interests. Superintendent Dr. George Steinhoff praised the curriculum’s impact, noting, “This is an ideal fit for our district, equipping K-5 students with ‘Ready for Life’ skills that will benefit them well beyond elementary school.”

In preparation for the district-wide roll-out, elementary school staff participated in summer and fall training. Each six-day cycle, students now complete three *Leader in Me* lessons—two in Guidance (a new related arts class) and one during regular classroom time. These lessons are reinforced throughout the school day, creating a culture centered on the 7 *Habits of Highly Effective Students*: Be Proactive, Begin with the End in Mind, Put First Things First, Think Win-Win, Seek First to Understand Then to Be Understood, Synergize, and Sharpen the Saw.

Penn-Delco looks forward to cultivating a generation of confident, responsible, and caring leaders ready to make a positive impact in their communities.





Radnor

Dr. Kenneth Batchelor, Superintendent

Radnor Township School District's Flex Mod Initiative: A Shift Towards Personalized Learning



In an ever-changing educational landscape, Radnor Township School District made a pioneering move. Recognizing the limitations of traditional classroom models, we unveiled our Flexible Modular (Flex Mod) course initiative. This ambitious project redefines classroom boundaries and places students at the center of the learning experience, offering them tailored pathways to success.

The district's goals are clear and expansive: to boost student engagement and motivation, to promote deeper learning and experiences, to personalize instruction, to leverage flexible learning spaces, and to diversify instructional groupings. By breaking the mold of traditional pace and space, the district seeks a fresh approach to personalized learning. Students are able to learn at various paces and in different spaces within the building. The modular approach is grounded in three principles: personalized learning, blended instruction, and mastery and competency-based learning, determined by the instruction, in consultation with the student(s), and based upon the current lessons. Flex Mod encourages a more tailored experience meeting students at their level of readiness. But the Flex Mod approach isn't just about academic flexibility, it aims to develop independent thinkers and self-advocates. By focusing on individual readiness and mastery, lessons are more resonant and impactful.

The types of modules (or, "Mods"), including: whole class session, small group, or individual conference, are determined by the instructional experience of a given day. The initiative encourages varied configurations, from large groups to personalized sessions, promoting tailored instruction.

As one student put it, "I like that we get to stay in the classroom and learn the actual material and then any assignments we have to complete, we get to do on our own time and in independent spaces rather than just sitting in the classroom."

To facilitate the Flex Mod course initiative, several foundational elements of the school system were revisited. Alignment with organizational values was paramount and the initiative was closely intertwined with the district's broader vision for personalized learning and education. Extensive professional development ensured teachers were well-equipped to navigate the nuances of this new teaching model and to bring the Flex Mod vision to life.

Leadership played a pivotal role, steering the initiative through challenges and ensuring alignment with the larger educational goal. Adopting a feedback-loop and utilizing data and feedback to refine and enhance the initiative, the Flex Mod can continue to grow and improve.

The Flex Mod project wasn't a solitary endeavor, and with the support of various stakeholders, the initiative took shape. Teachers and administrators were instrumental in the blueprint of the Flex Mod courses, ensuring they aligned with curricular standards and addressed student needs. Insights learned from the district's Homework Committee and the Grading and Mastery Learning Group informed many aspects of the initiative's design and execution.

Radnor Township School District's Flex Mod initiative illuminates the transformative power of student-centered learning. By reshaping traditional educational paradigms, we have crafted a dynamic model that resonates with the needs of the modern student. Challenges were inevitable, but the positive impacts underscore the potential of such innovative educational strategies. For more information visit www.rtsd.org/FlexMod.



Ridley

Lee Ann Wentzel, Superintendent

Ridley School District's Autistic Support Program at Leedom Elementary: A Model of Inclusion and Excellence



Leedom Elementary School, part of the Ridley School District, is home to a standout Autistic Support program that exemplifies inclusive education. This exceptional program fosters a positive and welcoming environment where students with autism are supported by a dedicated and passionate team.

Leedom Elementary School is a shining example of inclusive education through its exceptional Autistic Support program. This remarkable initiative creates a positive, nurturing environment where students with autism are embraced and empowered by a dedicated, passionate team. By blending personalized instruction, innovative teaching techniques, and strong collaboration with families, the staff ensures that every student flourishes—academically, socially, and emotionally. The commitment to true inclusion is woven into every part of the school day. Students in the Autistic Support program seamlessly participate in both specialized instruction and mainstream classroom activities, cultivating meaningful interactions with their peers. This integration not only enhances learning but also fosters empathy, understanding, and friendships across the school community.

