

Des Moines Public Schools

DMPS

COMMUNITY REPORT

October 2013

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## Student Achievement Shows Growth Across All Grade Levels

Students all across the district are working hard in school and the latest results from the Iowa Assessments prove it.

The Iowa Assessments are the statewide tests that measures student proficiency in reading and math. Students in grades 3-8, and 11 are tested every year.

Data from the tests were presented at the September 17 meeting of the School Board. The test results show student growth across every grade level and among nearly every demographic group in Des Moines.

"Proficiency is always the goal, but growth is what I find most important," stated Superintendent Tom Ahart.

Some of the biggest gains were made in reading, with every grade level seeing

an increase on the Iowa Assessments. In grades 3-5, students overall saw an increase of 2.4%. In fact, all student demographic groups, with the exception of Asian students, saw growth. In grades 6-8, students overall saw an increase of 1.2%, including growth among every student subgroup. And in grade 11, students overall saw an increase of 4.5% and growth in every student subgroup.

The growth in mathematics was nearly as impressive, with increases at all grade levels. In grades 3-5, students overall saw an increase of 1.7%. In addition, all student demographic groups increased with the exception of students with disabilities, who remained the same, and Asian students, who saw a slight

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### TEACHERS HONORED

Two DMPS educators are finalists for the prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching while two other DMPS educators are finalists to be Iowa Teacher of the Year. [Read more about our great teachers on pages 4-5.](#)

# Student Achievement Shows Growth Across All Grade Levels

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decrease. In grades 6-8, students overall saw an increase of 1.8% and all student demographic groups increased, with the exception of Asian and Hispanic students; African American students had the largest increase of 4.6%. And in grade 11, students overall saw an increase of 2.2%. Most student

subgroups increased, with the exception of ELL, African American and Asian students.

The latest scores indicate the district is moving in the right direction to improve student achievement.

“New systems and structures have been put into place to

complement the delivery of high quality professional development to our highly trained teaching staff that is beginning to move the pendulum of academic success towards the high expectations that we have set for our students,” commented Holly Crandell, Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. ■

## Record Number of Students Take ACT; Two Students Earn Perfect Score

**A record number of juniors at Des Moines Public Schools took the ACT college entrance exam this past spring, and two members of the Class of 2014 recorded perfect scores, according to information recently provided by American College Testing.**

In 2009, Des Moines Public Schools became the first school district in Iowa to make the ACT exam available, free of charge, to all high school juniors. They attend school on a “no school” day for the rest of the student body in order to take the ACT exam.

The spring 2013 exam administration had the highest number of juniors tested to date, with a total of 1,732 students. This equals approximately 88 percent of all DMPS juniors who took the ACT in the spring of 2013, an increase of 3 percent of students from the spring of 2012.

In addition, while fewer than one out of every 1,500 students who take

the ACT earn a perfect composite score of 36, two of these are seniors at Roosevelt High School: Edel Aron of Clive, the daughter of Mikhail and Julia Aron, and Max Pilcher of Des Moines, the son of Timm and Kathryn Pilcher.

For last year’s graduating class, nearly 1.8 million students across the nation in the Class of 2013 took the ACT exam; only 1,162 of them earned a composite score of 36. Two members of Roosevelt’s Class of 2013 – Nathan Leys (now at George Mason University) and Luke Sheeley (now at Cornell University) – also earned perfect ACT scores of 36.

“Administering the ACT is one step we take to help determine if graduates are college and career ready,” said Mary Grinstead, assessment supervisor for Des Moines Public Schools. “No matter what students dream of doing with their lives, being prepared for education after high school is the best plan. Providing a college entrance exam



Roosevelt seniors Edel Aron and Max Pilcher earned top marks on the ACT college entrance exam.

with critical feedback on student skills is essential to preparing students for life after high school.”

“There is a downside to the school district being more inclusive with the ACT: as more and more students take the exam overall scores will see slight declines compared to the past, when the ACT was exclusive to students who had definite plans to attend college,” added Grinstead. “But there are some positive exceptions to this trend. The best example is reading, which is an area of growth for both our district and many of our schools. This can be attributed to a renewed focus on reading interventions at the high school level, an effort that is starting to bear fruit with the success of our students.” ■

## Explore Test Helps 8th Graders Stay On Track for Graduation

Des Moines Public Schools administered the ACT Explore assessment to eighth grade students on October 7-18. Results from the Explore assessment will provide students the opportunity to build plans for their future and offer students a “check point” for college and career readiness. Explore assessments show students what they know in English, math,

reading, and science and what they are ready to learn next.

