

Des Moines Public Schools

DMPS

COMMUNITY REPORT

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DMPS Sees 3.5 Percent Increase In Graduation Rate for Class of 2012

The Class of 2012 at Des Moines Public Schools had a graduation rate of 79.15%, an increase of nearly 3.5% over the previous year and the highest since Iowa began using its current graduation rate formula in 2009, according to figures released by the Iowa Department of Education in February.

Statewide figures showed an overall increase in the percentage of Iowa high school students who completed high school in four years, with a statewide graduation rate of 89.26% for 2012 compared to 88.3% for 2011. For Des Moines Public Schools, the graduation rate for the Class of 2012 was 79.15%, up from 75.68% for the Class of 2011.

There was a slight decrease in the state's five-year graduation rate, which was 91.4%

for the Class of 2011 compared to 91.8% for the Class of 2010. Des Moines Public Schools also saw a slight decline: 81% for the Class of 2011 compared to 82.88% for the Class of 2010.

“Our focus on providing additional support for students to earn the credits needed to graduate – whether that takes four years or five years – is starting to pay off by helping more young people earn a high school diploma,” said Superintendent Tom Ahart. “While, in my opinion, progress can never be fast enough our work is moving in the right direction.”

This is the fourth year that Iowa graduation rates have been calculated using a formula established by the U.S. Department of Education. Unique student identification numbers are assigned to

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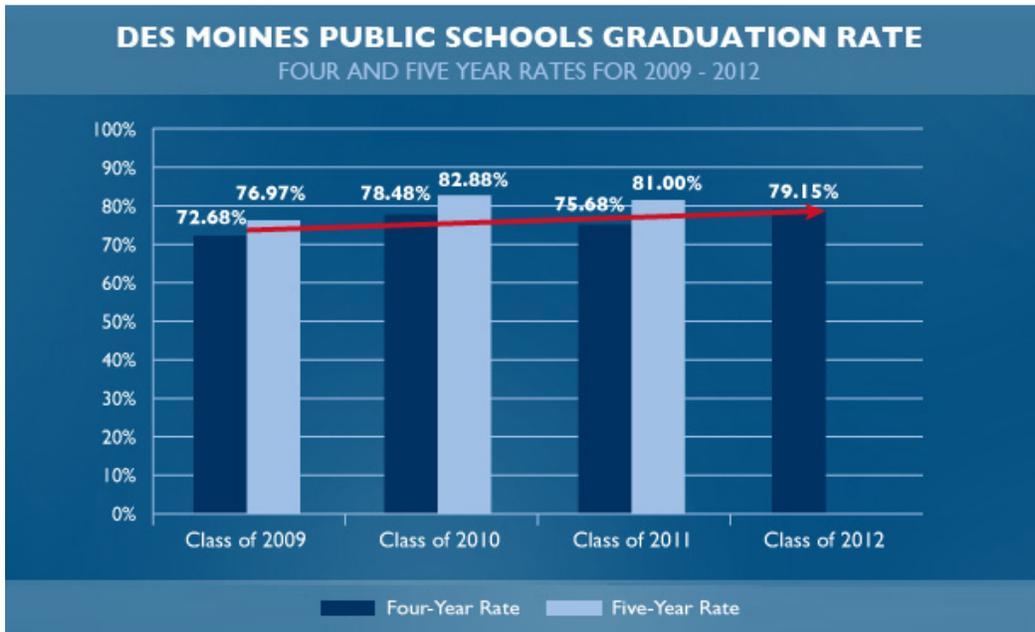
DMPS Sees 3.5 Percent Increase in Graduation Rate in 2012

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ninth-grade students, allowing school districts to account for all students as they move through high school. At the state level, the method helps determine when a student graduates, even if the student has moved to a different district in Iowa during high school.

The graduation rate for Des Moines has increased nearly seven percent since the State of Iowa first started using this formula for the Class of 2009. In addition, the graduation rate is higher today than in 2009 for every student demographic group in Des Moines, with the largest gains among ELL students (+18%), Hispanics (+14%), and males (+9.2%).