Starting with just two classes years ago, Leedom has grown its program to include seven specialized classes, including two full kindergarten classes this year. Leedom is the district's central hub for students who require supplemental or full-time support. As the continuum for students transitioning from early intervention services, the school sees a growing number of families entrusting their children's education to its capable team. The program's success is rooted in the staff's dedication to creating individualized learning plans, celebrating milestones, and fostering a culture of acceptance.

Leedom is the only school in the district offering both supplemental and full-time Autistic Support programs. Here, students are not set apart or placed in isolated spaces—they are integrated into every aspect of classroom life. Whether it's in reading groups or during science experiments, students with autism are active participants, sitting alongside their peers. Other students naturally step in to support them, further explaining lessons, and offering help when needed.

The commitment to inclusion is especially evident in the upper grades, where the team works closely with fifth graders to prepare them for middle school. This thoughtful approach acts as a bridge, helping students navigate the transition to the next phase of their education. School counselors and behavioral specialists play crucial roles, focusing on the holistic development of each child. The health and physical education teacher is dedicated to ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, are included in physical activities.

Leedom has truly become a place where every student is empowered to learn, grow, and feel valued. Through the hard work and dedication of the Autistic Support team, the school is setting the standard for what inclusive education should look like, making a lasting impact on students, families, and the broader community.

Vocational Training from the Elementary to the Post-Secondary Level



Preparing students with disabilities for life in the real world begins at the elementary level – as early as kindergarten – in the Rose Tree Media School District. In 2024, the district instituted new programs to grow transitional skills for their elementary students with disabilities, augmenting the secondary school program, Linking Learning to Life, which will mark its tenth year in 2025.

Preparing students with disabilities for life in the real world begins at the elementary level – as early as kindergarten – in the Rose Tree Media School District. In 2024, the district instituted new programs to grow transitional skills for their elementary students with disabilities, augmenting the secondary school program, Linking Learning to Life, which will mark its tenth year in 2025. The programs focus on the three domains of post-secondary transition: post-secondary education, post-secondary employment, and independent living.

Indian Lane Elementary School, for example, this year launched a coffee cart in an Autistic Support class. With staff support, students take the coffee cart around the school one morning per week. They work on their social skills, including knocking on doors and waiting for an answer, then greeting the people in the room. Financial literacy is practiced through collecting money, and executive function skills are honed through putting on and tying aprons and serving the coffee. A district-wide coffee cart will be launched in the coming months.

In addition to the coffee cart program, breakfast delivery has become a regular event at Indian Lane, providing an inclusivity opportunity for all students. A general education student is paired with a student in the Life Skills Program to deliver breakfasts and later collect the breakfast plates.

To provide occupational therapy opportunities, skill development in kindergarten begins with a focus on handwriting and scissors use, then transitions quickly to

functional daily skills that require a student's two hands to be used together, such as simple cooking skills. Examples include opening containers and holding a bowl with one hand and stirring with the other. These skills are used in a student-led "Thankful Tea," which also entails students making placemats and sorting and wrapping silverware for the event. Additionally, students make a simple menu for the Tea and serve guests the items they order.

Older Life Skills elementary students learn that before going to work, they must keep themselves clean. Hygiene baskets are provided, with a focus on students brushing their hair, washing their face, brushing their teeth, and washing their hands regularly. Students also help with the school's Lost and Found, sorting items, hanging items on hangers or folding them, which provides the practice of fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination in a functional manner.

Indian Lane is also home to a new Job Training Program. When Penncrest High School Life Skills student Olivia expressed an interest in working with children, the Job Training Program was created. "Miss Olivia" helps in Indian Lane's Autistic Support and Life Skills kindergarten class four mornings per week, prepping materials, setting up activities, reading aloud to the class, and serving as a high-school-aged peer/mentor for students. In addition to the kindergarten students benefitting from Miss Olivia's help, Miss Olivia has strengthened her independence and her self-advocacy skills. Plans are underway to expand the Job Training Program.

Also at the high school level is the Community Flower Business. Students arrange and deliver the flowers every other week on a subscription basis to employees throughout the district. The Community Flower Business also has provided flowers for funeral lunches, bridal showers, weddings, and other events. “The kids just absolutely love it,” said Dr. Tiffany Orrin, Supervisor of Transition Programs.