Students will use information from the Explore assessment to write goals, think about future education plans and learn about career options. Testing students before high school helps them choose classes that will support their plans and help them

stay on track for graduation. Whether students go on to college, university, career or technical school, the information and skills they learn in their high school classes will always be useful in planning for their post high school years.

Visit [www.explorestudent.org](http://www.explorestudent.org) for more information. ■

## Students First – Entering Year Five



[studentsfirst.dmschools.org](http://studentsfirst.dmschools.org)

Iowa is known across the nation and around the globe for its commitment to excellence in education. For many years our students and teachers have been leaders when it comes to academic excellence. More recently, we are also leading the way when it comes to state-of-the-art school facilities.

In 1999, Polk County voters approved the “Schools First” campaign, a local option sales tax that made possible significant and long overdue improvements to school facilities in Des Moines Public Schools and other school districts throughout the county. The approval made positive changes for students, teachers, parents and neighborhoods, investing more than \$240 million throughout the community.

Then in 2008, the Iowa General Assembly turned the local option

sales tax into a statewide sales tax, providing each school district in Iowa with an ongoing revenue stream to meet their school building and infrastructure needs. The following year, voters in Des Moines approved the district’s plan for using these funds – called “Students First” – which includes enhanced safety and security; replacement of obsolete, inefficient, or worn-out equipment and systems; improvement of buildings not addressed by “Schools First”; installation of air conditioning; and technology upgrades.

As DMPS enters the fifth year of “Students First,” a special online report has been prepared to provide a closer look at what this has meant for our community, the priorities set in improving schools, how public dollars are being wisely spent, and how it is all making for excellent schools in which our students learn and our teachers teach.

To learn more about what has been accomplished over the past five years and the district’s priorities for the future visit [studentsfirst.dmschools.org](http://studentsfirst.dmschools.org). ■



### EDMUNDS:

Des Moines’ newest school was made possible thanks to the Students First plan.



Kristi Wickre, Smouse Opportunity School



Chef Elaine Wolf, Central Campus

## Two DMPS Educators Finalists For Iowa Teacher of the Year

Each year the Iowa Department of Education names five finalists for the state's Teacher of the Year award. This year two of the five hail from DMPS and between them they vividly demonstrate the exceptionally wide spectrum of opportunity that the district offers.

### Kristi Wickre, Smouse

At Smouse Opportunity School Kristi Wickre teaches special education. Maybe a better way to say it is that she's a special educator.

Her entire 20-year career has been at Smouse which she describes as "a very positive, caring place," thanks in no small measure to her.

Wickre was nominated by her longtime classroom associate Kristen Van Dyke who's been so inspired by her mentor that she's returning to school to get her own degree in special ed. There's no recognition that's quite so flattering as that bestowed by teammates.

Wickre attributes her own teaching aspirations to Mrs. Nielsen, her 3rd grade teacher back in Linn Grove, IA.

When Wickre started at Drake University she was a Psychology major with vague intentions of law school but summer jobs at Childserv and memories of Mrs. Nielsen steered her in a more necessary direction. She got a job as an associate at Ruby Van Meter and a master's degree in education at Drake with certification in special ed. While long term subbing at RVM the job opened at Smouse that's been hers ever since.

Her room brims with attention-getting appointments. The whole solar system is on display with Jupiter and Saturn looming on the ceiling and the sun on the far wall, beaming almost as brightly as Wickre's ever-ready smile, the energy source in this space. One can imagine that it's as powerful as gravity to her students.

Like an old fashioned school marm presiding in a one-room schoolhouse, Wickre welcomed her class of six ranging from grades 1-6 on a recent morning. Later on a field trip for Special Olympics bowling was planned but first the kids had some classwork to do. On the screen at the front of the room was their writing prompt for the day:

I am a student who...  
"...goes to school," wrote one.  
"...reads books," wrote another.  
"...has a great teacher," they might all have written.

Teacher of the Year? How about Teacher of the Last Twenty?

### Chef Elaine Wolf, Central Campus

Lots of good things are always cooking at Central Campus so no wonder Chef Elaine Wolf, who heads up the award-winning culinary arts program there, was also recognized as one of five finalists for Iowa Teacher of the Year by the state's Department of Education.

Chef Wolf holds a degree in Restaurant Management from Miami University of Ohio and has a wide-ranging career background in the field that runs the gamut

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Brian Reece, Central Academy



Jeff Marks, Roosevelt High School

## Two of Iowa's Three Math Finalists for Presidential Award Teach at DMPS

It's that time of year when apples fall on the nogginns of great thinkers like Isaac Newton, and change agents from Nobel laureates on down are being recognized. And again this year Des Moines Public Schools can claim two of Iowa's three math finalists for the prestigious Presidential Award for Excellence in Math & Science Teaching (PAEMST).