Overall there were a total of 1,923 students in the Class of 2012 (counted as students who began high school as ninth graders in



the fall of 2008); 1,522 of those students graduated in four years.

In the fall of 2009, Des Moines Public Schools implemented the Early Indicator System (EIS) to help identify students who may be at risk of dropping out of school. The EIS tracks attendance, class performance, and discipline/behavior issues at the elementary and secondary levels. In addition, each high school now has an Academic Support Lab to help serve students who are identified

through the EIS as at-risk for dropping out of school.

The Iowa Department of Education also released dropout rates for the state. Des Moines Public Schools saw a slight decline in the dropout rate last year. The grade 7-12 dropout rate for 2012 was 4.73%, down from 4.8% the previous year. The dropout rate in 2009 was 5.1%. The grade 9-12 dropout rate for 2011-12 was 7.05%, down from 7.2% in 2010-11. ■

DMPS Website Recognized for Transparency



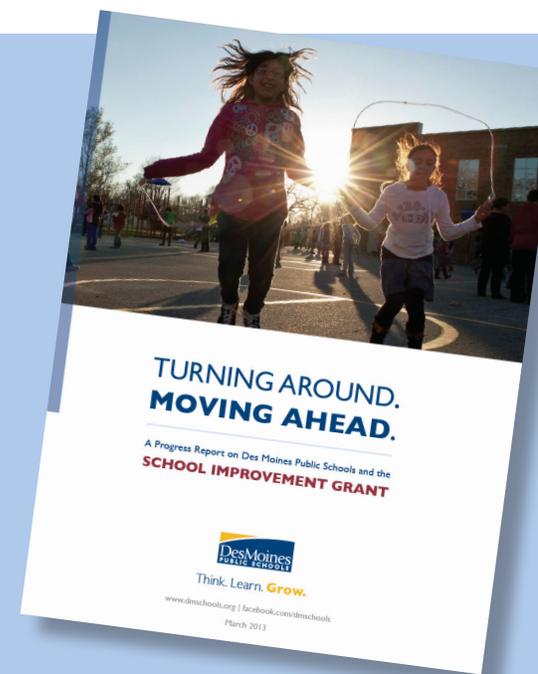
The Des Moines Public Schools website was recognized as being one of the most transparent government

websites in America, according to the Sunshine Review's Transparency Checklist. The district's site earned a grade of A-, which places dmschools.org among the top one percent of the 7,000 state and local websites that were analyzed. ■

Update on SIG Schools

Des Moines Public Schools recently created *Turning Around. Moving Ahead.* a report that takes a look at the progress being made at six schools in the district which are part of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program: Edmunds, Findley, Harding, Hoyt, North, and Weeks. You can view the report on the district website.

<http://www.dmschools.org/2013/03/turning-around-moving-ahead/> ■





Tom Ahart, Superintendent

Tom Ahart Appointed Superintendent of DMPS

Tom Ahart was named the next Superintendent for Des Moines Public Schools in March. Ahart had been serving as interim Superintendent for the past 10 months.

“Tom Ahart brings a commitment to our community, a wealth of experience, and a track record of success to this position,” said Dick Murphy, Chair of the Des Moines School Board. “We had three strong, experienced candidates for this position – any one of whom could have been a successful leader for our district – but in the end the very best was right here at home.”

The school district held community forums and public interviews with three final candidates for the position on March, 4, 5, and 6. The Board of Directors approved Ahart’s contract, including

a \$260,000 salary, at the School Board meeting on March 12.

Ahart is the 13th Superintendent in the 106-year history of Des Moines Public Schools.

“I am excited and honored by this opportunity, and promise that we are going to build on the success that we are seeing at schools throughout the community,” said Ahart. “I am thankful to be part of a great team of teachers and staff who each and every day are out there working to help every student succeed. My goal as Superintendent is straightforward: we will be recognized as the best urban school district in America.”

Prior to being named interim Superintendent of Des Moines Public Schools, Ahart was Associate Superintendent of the school district from July 2011-May 2012 and previously served as

principal of Harding Middle School for three years.