Secondary and post-secondary students have been hired locally thanks to their work in Linking Learning to Life. Partner employers include Nifty 50s in Newtown Square and the Rose Tree Media School District, where two students work as part-time receptionists in the Education Center, and others work as classroom paraprofessionals in the Transportation Office, the Athletic Office, and in Food Service.

Middle school life skills students go to the Acme supermarket each week and take a monthly community-based trip. High school life skills students engage in community-based learning and travel multiple times per week. High school students may also participate in dual enrollment at Delaware County Community College. The district’s related services providers support the students’ coursework, which includes a soft skills course for instruction on the social skills necessary for job success. Parents may sign up for “Transitional Tips with Tiffany,” meeting with Dr. Orrin, who helps them connect with community agencies.

The district’s PAES lab (Practical Assessment Exploration System) continues its fifth year, mimicking real workplace settings in fields such as business/marketing, service, production, construction/industrial, and computer technology. Instructors in the PAES lab serve as supervisors, and students act as employees.

The Linking Learning to Life Program’s partnership with the Penncrest High School football team continues to thrive. Students support the team by serving as water and ball boys/girls, filming the game, and selling programs. In addition, the TOPS (Transition Opportunities in Post-Secondary Setting) Shop, operated out of the Game on State arcade in Media, provides employment training and opportunities for students of all levels.

“I am so appreciative of the continued support of these programs,” said Dr. Orrin. “We look forward to having more success.”





Southeast Delco

Dr. Yamil Sanchez, Superintendent

Building Bright Futures: Southeast Delco Kindergarten Center's Transformative Growth and Community Spirit



Families in the four boroughs that make up the Southeast Delco School District (Sharon Hill, Collingdale, Glenolden and Folcroft) have had the privilege of their children attending a full-day kindergarten program for the last fifteen years!

The Southeast Delco Kindergarten Center is more than just a school—it's a close-knit community dedicated to nurturing young minds with love, support, and a shared vision for lifelong learning. Over the years, the center has experienced significant growth, leading to greater success in shaping the futures of its students. With the arrival of the new Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Yamil Sanchez, the school community is excited to see even more enhancements that will enrich students' educational experiences.

Investing in Student Well-Being and Enrichment

One of Dr. Sanchez's first initiatives has been expanding the school's offerings by hiring dedicated gym and art teachers. Previously, budget constraints limited access to these creative and physical programs, even though students benefited from a meaningful full-day program. Now, with this addition, children will have greater opportunities for holistic development. Dr. Sanchez also prioritized hiring a full-time social worker and additional instructional aides to address mental health concerns, build social skills, foster positive interactions, and provide more classroom support.

A Commitment to Positive Behavior and Social Skills

The Kindergarten Center has long embraced the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) framework to create a welcoming and supportive school environment. PBIS focuses on reinforcing positive behaviors, fostering a positive school climate, and enhancing social-emotional skills. Led by Principal Colleen Burke and kindergarten teacher Claudia Donahue, the school's dedication to PBIS has earned them state recognition at the Hershey conference for their effective implementation. Rather than focusing on what students shouldn't do, the staff promotes positive language, such as encouraging students to "walk safely in the halls" instead of simply saying, "Stop running."

Additionally, the school highlights a character trait each month to promote character development. For example, November

focuses on kindness, with classroom lessons, videos, and activities showing students how to demonstrate kindness in school and within their community. To celebrate, classrooms that excel in these traits are recognized with a special breakfast event, and fun celebration days, like pajama day, are organized when certain goals are met.

Strong Family and Community Connections

Building strong family partnerships is at the heart of the Kindergarten Center's approach. Every morning, social learning concepts are reinforced through activities like morning meetings, which are supported at home through communication with parents via Class Dojo. Impressively, 100% of parents participate, staying informed about what's happening in school and receiving suggestions to extend learning at home.

Recently, the district added two new family and community relations professionals, who, along with the social worker, will be key in distributing a donation of hats and scarves to students and their families—further strengthening community ties.

Focused Academic Support and Small Class Sizes

The Kindergarten Center's success is bolstered by its small class sizes, averaging 17 students per class, and a total enrollment of 225 students. The school also provides specialized support with two classrooms dedicated to autistic support and one for emotional support. Additionally, the school benefits from a math specialist and a collaboration with DCIU to develop a new math curriculum. By utilizing key assessment tools to gather baseline data, the school is able to personalize small-group instruction, ensuring that each child's unique needs are met.