The Iowa Department of Education announced that district math teachers Brian Reece of Central Academy and Jeff Marks of Roosevelt High School have been selected as state honorees. National winners will be announced next spring.

For DMPS, this is getting to be a habit. The same thing happened last year, as Zac Christensen of Perkins and Josie Burg of the Downtown School comprised two-

thirds of Iowa's PAEMST math finalists. And in 2010 all three finalists were DMPS teachers, one of whom – Barb Leise, also of the Downtown School – was named a national awardee. (Since the award originated in 1983, nine DMPS educators have gone on to earn the national honor.)

Reece is in his 7th year at Central Academy. He used to be a wrestler so the segue into grappling with mathematical predicaments came naturally. He's been coached enough that it informs his teaching methods. Those wheelbarrows full of titles that Central Academy students haul back from regional and national math competitions every year? Do you suppose that would happen without good coaching? Reece is part of that coaching staff.

He was nominated for the PAEMST by a parent of a former

student and cites one of his own former teachers when he was growing up in Osceola, Frank Riley, as a major influence in his decision to become a teacher himself.

A discussion of limits in one of his calculus classes quickly takes off and soars way over the head of a visitor who is struck, on the contrary, by how unlimited everyone seems. Reece scribbles something on the whiteboard and tells his protégés to unknot it without calculators. "No problem," the visitor thinks. "They ARE calculators!"

A perfect storm of potential and guidance gathers in Room 1022. It happens every day.

The climate's pretty much the same in Room 2770 over at Roosevelt where Mr. Marks has presided for eight years at his high school alma mater after 14 years at Brody Middle School. His nominator for the PAEMST was former Roosevelt Principal Kathie Danielson.

On the whiteboard in Marks' room as a class of pre-calc students files in is a caricature in red marker beneath the words Favorite Math-Related Nickname So Far: Arcsine the Magnificent. It bears a suspicious resemblance to the resident professor. Did one of his students draw it? "Yes, it is me," Marks admits, "but actually, I drew it myself." Never mind the Arcsine part. You wouldn't understand.

Class begins and an easy rapport between instructor and pupils is readily apparent. Somehow they all wring laughter from triangles. The only things an outsider recognizes here are the word "hypotenuse" and the old-fashioned pencil sharpener bolted to the wall in the back corner of the room.

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## Two DMPS Educators Finalists For Iowa Teacher of the Year

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from institutional foodservice to fine dining. She's been at Central Campus since returning to teaching from the private sector in 2004. Her TOY nomination letter reads like a full-course menu of credentials and achievements. She has elevated the culinary arts program to one where students can earn up to a full year's credit toward a degree from DMACC's

Iowa Culinary Institute and also forged partnerships with more than 50 area food industry professionals as an additional means of generating opportunities for her students. Heck, the program even has its own trophy case in the hallway outside the state of the art teaching kitchen that was included in the recent renovations at Central Campus and partially

## Central Campus Café

Good luck getting a table when the Central Campus Café reopens for lunch on Friday, November 1 (see dates below). The views of Western Gateway Park are breathtaking and the chef is now officially recognized as one of the best in her business.

- Friday, November 1
- Thursday, November 7
- Friday, November 15
- Thursday, November 21
- Friday, December 6
- Thursday, December 12

The café's serving hours are 10:55 – 12:30. Please make reservations for groups of six or more at [centralcampuscafe@gmail.com](mailto:centralcampuscafe@gmail.com).

equipped through grants written by Chef Wolf. Asked to share the recipe for the success of her apprentices, Chef Wolf describes herself as equal parts mentor, manager, advisor, cheerleader and coach.

"I absolutely love my job," said Chef Wolfe. No one doubts her. ■

## Two of Iowa's Three Math Finalists for Presidential Award Teach at DMPS

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Marks looks too young to know all that he does and to have taught it for as long and as well as he has. But he's in his element, even figuring out the solution last year to the following story problem: one of the students in the class of a veteran high school math teacher is his own daughter: where is the line drawn between home and school?

"It really was no big deal," the teacher/dad claimed. "It worked itself out pretty easily."

Isn't that what the math whizzes always say?

Reece and Marks will be honored at a luncheon hosted by the Iowa Department of Education on November 8 at the Prairie Meadows Events Center.

The PAEMST is the highest honor a public school math or science teacher can achieve. Reece and Marks are now eligible for a \$10,000 cash prize and a trip to



Washington, DC. Established by Congress in 1983, the award program authorizes the bestowal of up to 108 awards each year.