He has also served as the Director of Human Resources at the Ankeny Community School District, the Director of Instruction at the Marshalltown Community School District, and as a school improvement consultant at the Heartland Area Education Agency. He has also been a language arts teacher at high schools in Denison, IA and Glenwood Springs, CO.

Ahart has been involved in a number of educational and professional associations, including president of the Iowa Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and an editor of Iowa Educational Leadership. Ahart received a BA in Speech and Mass Communications from the University of Denver as well as a Master’s of Public Administration and Ed.S from Drake University. He is completing his Doctorate in Education Leadership at Drake University, with a dissertation on student achievement factors in Iowa schools. ■



Harding Middle School Featured on IPTV

Iowa Public Television’s program “Bullying in Iowa Schools” features the work underway at Harding Middle School. See and hear about the great work by both students and teachers to change the climate at the school and create a positive culture where all students can thrive.

<http://www.dmschools.org/2013/03/hardings-anti-bullying-efforts-featured-on-iowa-public-television/> ■

Fine Arts Funding Brings Forest To Findley

You'd figure if Forest Whitaker is in town and he's at the Civic Center he must be center stage, right? Not this time. Perhaps mindful of the old theatrical axiom about kids and animals being renowned scene-stealers, the academy award winner was content to sit in the audience and watch the Findley Elementary Drama Club strut its stuff.

Whitaker was in town last month to play his leading role in the Turnaround Arts Grant that was awarded by the President's Council on the Arts and Humanity (PCAH) last spring. Findley is one of only eight schools nationwide selected to participate.

The drama club at Findley is some 80 students strong. It meets every Thursday after school under the direction of two Drake University freshmen theater students, Violet Saylor and Ali Hassman, both from Waukee. They're making an impact. The theme of the Civic Center show was the same as it's been all year at Findley: *Dream Big*.

What better venue to lend a sense of scope and scale to that notion than the stage that's seen a steady procession of Broadway blockbusters? Only the day before, the touring production of *Jekyll and Hyde* had been where the Findley troupe was, spilling in from the wings in multi-colored club t-shirts like a bag of marbles. During her opening remarks, Findley Principal Tara Owen was quick to thank



Oscar-winning actor Forest Whitaker spent March 11-12 at Findley Elementary School as part of the school's participation in the Turnaround Arts program.

Des Moines Performing Arts CEO Jeff Chelesvig for making the Civic Center available in a spirit of community/schools partnership.

As the culmination to Whitaker's visit to Findley, the school threw him a farewell assembly. The program consisted mostly of the same material already performed on the big stage at the Civic Center the night before. But the audience this time was primarily the thespians' classmates instead of parents and family and they poured into the gym like a carbonated beverage filling a glass, all fizz and bubbles.

Whitaker's closing remarks rang genuine. He told the kids they'd inspired him with their hard work and collective spirit. "I feel stronger inside knowing that you guys will be in charge someday," he said. "You make me want to keep dreaming – even bigger!" And since this is only the first year of the two-year grant he hinted that Findley hasn't seen the last of him.

Lest anyone think that all Whitaker lends to the PCAH

program is sheer celebrity, Findley Principal Tara Owen was quick to point out that he spent six contact hours in classrooms over the two days working directly with students on concepts like conflict resolution. She said she "can't wait" to see the residue of the presence of a real, live, big dream come true as the turnaround effort at Findley continues. "He talked a lot about connectivity," Owen explained. "And our teachers have already discovered many ways that principles with a basis in the arts can be transferred and connect with other content areas."

After the assembly dismissed the kids headed back to their classrooms and Whitaker headed to the airport. But not before lots of hugs and smiles were exchanged. Countless pictures were posed and snapped. It was like a big brother heading back to college, telling his younger siblings their turn will come, just as his did. Whitaker's frequent and easygoing laughter sounded very reassuring.

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Fine Arts Funding Brings Forest To Findley

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Why does he do it?
“The arts are a way to focus more community attention on schools,” he said. “And they increase attendance, not just of students, but their parents too, who want to come and watch. Art is a unique way to plant a seed in kids and let them see themselves differently.”