With these enhancements, the Southeast Delco Kindergarten Center is truly paving the way for a brighter future for its students, embracing a holistic approach to education that blends academic excellence with social and emotional well-being.



Springfield

Dr. Anthony Barber, Superintendent

Springfield High School Recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School



Springfield High School (SHS) is committed to excellence in education and is steadfast in strategically fueling the four pillars of academics, athletics/activities, arts, and service, encouraging achievement for all at all levels.

Recently recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School, Springfield High School is committed to excellence in education and is steadfast in strategically fueling the four pillars of academics, athletics/activities, arts, and service.

Being named a Blue Ribbon School is a great accomplishment and a point of pride for the district. What makes this recognition so prestigious is that schools do not apply for the award. They are selected by their states as exemplary educational institutions. They represent the very best our education system has to offer our children.

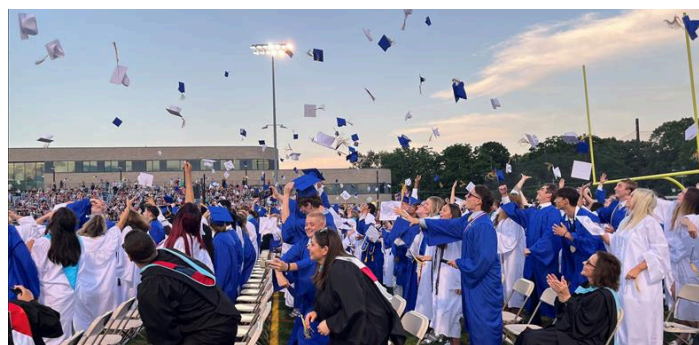
The district is planning to celebrate this incredible accomplishment with the high school staff and students sometime in November when the award arrives. Likewise, they will also be celebrating this spring as a community and as a district, for a high school does not reach such lofty heights without the support of all the schools contributing to its success.

Springfield High School, the core, heart, and home of the Springfield/Morton community, proudly celebrates district, regional, state, and national recognition of its students' achievements with Blue and Gold "Cougar Pride in All Things." Advanced Placement examinations have resulted in students earning AP Scholarship and Distinction. The Science Olympiad, Future Business Leaders of America, and Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science Teams abound in student leadership and scholarship.

Junior Academy of Science Teams abound in student leadership and scholarship. Further, SHS is committed to community service, with 165 student club members

averaging over 7000 hours of service. Over 700 scholars and athletes comprise 17 junior varsity and 26 varsity teams excelling on and off the field. Contributing to the district recognition for the 12th consecutive year for Best Communities in Music Education, SHS students thrive in the arts.

Resolute in its daily investment in fueling and driving a culture for learning, SHS provides rigorous academic programming executed by innovative, resourceful, and collaborative faculty and staff. Its commitment to developing and empowering teacher professional learning, building systems and frameworks for curriculum development and enactment, and designing professional learning communities for data analysis and discourse focused on student growth remains non-negotiable and hallmarks in maximizing student learning. The district's values, vested in maintaining high expectations for students to realize their unique growth, potential, college and career readiness, and pathways to an outstanding landscape of opportunities and futures, are outcomes of their Springfield High School experience.





Upper Darby

Dr. Daniel McGarry, Superintendent

Highland Park Elementary Celebrates 50 Years of the Firefly as Pennsylvania's State Insect



The 3rd-grade class of Highland Park Elementary School made the firefly the state insect 50 years ago! Highland Park recently celebrated a momentous anniversary that shines a light on a remarkable chapter in Pennsylvania's history—the designation of the firefly as the state insect, a movement sparked by the school's own third-grade class fifty years ago.

It all began with Mrs. Dorothy Holzwarth, an inspiring third-grade teacher at Highland Park, who, in 1973, introduced her class to the idea of civic engagement in a big way. She shared the story of a class in Maryland that successfully campaigned to make the monarch butterfly their state insect. Mrs. Holzwarth saw a valuable learning opportunity: her students could discover firsthand how a bill becomes a law. The class enthusiastically discussed potential state insect candidates, ultimately voting for the firefly—an insect they found fascinating, harmless, and distinctly Pennsylvanian.