For more information about the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math & Science Teaching, visit [www.paemst.org](http://www.paemst.org). ■



## For Some Students, Graduation Walk Renews the Route to a Diploma

*A variation on an old riddle:*

**Q:** *Why did the 20 year-old young man who had no choice but to quit school a few credits shy of graduation so he could work two jobs as the only breadwinner in his household cross the stage?*

**A:** *To get the diploma he earned by completing his coursework in online academic support labs while keeping his job[s].*

On September 21, the annual search and rescue mission known as the Graduation Walk (formerly Reach Out to Dropouts) hit the streets of Des Moines for the fifth time and cast the widest net yet to re-engage not only students who have officially left school somewhere short of the finish line, but also to reach kids who've veered off-course and fallen behind in credits and get them caught up before it's too late.

The perfect weather that greeted a determined force of DMPS staff and community volunteers nearly

300 strong proved to be an omen of the successes they achieved in rounding up strays and bringing them back into the fold.

Also participating were representatives from the International Visitor Leadership Program arranged by the Meridian International Center. The visitors were learning effective ways of dealing with the same problem in the Caribbean and were invited by the U.S. State Department.

The volunteers were divvied into 87 teams and altogether they knocked on 782 doors, a record number of home visits since under-credited students were targeted as well as actual dropouts. Not everyone was home, in which case a door-hanger was left to explain who'd been there and why, along with some contact info. But the troops did have 391 conversations and preliminary results indicated that 111 kids scheduled follow-up appointments to explore alternative pathways to the all-important diploma.

The event's corporate sponsor this year was Wells Fargo and the other community partner was United Way which has been a driving force behind RO2DO/Grad Walk since the event's inception.

That stereotype of an incorrigible kid from an apathetic home is as obsolete as blackboards. The door-knockers reported encounters with hard-working kids carrying too much weight on their young shoulders who were excited to learn there are ways to complete their classwork even if they can't be at school all day, Monday through Friday, due to work schedules or childcare responsibilities, to cite just a couple of predicaments many of them face. "Bless you for coming," was a sentiment expressed on more than one front porch.

After the obstacle course many kids have to negotiate throughout their lives to get there, they deserve that proud, hard-earned walk across the stage. It's even better than going the extra mile on a sunny Saturday morning in the fall.

**Save the date: next year's Grad Walk is already in the works and scheduled for September 20, 2014. ■**





## Hanawalt Elementary School Launches Community Recess

On September 23 Hanawalt Elementary School, together with Des Moines Public Schools, Polk County, and some private partners, cut the ribbon on Phase One of a community conservation and recreation site.

This site, designed to serve school and community, got off and running with celebration (and demonstration) of a three-lane, 1/10 mile asphalt track, resurfaced play courts and an open

park lawn, promoting public health and innovations in storm-water management.

Hanawalt's project will eventually culminate in a Community Recess Initiative with the lawn, track, and courts enhanced by community gardens and restored landscaping and supplemented with an outdoor classroom/mini-amphitheater, all designed to invite students and the community to get outside and activate.

Polk County Supervisor Angela Connolly chairs the region's Tomorrow Plan and Capital Crossroads initiatives. The Polk County Board of Supervisors was one of the lead contributors in the planning and construction of this project.

"Polk County values opportunities to help residents connect to their communities, live actively, and enjoy the great outdoors," said Supervisor Connolly. "We need more places like this across the region."

Des Moines Public Schools Superintendent Tom Ahart praised the many partners who have "worked for success here," while Hanawalt PTA President Julie Hahn acknowledged the contributions of Polk County, RDG Planning & Design and Des Moines University (DMU), along with private donors. RDG and DMU joined forces to design the site and develop programs with educators to enhance learning and promote physical activity.

At the ceremony, Ahart, Connolly, and Hahn were joined by students, staff, and residents who were eager to take the first steps on the new track. Educational markers introduced the public to the new site's many benefits and future plans for life in the fast lane. ■

## New Members Elected, Veterans Re-elected to School Board

The Des Moines community voted on September 10 to re-elect Connie Boesen and Teree Caldwell-Johnson to the Des Moines School Board, and also elected two new board members: Rob Barron and Toussaint Cheatom.

Boesen was elected at-large and begins her tenth year as a school board member. Caldwell-Johnson will represent

District 4. She begins her seventh year on the board.

Barron was elected at-large and Cheatom was elected to represent District 2.