At the Civic Center the kids got the big ovation, and rightly so. They got another rousing reception in their home theater the next day from their peers. But the loudest one was reserved for *The Last King of Scotland*. He won an Oscar for that role. In his latest one as *The First King of Findley* he won lots of new fans – make that, friends. ■

Community Spirit Shouts Out Loud and Clear at Northside Night

There was a spirited shout-out at North High School on March 7 as 350 choristers from five schools across all grade levels joined forces to give voice to a resurrection of community pride. They're calling it Northside Night and planning to make it an annual event. From the look and feel and sound of things that evening, once a year may not be nearly enough.

The crowd overflowed the auditorium's main floor and rose into the balcony.

Findley Elementary was there to belt out *The Power of the Dream*. The Madison Singing Lions chanted out a stirring rendition of *Singabahambayo*, a Zulu folk song. Oak Park's 5th grade choristers offered some up-tempo Gershwin on *I've Got Rhythm*. Harding Middle School's 7th and 8th grade choir opened the program with a spiritual entitled, *Shine On Me* and the 6th graders later chimed in with *The Storm is Passing Over*.

There was energy in the hall throughout the program and it

really bubbled up when the North Soul & Gospel Choir, under the dynamic direction of first-year vocal music teacher Vanessa Brady, throbbed into *The Blood Still Works* and *We Acknowledge You*. The crowd couldn't help getting involved and their rhythmic clap-along burst into a joyous ovation when those tunes were through.

Then Brady and her counterparts at the other schools (Nels Dovre; Madison, Dustin Harmsen; Oak Park, Jane Olson, Findley and Amanda Stevenson; Harding) massed their choirs for *I Can* and the finale, Jim Papoulis' popular youth choral anthem, *Give Us Hope*.

If there is anything lacking on the Northside, it sure ain't hope. From the moment North Principal, the irrepressible Matt Smith, and DMPS Superintendent Tom Ahart, a proud Northsider himself, welcomed everybody to the show it was loud and clear that hope springs freely in that part of town these days. ■



All-City Festival Honors Student-Artists

Sunshine streamed through the skylight portion of the bowed roof on the Jacobson Exhibition Center at the Iowa State Fairgrounds on the morning of March 26. Melting snow slid off the massive building's edges in big chunks as a fleet of school buses began arriving from all corners of the district to deliver an elite force of middle school musicians.

They came to rehearse for the All-City Middle School Music Festival. Besides the musicians a gallery of visual art was arranged for display in the building lobby. The annual fine arts event is a generous gift to Des Moines Public Schools from former school board member Marjorie Spevak that she just keeps on giving. You've probably heard the term student-athletes? Mrs. Spevak makes a regular point of honoring student-artists.

The musicians were divvied into a choir, a band and an orchestra and assigned separate practice spaces.

The band settled in at the Jacobson Center and after a rowdy arrival that was a mix of middle



Guest conductor Joshua Reznicow leads the orchestra at the All-City Middle School Music Festival on March 26 at the Iowa State Fairgrounds.

school hijinks and random, brassy tooting everyone got down to business under the direction of Richard Thimmesch, Director of Bands at Grandview University. Same thing next door with the singers where Stephen Sieck, Co-Director of Choirs at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, blended a strong, choral voice out of the 168 squeaky, changing ones that got off the bus sounding more like the moo-sic that's heard in that 4H building every August. Meanwhile, Joshua Reznicow, Director of Orchestral Activities for the Linn-Mar Community School District, was working his magic with the stringy warm-up bleats coming from the Walnut Center, up near the sheep barns.

All told, nearly 400 kids from eleven schools were selected by their music teachers to participate. They'd all been practicing the program selections at their home schools since the 2nd semester began in January so they came well-prepared. But prior to the festival day many of them had never met one another, let alone played together. As they tumbled off the buses, most no bigger than a cello, clad in hoodies and tennis shoes and lugging their instruments and

a change of clothes, the cavernous venue looked too big for them. Each school's delegation arrived and improvised a campsite in a corner where backpacks and other gear were stowed.

By the time they broke for dinner each of the three ensembles was ready. They ate and horsed around. Then they changed into their blacks-and-whites. And finally, after weeks of practice, school-by-school; and one afternoon's mass, crash rehearsal, they made music together – enough to fill that big barn of a recital hall and then some.