With Mrs. Holzwarth's guidance, the third graders rallied around their choice. They wrote letters to state legislators, gathered signatures on petitions, and even distributed bumper stickers across the Highland Park area, all calling for the firefly to become the official state insect of Pennsylvania. Their campaign gained widespread media attention, with both television and newspaper outlets covering their progress. The students made two memorable trips to Harrisburg that year: first, to present their case to lawmakers, and then, to witness Governor Milton J. Shapp sign the bill into law on April 10, 1974. For a group of eight- and nine-year-olds, it was an unforgettable experience that underscored the power of civic engagement.

The legacy of their achievement lived on in the form of a plaque, which, as Principal Joanne DeVito recently rediscovered, had been tucked away in storage. Realizing the significance of the approaching 50th anniversary, Mrs. DeVito began planning a celebration to honor the remarkable accomplishment of that third-grade class and their teacher. In her search, she uncovered a treasure trove of artifacts—letters, photos, and even original bumper

stickers—that vividly documented the campaign. These items were displayed at the celebration, providing a visual history of the effort that led to the firefly's official status.

The anniversary celebration was a heartfelt and colorful event. Highland Park students decorated the school with vibrant firefly art, and the high school band added a lively touch to the day's festivities. Dressed in their purple shirts, the students gathered to witness and participate in a commemorative ceremony that included first graders reciting a poem about fireflies and a special performance of a song written for the original campaign fifty years ago. The celebration also featured remarks from Upper Darby's Mayor Ed Brown, Pennsylvania Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid Mumin, State Representative Gina Curry, and Superintendent of Schools Dan McGarry, among others. Former students of Mrs. Holzwarth's class shared their memories of the campaign, reflecting on the importance of civic engagement and the lifelong impact of their third-grade project.

As Highland Park Elementary commemorated this special anniversary, the atmosphere was filled with pride and nostalgia. Former classmates, now adults, reunited to remember a time when they changed state history. Principal DeVito summed up the spirit of the day: "It was one of the best days ever."

Fifty years later, Highland Park Elementary School continues to celebrate the lesson imparted by Mrs. Holzwarth's class—a lesson in persistence, community, and the power of young voices, demonstrating public education at its finest.



Wallingford-Swarthmore

Dr. Jim Scanlon, Superintendent

Unified Sports Programs Shine Bright in Wallingford Swarthmore: A Celebration of Teamwork, Inclusion, and Joy



In the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District, Unified Sports is doing something truly special: bringing students together through teamwork, laughter, and friendship.

With programs like basketball, cheerleading, bocce, and team handball, students of all abilities come together to play, connect, and celebrate each other in a welcoming, inclusive environment. These programs aren't just about sports—they're about creating memories, forming friendships, and building a community where everyone belongs.

For Ian Sandberg, Director of Student Services, Unified Sports perfectly embodies the district's values. "At WSSD, we believe in equal worth and that diversity makes our community stronger," he explained. "Unified Sports lets us put those beliefs into action, offering everyone the chance to connect and support each other in a way that's both genuine and fun." It's about more than just having students on the same team—it's about helping them grow and thrive together, learning that everyone has something valuable to contribute.

Parent and volunteer coach Nicole Bottino, a Strath Haven alum, has seen firsthand the joy and connection that Unified Sports creates. "It's amazing to watch students who may not have had a lot of social opportunities suddenly make new friends and become part of a supportive team," she said. The low-pressure environment of Unified Sports allows students to relax, have fun, and grow without the pressures of competition. "They're just enjoying themselves, laughing and bonding. It's truly heartwarming—everyone leaves in a great mood!"

One of the beautiful things about Unified Sports at WSSD is its inclusivity—students of all abilities have the chance to shine.

For neurodivergent students, it's a space where they can feel seen, valued, and celebrated. And for neurotypical students, it's an opportunity to forge new friendships and gain a better understanding of others' perspectives. "It's wonderful to see students coming together and cheering each other on, learning from one another, and creating friendships that go beyond the game," Sandberg added.

Over the past two years, the district's Unified Sports offerings have expanded, adding Bocce, Handball, Cheerleading and Basketball, with exciting ideas for even more sports in the future. Bottino has high hopes for a Unified track program. "Any sport can be adapted, and as we continue to build on what we have, even more students will want to join," she said. "This isn't just about sports; it's about giving everyone a chance to belong and be part of something special."

The success of Unified Sports at WSSD is a true community effort, made possible by the dedicated teachers, staff, parents, and student volunteers who give their time to coach, referee, and support the games. Bottino expressed her gratitude for the incredible support from the community. "We have teachers showing up on weekends, parents of neurotypical kids coming out to cheer for all the players, and staff putting in time and energy to make sure every student feels included and celebrated," she said. "It's really about the whole community coming together."