School board members are currently elected to serve four-year terms. Elections are held on odd-numbered years. ■



**DES MOINES SCHOOL BOARD:** Pat Sweeney, Teree Caldwell-Johnson, Bill Howard (vice chair), Cindy Elsbernd (chair), Superintendent Tom Ahart, Rob Barron, Connie Boesen, Toussaint Cheatom

# North Named “Exemplar School” by Partnership for 21st Century Skills

North High School has been designated a P21 Exemplar School by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills in honor of the school’s work to prepare students for life after graduation.

“Everyone at North is working hard to put our school on the cutting edge,” said principal Mike Vukovich. “We have seen tremendous academic gains over the past few years... (and it’s a great honor for North to now serve as a model for other schools across the nation.”

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is a national organization that advocates for readiness for every student. P21 advocates for local, state and federal policies that support schools. For more information, visit [www.p21.org](http://www.p21.org).

The Exemplar Program identifies, documents, and promotes examples of successful 21st century learning taking place in schools across the country. The program provides educators and communities with a variety of resources to draw from and offers policymakers local examples to encourage their support.

Recognized schools must go through an evaluation process to ensure they employ 21st century instructional practices. Steps in the evaluation process include a team visit by representatives of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (including classroom visits and meetings with the superintendent, principal, teachers and students) and a site evaluation of the school that analyzes its evidence of commitment to college, career, and life readiness;



educational support systems and sustainable design; engaged learning approaches; equitable student access to 21st century learning; evidence of student acquisition of 21st century knowledge and skill; and partnerships for sustainable success.

North High School will participate in a national summit on 21st century learning next month. ■

## DMPS, Drake, DMACC Form 3D Coalition To Recruit & Train More Minority Teachers

Leaders from Des Moines Public Schools, Drake University and Des Moines Area Community College are partnering to recruit, train and hire more minority teachers for Iowa’s capital city. The goal of the new partnership – called the 3D Coalition – is to identify aspiring minority teachers in Des Moines.

In 2012-13, minority students at Des Moines Public Schools, the largest school district in Iowa, made up 53.4% of enrollment. During that same time, only 10% of administrators and 4.5% of certified teachers were minorities.

DMPS, Drake, and DMACC recognize the efficiencies of working together to strengthen the urban community and preliminary planning is underway to identify other potential allies and revenue sources.

Members of the 3D Coalition previously worked together to implement two large federal grant programs geared to attract minority teachers to Des Moines classrooms. The Career Opportunity Program was active in the 1970s and was instrumental in recruiting and training a number of minority teachers who went on to serve Des Moines schools in the classrooms and administrative offices for many years. The Teacher Quality Project (TQP) ran from 2005-2009 and it, too, focused on the recruitment, training, and hiring of minority teachers. Thirty-two of the 34 TQP graduates continue to teach in Des Moines schools.

The new program will develop an academic plan for each student, customized according to their educational background. Other objectives include:

- Educational pathway development and advising
- Financial planning, including the identification of grants and financial aid opportunities
- Mentoring and seminars
- Technology assistance
- Tuition assistance, including books and fees
- Flexible work, including schedules and student teaching stipends

After completion of the program, graduates will be hired as DMPS teachers and be required to work in the district for as many years as they were supported by 3D. ■



THE 3D COALITION



## Middle Schoolers Learn Lessons About Community Service

### Service Learning Fair Connects Merrill Students with Non-Profits

Middle schoolers roaming malls in packs aren't an uncommon sight. But when the "mall" is the school cafeteria and the "shops" are displays set up by area non-profits looking for help, deliberate attention is called for.



Merrill students signed up to volunteer for a variety of local non-profit organizations.

That was the scene at Merrill during the school's 5th annual Service Learning Fair.

The day began with an assembly in the auditorium where the 8th graders were briefed on the ways and means of fulfilling the community service component of their International Baccalaureate curriculum. Each of them must log 10 hours over the course of the year at a nonprofit agency of their choosing from a long list of certified service providers. Twenty-one of them were represented at Merrill, ranging from the Animal Rescue League to the Young Women's Resource Center.

Math teacher Robert Randazzo warned all those not exactly fired up to pitch in that they were in for a pleasant surprise. He recounted his own adolescent baptism as a volunteer when he raised his hand to help out with the Special Olympics. There was a free meal at McDonalds in it for him, plus his girlfriend was involved. That was more years ago than Mr. Randazzo can believe.

McDonalds isn't quite the special treat he thought it was back then and the girlfriend is long gone, but his association with Special Olympics endures.