Ryan Rowley is the district's Fine Arts Coordinator; the DMPS Music Man, you could say. And he orchestrated quite a concert, as per tradition. There weren't seventy-six trombones (only seven) or a parade. But there were rows and rows of virtuosos and horns of every shape and size. Yes folks, we got music, lots of it, right here in River City. Thanks to Spevak. That starts with 'S' and that stands for SCHOOLS!

Outside on the Jacobson Center entrance plaza is a sign that proclaims BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE. It wasn't put there with this specific event in mind. But it might as well have been. ■





Middle School Science Fair Continues to Grow

Everyone knows the image of a mad scientist. Some brilliant but misguided old guy in a castle laboratory plotting world domination, laughing diabolically all the way.

And then there are glad scientists. On February 19 there were lots of them, in fact, at the 5th annual DMPS Middle School Science Fair, held at the Science Center of Iowa.

The event continues to grow along with the increasing emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education. Year one drew about fifty entrants. This year there were 134, up ten from a year ago.

Patrolling the exhibit hall was like walking up and down the aisles at the smarts store, trying to decide what you most need and want to know amidst the maze of hypotheses and conclusions

and dependent, independent, and controlled variables. Does music really soothe the savage beast (okay, make that a family pet)? Can we see the effects of pollution on flowers? Can drinking cola make your body fall apart? If so, maybe swing by the booth on how to make your own root beer. Do we really get what we pay for (as measured in the durability of drumsticks)? Can body English affect the probability of a high number with a pair of dice (good to know if you wanna clean up at the family Monopoly table)? And the pesky conundrum: how does the dextrose concentration affect the osmosis rate in peritoneal dialysis?

So many questions (and answers); so little time.

Every entrant was judged against the same rubric of five criteria, according to DMPS Science Curriculum Coordinator, Kim O'donnell. Fortunately for them,

none of the 38 judges (community representatives from relevant fields and educators from other districts) was charged with assessing all 134 projects. A system was devised that assigned three judges to each exhibit. All place-winners advanced to the State of Iowa Science Fair on April 4 & 5 at Hilton Coliseum in Ames.

Lucy Karlin, for instance. The Merrill 7th grader wondered if old dogs might not learn as well or better than young ones. Her hunch was they can. She has two pooches herself; Doc, a 13 year-old lab, and Bijou, a five year-old mutt. She turned both of them and several of their canine pals from around the neighborhood into guinea pigs to conduct some experiments using food as a motivator. Besides the assigned judges, her display caught the eyes of at least one older passerby who was relieved to see the data she'd gathered to support the conclusion that old dogs can learn a lot as long as there's something in it for them, in this case a "beggin' strip." Eating's not a new trick exactly, but still, Lucy's research flies in the face of conventional wisdom.

Cowles 7th grader Treyton Jenkins' display was labeled "The Death of an Orange." That sounded juicy, even more so when you pulled over and listened to him wax forensic about the effects of size on rates of decomposition with all the earnestness of a car salesman a bit shy of his quota on the last day of the sales month. There's no substitute for genuine enthusiasm! Treyton was one of the gladdest scientists at the fair.

One more finding: the savage beast thing? If the music is heavy metal the answer is no. But classical? Yes, according to the latest research! ■

Celebrating Our Achievements

This regular feature of the *DMPS Community Report* highlights awards and achievements of district students and staff. Please let us know if you have a notable achievement to share by e-mailing Sarah Taylor at sarah.taylor@dmschools.org. Here are some achievements from the past few months.

Emily Lang and **Kristopher Rollins**, teachers at Harding Middle School, were presented with this year's Phyllis Yager Memorial Commitment to Diversity Award by the University of Iowa College of Education. They are being honored for their work that goes "above and beyond in implementing important diversity initiatives which have impact on the students, families, community, and other staff".

Six Central Campus Culinary Arts students received gold medals at the FCCLA State Star event competitions held on March 25 and will move on to the national competitions in Nashville, Tennessee in July. They are **Allison Ross**, **Colton Ruegsegger**, **Erica Lysinger**, **Charles Machamer**, **Xavier Powers**, and **Ken Sayavong**.