But the magic of Unified Sports doesn't stop at the end of each game.



Wallingford-Swarthmore

The friendships and bonds formed on the court carry over into the school day, creating a culture of empathy, understanding, and connection. "It's fantastic to see these relationships grow outside of sports," Bottino noted. "The students are becoming true friends, sharing experiences and memories that go far beyond the field."

For Sandberg, the impact of Unified Sports on the district's culture is clear. "We're preparing students for a diverse, interconnected world where empathy, teamwork, and understanding are essential," he said. "Through Unified Sports, we're not just sharing our values; we're helping shape the next generation to embrace inclusion in everything they do."

At Wallingford-Swarthmore, Unified Sports is about more than just the thrill of the game. It's about creating a joyful, inclusive space where every student feels celebrated. It's a community gathering where high-fives, cheers, and smiles are everywhere, and where every season brings new friendships, memories, and a spirit of togetherness. Here's to many more seasons of Unified Sports and the incredible impact they bring to our schools and community!



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On the field we are teammates; off the field we are friends.

- Unified Sports

William Penn School District Launches Superintendent's Student Advisory Council



As part of American Education Week (November 18-22, 2024), the William Penn School District is proud to spotlight its newly launched Superintendent's Student Advisory Council (SSAC), an initiative led by Superintendent Dr. Eric J. Becoats.

This council gives students a platform to engage with district leadership, share ideas, and advocate for positive change across the district and community.

Students applied at the end of the 2023-2024 school year, and after a careful review of applications, twenty members were selected. They began meeting in September 2024, with their first priority being to outline goals for the year focused on advocacy and volunteer work.

Dr. Becoats explained his motivation for creating the council: "Students are at the heart of everything we do, and I wanted to give them a seat at the table. Their perspectives are essential to building a district that truly reflects their needs, hopes, and ideas. This council allows us to listen, learn, and grow together."

One of the council's early priorities is voter engagement. Members encouraged eligible students to vote in the November 5th presidential election, organizing voter registration drives during lunches, at a PWHS football game, and a Class of 2025 assembly.

Council member Aliou Kamara, who has been active in the voter registration drive, is looking forward to voting next year when he turns 18. "Being a member of the Student Advisory Council is helping me express myself and build connections with other council members," he shared. "I really enjoy working with Dr. Becoats and learning how the district works. It's exciting to see how we can get involved to make a difference. This experience is definitely helping me develop my leadership skills."

Alongside voter registration, the council supports the district's Toys for Tots drive and the expansion of Rap's Athl-EATS, a free resource pantry providing food and

essentials for students in several district schools. They're also working on personal development initiatives like skill assessments and resume writing.

Council member Savannah Samuel, '25, shared her reasons for joining: "I joined the council to be part of something bigger and to serve my school community. This opportunity has allowed me to give back in meaningful ways, and I'm especially excited about the community drives we're planning. I look forward to making a real difference for those around me."

The Superintendent's Student Advisory Council is helping shape the future of the William Penn School District while building leadership skills that will serve its members long after graduation. "This council isn't just about the work we'll do this year," said Dr. Becoats. "It's about showing students the power they have to lead, to advocate, and to create change that lasts."

This initiative exemplifies the district's commitment to student voice, civic engagement, and community-building—all central to the spirit of American Education Week. With their passion and dedication, these student leaders are ensuring their voices, and those of their peers, are heard, paving the way for lasting, positive change in the William Penn School District and beyond.



Building for the Future: New Construction Projects Underway and on the Horizon at DCIU



DCIU is expanding and updating to provide state-of-the-art facilities for students and staff for years to come.

As the DCIU continues to expand and innovate, it is launching and preparing for several new construction projects that will enhance its facilities and support its mission of delivering exceptional services and products to students and families.

Projects include renovations and expansions at DCIU's Education Service Center in Morton, the Marple Education Center, and the DCIU Folcroft campus. "These projects represent a significant investment in our infrastructure and our commitment to providing a state-of-the-art environment for our students, employees, clients, and partners," said Dr. Maria Edelberg, Ed.D., DCIU Executive Director. "Investing in renovations and expansion is a strategic step toward paving the way for DCIU's future growth and success."