The idea is to plant a lot of civic seeds that will grow into full-blown citizenship as the kids grow into adulthood. According to social science teacher Dave O'Connor, the coordinator of the event, Mr. Randazzo's experience way back when is not unusual. "Oh yeah, every year lots of kids end up far exceeding the 10 hour quota," he said. "They kind of tiptoe in and then they get hooked on whatever kind of service they try."

There are 248 8th graders at Merrill this year. Times ten, that's a *minimum* of almost 2,500 hours' worth of helping hands extending into the community that wouldn't otherwise. Chambers of commerce like to tout the economic impact of big events on their communities. But how do you measure the impact of something like this? And how long does it last?

Sometimes, a lifetime – right, Mr. Randazzo?

### Harding Wolf Pack Brings Life Back to Laurel Hill Cemetery

The popular image of cemeteries depicts them as somber, even spooky places where love and grief are buried in equal measure. They're usually quieter than libraries are supposed to be. But not when a busload of middle school kids shows up to help out with the kinds of things that municipal budget cuts don't allow for.

Despite funeral weather conditions, as soon as the Harding Middle School Wolf Pack arrived at Laurel Hill, the municipal cemetery just south of the Iowa State Fairgrounds, the mood there

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## Middle Schoolers Learn Lessons About Community Service

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changed. They came in two shifts. In the morning the 8th graders policed the grounds, clearing debris dropped on grave sites from the abundant old trees that stand like sentries all over the rolling grounds. The afternoon shift was 7th graders who deployed with clipboards to update Laurel Hill's records of which sites are marked with footstones and which have headstones, for instance.

Harding's efforts at Laurel Hill are one of the ways that members of the school's Wolf Pack pay the community service portion of their membership dues.

The Pack will be back at Laurel Hill in November to continue its good work there. It's a naturally beautiful, spiritual place that really comes alive when noisy teenagers arrive in droves to give a little extra TLC to all the buried treasures. But it would be a mistake to think that they'll be doing all the talking.

"Some of them noticed that the markers in the infant section sometimes have only one date on them and they asked about that," said city sexton Jay Hastings. "I told them that's because those babies were born and died on the same date. I



Harding students donated their time to help improve the Laurel Hill Cemetery.

told them life doesn't come with any minimum guarantee and that things haven't always been the way they are now with hospitals and medicine. That's something to think about." ■

## AIB, Lincoln Play Ball on Facilities Partnership

AIB College of Business and Des Moines Public Schools launched a new athletics partnership with a groundbreaking ceremony at the Lincoln High School baseball/softball fields on Friday, September 20.

AIB's new softball and baseball programs will use the Lincoln South softball and baseball fields for practice and home games. The school district will be responsible for most maintenance of the fields, and AIB will contribute to the cost of renovating them.

The initial term of the agreement is five years, with the option for AIB to extend the agreement for four three-year terms subject to approval of the Des Moines Public Schools.

"This is an exciting partnership for both AIB and Lincoln High School," said AIB President Nancy Williams. "AIB will have the use of collegiate-level softball and baseball fields that are near our campus, and the college will have the opportunity to establish a feeder system of student-athletes for all sports from a major CIML high school in Des Moines.

"Lincoln High School will have assistance in upgrading facilities to use as their home fields. And the city of Des Moines will benefit from beautification of a very visible area," Williams added.

Superintendent Tom Ahart believes the district is fortunate to have partnerships with many higher education institutions in central Iowa.



Representatives from AIB College of Business, Des Moines Public Schools and Lincoln High School gathered to kick off a new athletics partnership.

"And this is a great opportunity to expand our relationship with AIB," Ahart said. "This joint effort not only benefits student-athletes at both Lincoln and AIB, but will enhance a public venue in our south-side community." ■

# 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](mailto:sarah.taylor@dmschools.org). Here are some achievements from the past few months.

Two national organizations – the Government Finance Officers Association and the Association of School Business Officials International – have recognized DMPS for excellence in financial reporting and accounting for the sixth year in a row.

**Sarah Dougherty**, who teaches half-time as an Arts Integration Specialist at Findley Elementary and half-time as the Visual Arts Curriculum Coordinator for Des Moines Public Schools, was named the 2013 Outstanding Elementary Art Educator for the state of Iowa.

**Lisa Jorgensen**, who is in her first year of teaching art classes at Findley Elementary, was named the 2013 Outstanding Middle School Art Educator for the state of Iowa. Lisa was previously a teacher at Webster City Middle School.

The Iowa State University College of Human Sciences highlights the work of alumna **Julie Rosin**, assistant director at Central Campus. The article looks at the work she does to help student-teachers succeed in their chosen career.