North High School Achievements

North High School won the state History Bowl competition on March 9 and will advance to the National competition in Arlington, Virginia on April 27-28. Team members are **Julius Tembe**, **Cody McKeegan**, **Clark Reimers**, and **Brian Shoemaker**.

The **North High School Academic Decathlon team** finished third at the Academic Decathlon State Competition in March.

Aaron Hosman of East High School, and **Adhel Jok** of Roosevelt High School were winners in the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence video contest encouraging young filmmakers to promote healthy relationships among their peers.

Forty-two students from all five comprehensive high schools in Des Moines earned superior ratings at the 2013 Iowa High School State Speech Association's state individual speech contest held in Nevada, Iowa on March 9. In addition, seven of those students were selected to advance to the All-State Individual Speech Festival at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls on March 25. Chosen for All-State were **Jake Biegger** (East), **Murphy Burke** (Roosevelt – qualified in two events), **Jack Chasse** (Roosevelt), **Fatima Fadel** (East), **Integrity Narcisse** (Roosevelt), **Cianna Rothwell** (Roosevelt) and **Leah Waughtal** (North).

Carver Elementary School won first place in the second annual African American Legacy event sponsored by the Wells Fargo Foundation and the Black African American Connection. Students at Carver chose to study George Washington Carver for their project.

McCombs Middle School eighth grade student **Quai Horton** has been named one of seven runners-up in the Max Warburg National

2012-2013 Courage in My Community Essay Contest.

East High School senior **Houa Vang**, received Honorable Mention from the Better Business Bureau Student of Integrity Award in February.

Hoover High School has named 14 juniors (**Sydney Allen**, **Ashley Bailey**, **Hannah Buscher**, **Michael Hardat**, **Molly Hawks**, **Jacqueline Henry**, **Mikayla Larson**, **Charles Machamer**, **Isaac Moore**, **Mathew Murr**, **Julie Penton**, **Andrea Rider**, **Amra Softic**, and **Bethany Wildt**) to represent Hoover at the annual National Council on Youth Leadership --- Youth Salute conference. At the conference, the Hoover students will be recognized for their leadership in the school and the community. They also will compete for scholarships.

The Cedar Rapids Independent Film Festival recognized Central Campus film students **Drew Hays** and **Tyler Hobson**'s films for viewing at their weekend event April 5th and 6th.

Roosevelt High School debate team members, seniors **Crystal** and **Stephanie Hou** and junior **Lily Nellans** have been named Academic All Americans for 2013.

East High School students **Shaeyguela Bassette** won Honorable Mention and **Kaitlynn Stoneburner**

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Celebrating Our Achievements

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was named a finalist in Level 3 of the Letters About Literature Contest. Letters About Literature is a national reading-writing program sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

Ann Downey, a Hoyt Middle School associate, is the 2013 Education Support Personnel of the Year for the State of Iowa. Ann has been working for the Des Moines Public Schools for over 40 years.

East High School senior **Gus Stangl** was honored with the

President's Volunteer Service Award in February. This award honors Americans of all ages who have volunteered significant amounts of time in service of their communities and country.

The **East High School** 2011-2012 yearbook had a photo and layout selected for inclusion in a nation-wide "best of yearbook" design guide published by Herf Jones.

Lincoln High School seniors **Allison Richter, Jessica Richter,**

and **Sam Sides** were selected to participate in the Iowa All State Jazz Choir in July. Only 20 students are selected state-wide.

Shana Liu, 8th grader at Merrill Middle School and Central Academy won 1st place in level F of the Iowa State Pre-college Piano Audition, organized every year by the Iowa Music Teachers Association (IMTA). Level F is the last level before college (level A - F). IMTA auditions were held at Wartburg College in Waverly in March. ■

Winter Sports Create Excitement Throughout the District

East and Roosevelt Basketball Teams Finish With State Appearance

The East High School Lady Scarlets returned to the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union's state tournament for the eighth time in the school's history. This year was also the third time in four seasons that the team earned a chance to play at state. The Scarlets finished the 2013 season with a 21-3 record, winning the CIML Metro Conference. Team leaders Roichelle Marble and Shareece Burrell were named to the second team All-State Squad.