The Marple Education Center Facilities Project will undergo renovations, including:

- New HVAC systems throughout the existing building
- A 35,000-square-foot Practical Nursing Program addition will be built to accommodate the existing program
- A new Early Intervention parent waiting room will be built to provide an accessible, child-friendly, and comfortable waiting space while evaluations and testing take place.
- Infrastructure improvements also include an expanded playground, perimeter fencing, reconfigured parking, and an improved stormwater management system.
- Additional work is being planned to ease parking concerns and improve traffic patterns on the site.

This project, launching in December 2024, will enhance the quality of educational programs and provide a modern and efficient environment for students across DCIU's diverse offerings. Project details and regular updates, including construction progress and any potential impact on services

can be found at <https://www.dciu.org/construction>

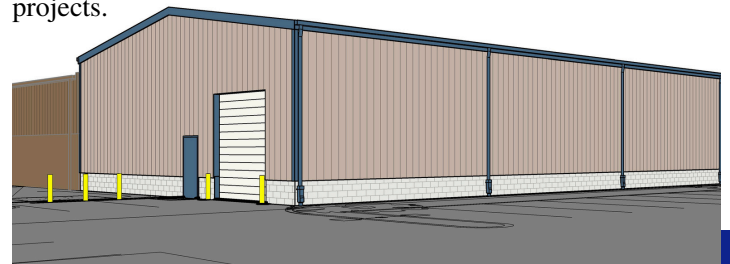
Exciting Transformations at Morton:

DCIU was thrilled to recently unveil the transformation of the main lobby in Morton. The lobby underwent a makeover including new flooring, modern paint colors and lighting, new ceilings, a sleek reception area, and digital displays to assist in communicating DCIU news, updates, and programs. The improvements extend beyond the inside—the exterior also received a facelift. The side entrances near the executive and business offices had outdated retaining walls that were removed and replaced with attractive new landscaping. The sidewalk leading to the main entrance has been regraded and repoured and the stairs and ramp were removed- making the entrance flat and more accessible. Significant changes are also coming with the addition of a new 6,000-square-foot annex. This space will serve as the new home for DCIU's Information Technology Repair Shop, workspace for the Facilities and Operations team, and much-needed storage.

Folcroft Campus to Undergo Major Renovations:

The DCIU Folcroft campus will also undergo comprehensive renovations. More details are coming soon.

DCIU extends its thanks to students and families, the DCIU team, and partners for their patience through the infrastructure projects.



The Future Begins Here: Record Enrollment at DCTS Reflects Growing Demand for Career and Technical Education



**Ambition.
Collaboration.
Community.
Determination.
Family.
Grit.**

As we kicked off the 2024-25 school year, Delaware County Technical High Schools (DCTS) reached an exciting milestone — welcoming our largest student body ever! The sight of 1,395 eager new and returning students filling our two campuses was a testament to the growing recognition of the value of Career and Technical Education (CTE) among students, families, and school districts across Delaware County.

This record enrollment reflects a shift in how students and families view CTE as a powerful pathway to success. More than ever, students are embracing the opportunity to gain hands-on skills, industry certifications, and real-world experience that set them apart in today's job market. By choosing DCTS, students are investing in their futures, equipping themselves with the tools they need for high-wage, high-demand careers.

At DCTS, we are proud to prepare students for tomorrow's opportunities. Our 22 programs, guided by industry professionals, provide innovative technical training that fosters lifelong learning. Career and Technical Education is not just an option — it's becoming the preferred path for many who understand the benefits of blending classroom knowledge with practical applications.

**Hard skills. Hands-on-Experience.
Perseverance. Soft Skills. Teamwork.
Imagine the Possibilities.**

Our partnerships with Delaware County's 15 public school systems and local parochial high schools further extend opportunities for students to be college and career-ready. By self-selecting to join DCTS, students commit to rigorous studies and begin post-secondary planning from their freshman year. This collaborative effort — involving students, parents, educators, and partner schools — is key to maximizing each student's potential.

Through hands-on training, teamwork, and industry exposure, DCTS students gain a strong foundation that prepares them for cooperative education experiences, essential careers, and higher education. The growing demand for skilled professionals in our communities highlights the need for CTE programs like ours to continue expanding. At DCTS, we are shaping pathways to success — one skill, one student, at a time. Together, we are investing in a brighter future.





Empowering Partnerships For Education

CELEBRATING

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK



**Thank
you!**



Empowering Partnerships For Education

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