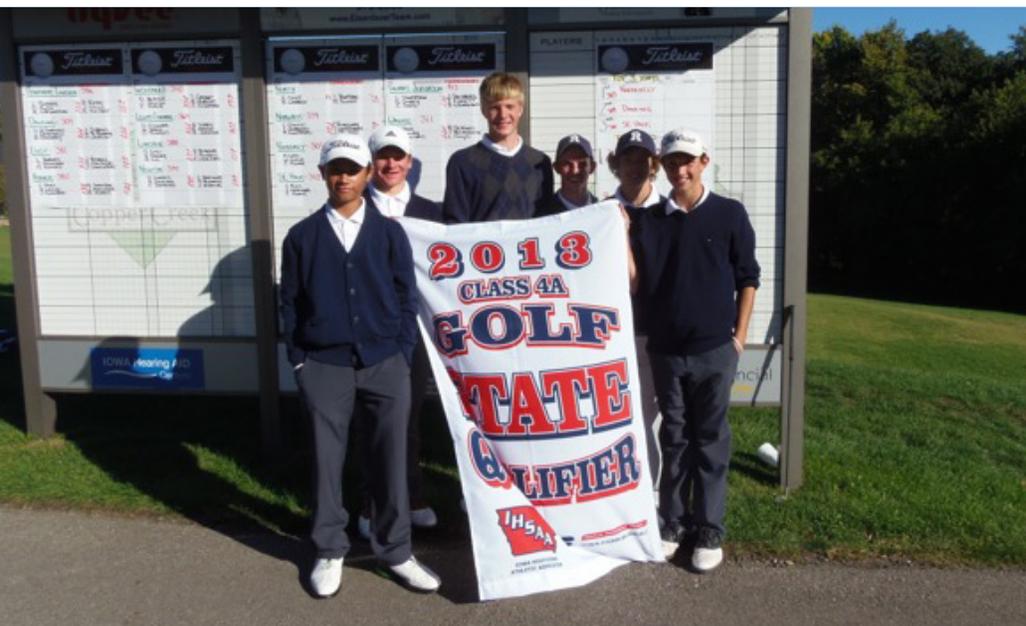


While in Des Moines in September, Grammy-nominated jazz saxophonist Joshua Redman took time to work with members of the Hoover High Jazz Combo during a master class session at Drake University.

Roosevelt High School senior **Lily Nellans** and '13 grad **Nathan Leys** were named All Americans for the 2012-13 school year by the National Forensic League. The honor means the current and former member of the Riders Debate Team were among the top 25 national point leaders in debate out of more 120,000 students who participate across the nation.

**Hillis Elementary School** was presented with the HealthierUS School Challenge Silver Award for their work to improve the health and nutrition of students. The initiative is sponsored by the USDA Food & Nutrition program. In total, ten DMPS schools are being honored this year for their participation and success in the program. Other schools include: Brubaker, Garton, Jefferson, Lovejoy, Monroe, Stowe, Studebaker, Windsor, and Wright elementary schools.

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After qualifying for the State Golf Tournament for the first time in 17 years, thanks to winning the District Tournament on October 8, the **Roosevelt Roughriders golf team** finished fifth in the team competition. Junior Aaron Wirt led the team in scoring and finished 3rd overall among individual golfers with rounds of 71 and 78. The State Golf Tournament was held in Marion on October 11-12.

## DMPS, Gallup Team Up to Survey Students on School Climate

Students in grades 5 through 12 in Des Moines Public Schools are participating in a Gallup Student Poll to provide information on how students feel about school and life. DMPS is joining thousands of other school districts in measuring the hope, engagement, and well-being of students.

Gallup's research has shown that three key factors: hope, engagement, and well-being are what drive student grades, achievement scores, retention, and future employment.

The Gallup Student Poll is dedicated to measuring these three key factors of America's students. By tapping into the hearts and minds of America's students, the Gallup Student Poll will provide crucial insight to help facilitate new conversations and solutions for student success in school and life.

The Gallup Student Poll consists of a 10-minute web-based survey, containing 20 core questions, five demographic questions, and may include one randomly assigned index. All data are stored, aggregated, and analyzed by Gallup.

All student data is completely confidential, as no personally identifiable information is collected. After the survey has been administered, each school principal will receive an electronic scorecard of their school's results. The district will also receive an overall scorecard.

For more information, please visit the Gallup Student Poll website at [www.gallupstudentpoll.com](http://www.gallupstudentpoll.com). ■

## Celebrating Our Achievements

*Continued from Page 12...*



### DMPS STUDENTS NAMED NATIONAL MERIT SEMI-FINALISTS

#### 2014 National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalists

Eleven high school seniors in Des Moines were chosen as 2014 Semi-Finalists for the National Merit Scholarship, placing them among the top young scholars in the state and nation. The Des Moines students were selected based on their strong performance on the Preliminary SAT (PSAT) test taken last year.