The Roosevelt Roughriders boys' basketball team defeated Valley High School 47-45 to capture the school's first state tournament appearance since 1982. The team finished the 2013 season with a record of 18-6. Roosevelt senior Chris Bennett was named to the first team All-State Squad. ■



East High School junior Makreem Ibraheem scored three points in the final seconds of his match to win 3 to 1.

Four Qualify for 2013 State Wrestling Tournament

Four high school wrestlers qualified for the Iowa High School Athletic Association's 2013 state tournament held at Wells Fargo Arena in February. From East High School, sophomore Josh Davis placed 7th at 145 pounds and junior Makreem Ibraheem qualified in the 160-pound weight class. Nate Luna, a junior at Lincoln High School was a state qualifier at 152 pounds and Sawyer Kochel, Roosevelt High School senior, qualified at 195 pounds. ■



DMPS Named Energy Partner Of the Year by the EPA

For the second year in a row, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has named Des Moines Public Schools as a 2013 ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year for strategically managing and improving the energy efficiency of its entire building portfolio, which totals more than 5.5 million square feet at over 60 facilities throughout the city.

Through its partnership with the ENERGY STAR program, Des Moines Public Schools has improved its energy performance, saved money and helped to protect the environment for future generations.

Des Moines Public Schools is the only school district in the nation to be a repeat recipient of the award this year.

“Our commitment in Des Moines to managing our energy use in partnership with ENERGY STAR is continuing to pay big dividends for our schools and the entire community,” said Bill Good, Chief Operations Officer for Des Moines Public Schools. “Energy efficiency is saving us millions of dollars each year, making more resources available for our real work: education.

With a focus on ongoing performance measurement and whole-building improvement, EPA’s ENERGY STAR program provides a proven energy management strategy that has helped Des Moines Public Schools achieve important reductions in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.

Key accomplishments by the school district’s award winning

energy management program during 2012 include:

- Raising the district’s average ENERGY STAR score to 86, representing a seven-point improvement over 2011 and a 28-percent reduction in energy use.
- Saving \$2.4 million in avoided energy costs since the 2007–2008 fiscal year through operational changes and cost-effective upgrades, such as installing software that automatically turns off all of the district’s more than 15,000 computers.
- Earning ENERGY STAR certification for 11 additional buildings in 2012, for a total of 53 certified buildings in the school district and earning recognition as an ENERGY STAR Top Performer. (In 2008, no DMPS school buildings were ENERGY STAR certified.)
- Educating students on the importance of energy conservation through the Iowa Energy and Sustainability Academy, a cutting-edge program focused on energy sustainability that is incorporated into the curriculum at all grade levels.
- Continuing to renovate historic structures with an average of 65 years of age into models of energy-efficient buildings through equipment upgrades, such as the installation of geothermal systems in 33 schools to date.



School Board vice chair Cindy Elsbernd accepts the Energy Star Partner of the Year award at a ceremony in Washington, DC.

“Superior energy management is our most cost-effective climate strategy and Des Moines Public Schools continues to exemplify leadership in this category,” said Bob Perciasepe, Acting Administrator, EPA. “Des Moines Public Schools’ innovative practices provide a model for energy management in the places we work, shop, and play. These strategies help the bottom line and support the well-being of families across America by reducing pollution and protecting the environment.”

EPA’s annual ENERGY STAR Awards honor organizations that have made outstanding contributions to protecting the environment through superior energy efficiency. The award winners are selected from approximately 20,000 partners that participate in the ENERGY STAR program and were recognized at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. in March. ■



Greenwood Elementary School

Greenwood Spotlited at State’s Annual STEM Summit

At lunchtime on March 5 in the ballroom at Veteran’s Memorial Auditorium, hundreds of attendees at the Iowa STEM Summit were treated to a presentation by Greenwood Elementary Principal Eric Huinker about the impact made by the school’s STEM Scale-Up Grant.