Des Moines Public Schools is proud to announce that the following students have been designated National Merit Scholarship Semi-Finalists:

- **Edel Aron**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Granger Carty**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Patrick Hiatt**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Austin Lin**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Lillian Nellans**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Lydia Phillips**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Maxwell Pilcher**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Cianna Rothwell**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Ryan Utke**  
Hoover High School
- **Quinn Veasman**  
Roosevelt High School
- **Reid Wade**  
Roosevelt High School

Each of the above students also attends classes at Central Academy.

In addition, **Daphne Gates**, a senior at Van Meter High School who takes courses at Central Academy, was also named a National Merit Semi-Finalist. ■



The **Lincoln High Marching Rails** earned the overall Grand Champion honors at the North Central Iowa Marching Band Invitational in Fort Dodge in September. The Rails also earned top individual honors in the categories of best marching, best brass and best percussion. ■



## The Dream Lives On in New DMPS Urban Leadership Course

Implicit in the historic dream that was shared half a century ago is a new class this year at Central Campus.

It's called Urban Leadership 101 and that's an accurate enough course title given that the objective is to raise up a generation of informed and inspired community activists, but it barely hints at the cross-curricular goings-on. Take the August 28 session for instance. In honor of the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's iconic "I Have a Dream" speech the class detoured from its unit on immigration for an exercise built around that stirring moment half a century ago in Washington D.C.

It was part American History, part Government/Civics and part English as the class watched a slide show of images from the event, wrote down their impressions and then shared them in a free-flowing discussion.

The groundbreaking new course is taught by Emily Lang and Kristopher Rollins who dash

from Central Campus back to their headquarters at Harding Middle School after beginning their days with UL 101. It's like jumping into the day from a trampoline for teachers and students alike.

Words like sacred, courageous, sorrow, reverence and spirit are the jargon. Outbreaks of goose bumps are frequent. The atmosphere is collegiate. When heads bow to write the only sound in the room is a pack of pencils racing across paper to convert powerful feelings into equally powerful words.

"We remind them all the time that we can learn as much from them as we teach them," Rollins said. "Our effectiveness depends on our ability to build relationships. We are challenging them to become the people we talk about in class and convincing them that they are capable of that."

Or as Lang puts it, "We want to equip these kids to become change agents in their community." As opposed, say, to settling for a high school resume padded with

student council offices that dress up a college application without impacting the status quo.

There is no teaching manual for a class this innovative. The curriculum is coming on the fly. But the co-creators are nothing if not resourceful. A good example is their plan to bring in ELL students that are brand new to America as part of the unit on immigration. That sounds like an idea that will give insight to their own students while also welcoming strangers who, if they're feeling intimidated by new surroundings, aren't likely to in Room 2101. Can you say win-win?

When it's time to go, music relevant to the lesson plays instead of a bell ringing. On their ways out, everybody stops to shake hands with their teachers. Expressions of love, casual but real, are exchanged.

They call it Urban Leadership but it could just as well be Modern Family. Kids from all over the world and all across the socio-economic spectrum judging each other not by the colors of their skins, but by the contents of their characters – like a dream come true. ■





## Winter is coming ... whether (or weather) we like it or not!

It's fall in Iowa and that means possible snow days may be in the near future! Detailed instructions are available on the DMPS website for what employees, students, and parents should do in the event there is no school, an early dismissal, or a late start due to weather conditions. ■

## 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](http://www.dmschools.org). In addition, follow DMPS on the following social media sites:

- Facebook: [facebook.com/dmschools](https://facebook.com/dmschools)
- Twitter: [twitter.com/dmschools](https://twitter.com/dmschools)
- Pinterest: [pinterest.com/dmschools](https://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](http://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.

The Des Moines Independent Community School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact the district's Equity Coordinator Patricia Lantz, General Counsel, 901 Walnut Street, Des Moines, IA 50309; phone: 515.242.7837; email: [patricia.lantz@dmschools.org](mailto:patricia.lantz@dmschools.org).

## Reminders

**Friday, October 25:  
Teacher EQ Development Day**  
No school for students, 195-day associates, 9.5 & 10-month employees. All teachers report.

**Wednesday, November 27:  
Thanksgiving Eve**  
No school for students, teachers, and associates. Offices will be open.

**Thursday-Friday,  
November 28-29:  
Thanksgiving Holiday**  
No school. All offices will be closed.

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