The annual summit is sponsored by the Governor’s STEM Advisory Council as part of its comprehensive effort to raise consciousness about the importance of science, technology, engineering and math curricula in 21st century education. Grants are also disbursed under the council’s auspices.

Huinker’s report explained that the grant provided training for seven staff members who have implemented the Engineering is Elementary (EiE) curriculum into five classrooms spanning grades 1-5

and serving 118 of Greenwood’s 456 students and also highlighted Greenwood’s multi-layered partnership with Drake University. Background and bullet points out of the way, they rolled the video of Huinker interviewing a panel of 2nd graders who’ve been busy crafting sails and windmills out of tin foil, wax paper, coffee stirrers and juice cartons like a bunch of precocious gadgeteers about the time his audience was pushing their salads aside in favor of dessert.

The kids stole the show. It was like watching one of the AT&T iPhone 5 commercials currently the rage where an adult facilitates discussions of concepts like faster vs. slower and more vs. less amongst a group of school kids under the umbrella tagline of “rethink possible.”

Huinker said he hopes to integrate the Engineering Design

Process (EDP) school-wide, noting that the basic principles of EDP (ask, imagine, plan, create and improve) are already infiltrating Greenwood’s literacy curriculum simply because the kids naturally transfer them from one area to the others they study.

By way of placing the cutting edge EiE program into its fuller context at his school Huinker told his listeners that Greenwood’s student body ranges from 5th generation Woodchucks to freshly relocated refugees enrolled in ELL. Sixteen languages are spoken in Greenwood homes. Times have changed since the original building first opened in 1901 and the landmark school, along with the rest of the district, is changing right along with them.

Strategies aimed at harnessing the natural curiosity of kids, like EiE, aren’t really any different than figuring out how to use the wind to lift a weight. Ask + imagine + plan + create + improve = THE GOAL. ■



National Junior Honor Society at Weeks

On March 7 more than 100 Weeks Middle School students were the charter inductees for the National Junior Honor Society. Weeks became only the second DMPS middle school with an active chapter of the longstanding organization. ■

2013 Commencement Ceremonies

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Scavo | Friday, May 24, 10:00 A.M. | Hoyt Sherman Place |
| North | Saturday, May 25, 10:00 A.M. | Knapp Center at Drake |
| Hoover | Saturday, May 25, 12:30 P.M. | Knapp Center at Drake |
| Lincoln | Saturday, May 25, 4:00 P.M. | Knapp Center at Drake |
| Roosevelt | Saturday, May 25, 7:30 P.M. | Knapp Center at Drake |
| East | Sunday, May 26, 7:30 P.M. | Knapp Center at Drake |
| Ruby Van Meter | Tuesday, May 28, 7:00 P.M. | Callanan Auditorium |

Important Dates

April 23

No school for 9th, 10th and 12th grade students. 11th graders attend a.m. for ACT testing

April 24

No school for 11th grade students. 9th, 10th and 12th graders attend a.m. only

May 23

Last day of school for high school seniors

May 27

Memorial Day – No classes, offices closed

June 4

Last day of school for elementary and middle students

June 5

Last day for high school students

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Pat Sweeney

More DMPS News and Information Available Online and On Air

Des Moines Public Schools is the largest provider of public education in Iowa, which means one newsletter alone cannot provide all of the information or share all of the stories about everything taking place in your school district. More news and information is always available online and on air.

ONLINE

You can find information on our schools, news stories, data, contacts, and more on the DMPS web site at www.dmschools.org. In addition, follow DMPS on the following social media sites:

- Facebook: facebook.com/dmschools
- Twitter: twitter.com/dmschools
- Tumblr: dmschools.tumblr.com
- Pinterest: pinterest.com/dmschools

ON THE AIR

Tune in to **DMPS-TV on Mediacom Cable channels 85 and 97-3** at any time to see stories about programs and events from throughout the school district. If you do not subscribe to cable television, you can still view stories online at www.dmschools.org. And if you're in the mood for interesting talk and music, tune into Des Moines Public Schools' own radio station - **KDPS 88.1** - where your hosts are students from Central Campus and GrandView University.

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