Millville Public School Graduation Rate Tops Cumberland County

Recently, the New Jersey Department of Education released graduation rates. We were elated to see that our students and staff have continued their upward movement. In 2013, 82 percent of our students graduated. Now, we have reached 90 percent.

We attribute the success to our long-range commitment to being able to answer a few simple questions. First, what do we do when students aren’t learning the desired content? Our RTI Process, or Response to Intervention approach, answers this question. It identifies students early in the learning process by using simple benchmarks; if students are struggling, the staff intervenes. We have amazing teachers who are serving in this capacity across the district as RTI teachers. This investment in helping struggling learners has really started to pay off. We have to be able to help students early when they aren’t quite getting it.

Second, how do we create an environment dedicated to learning and embracing life-long learning? This comes by providing many different interesting learning paths that students can pursue. We are dedicated to helping our students learn how they learn best. We help the students understand that there are multiple ways to be “smart”. We attempt to challenge, engage, and support our students through having exceptional curriculum, teachers and staff. Over the last 7 years we have focused on Classroom Instruction that Works as our instructional model. Classroom Instruction that Works, or C1TW, is an instructional model that was created at McKeel and is grounded in years of researching teachers. They have determined what great teachers do differently. We developed a process of walkthrough observations to capture information about what is going on in each classroom. This information is then given to teachers and their teams for their use. The data helps teachers make sometimes just subtle changes in their approach, at other times the data may highlight the need for bigger change. Our staff has done an amazing job of embracing the instructional model and dedicating themselves to becoming better. Our focus has been on helping our staff become world class; our thought was student outcomes would follow. It appears this theory was correct.

Third, what can we do differently or better in order to get better results for our students? We adopted the mindset of continuous improvement several years ago. We trained our leadership and teacher leadership teams in using a systems approach to problem solving. In every situation, we attempt to figure out how we can improve in all areas.

There are no silver bullets to improving our public schools. It takes time, dedication, and a commitment to stay the course. Too often in education, we change to the latest promised solution. In Millville, we believe our number one resource is our staff. Instead of chasing new programs we instead focus on creating an environment for teachers and staff members to approach their work in a clinical manner. We encourage innovation and risk-taking.

All too often we get hyper focused on state test results or other standard measures. While state assessments provide information, that is all they provide. I do not believe that state assessments should carry so much weight in determining the quality of a school, student, or teacher. Instead, I believe there are multiple ways for students to demonstrate understanding and growth. Our students in Millville are amazing. They have dreams, hopes, and aspirations that cannot be summarized simply in one state assessment score.

The increased graduation rate is one of the measures that I feel shows the district’s commitment to continuous improvement and growth. We hope that someday 100% of our students will find their path and graduate. What they decide to do after high school is completely up to them. For some, traditional university or college study may be in order. For others, a community college start may be best. And yet for others, pursuing a trade school or other work-readiness program. We simply want all of our students to have options at the end of their high school careers. More importantly, we want them to know how to problem solve and work collaboratively with others. The future is uncertain, what is known is that the world will need employees who can solve complex problems and work well with others.

Congratulations to our students and staff for achieving 90 percent!

— Dr. David Gentile
Superintendent of the Millville Public Schools

Rieck Ave. Jets Keep on Giving!

Mrs. Burns’ class put together a great presentation at the Jet Pride Assembly to kick off our annual Jet Pride Food drive. The food goes to all local families. We will collect canned goods and non-perishable food throughout the year with distributions going out weekly. The fifth grade at Rieck Ave. organizes the food drive by making the collection boxes, creating posters to advertise, and gathering the items. The food is then sorted in Mrs. Ale’s office and distributions are made to local families in need, and the rest taken to the local food pantry.

We are also, in fifth grade, collecting pajamas, books, socks, hats and gloves. Last year we collected 88 pairs of pajamas so this year we are hoping to collect even more! These are also donated to a local shelter chosen by The Pajama Program. If you are in need of food feel free to contact Rieck Ave. School and we will be sure to help. We believe, as a fifth grade team, that teaching children to empathize with others is how they grow as humans. More important than academics, we want our students to contribute to making the world a better place.
Millville High School welcomed all current and prospective students to their Annual Scheduling Fair and Open House on January 12. The event consisted of over 60 display tables showcasing the numerous programs and athletic opportunities for students to participate in. Throughout the state high schools have become more and more competitive in maintaining student enrollment. This has become a difficult challenge for public schools with the recent surge of charter schools and workforce.

“Millville High School is dedicated to providing students with the most rigorous opportunities to prepare them for post-secondary education,” said Mrs. Stephanie DeRose, principal of Millville High School. Millville High School currently has 14 advanced placement courses for students as well as 15 dual credit offerings for students to earn college credit while in high school. The scheduling fair showcased multiple programs including the engineering and robotics program that this year won the Rowan Engineering Pumpkin Chunkin Competition, as well as the numerous technology programs including digital design and game design.

Academic excellence is not the only focus for this administrative team. Currently Millville High School also offers 23 athletic programs that have earned countless championships. Students also have the opportunity for weight training and strength and agility training in preparation for their season. The coaches are dedicated to their sport and collaboratively work with colleges and universities to get athletes scholarships. They also work with professional scouts based on the students skill level.

The fine and performing arts program is also growing for Millville High School. The multi-year award winning musical productions have been entertaining the citizens of Millville for years.

The marching band grows each year with currently over 115 members.

“The quality of musicians that graduate from Millville are incredible,” DeRose said. Graduates have gone on to attend Vanderbilt University, be leads in Broadway musicals, and completed internships for Walt Disney World.

During the open house the administrative team also unveiled the rendering of the new renovation project of the HS beginning in the summer of 2017. Parents were given an opportunity to see the new complex and ask the principal questions about the new facility.

“We’re so excited to finally be able to have all of our students on one campus 9-12,” DeRose said. “We are about to embark on a tremendous journey that will provide us with a facility that will match the amazing programs and staff that we have at Millville High School.”

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A Regal Visit

Child Family Center’s cafeteria was transformed into the parade route for a visit from three regal gentlemen on Three Kings Day, January 6, 2017. Students from Rieck Avenue School’s bilingual program joined Spanish-speaking 3- and 4-year-olds following the kings around the cafeteria, playing a variety of percussion instruments, tambourines, bells, sticks, maracas, and the Puerto Rican güiro. The kings, otherwise known as Abraham Vilorio, Jeniel Rivera, and Alberto Vilorio, brought each child a book to take home.

In Puerto Rico and some other Spanish-speaking countries, Three Kings Day, also known as Epiphany, is the day when children receive their gifts. Traditionally on January 5th, children put grass or hay in shoe boxes before they go to bed so that the camels have food when they arrive with the kings. The camels eat the grass, and the kings leave a gift for each child. January 6th is the time for family gatherings, parades, and festivals.

After the visit from the kings, the Rieck Avenue students helped the preschoolers decorate an oaktag crown, while the adults prepared a yummy buffet of traditional foods, including pernil (roast pork), ensalada de papas (potato salad), arroz con gandules (rice and pigeon peas), taquitos, flan, and tembleque (a coconut-flavored custard). Parents, children, and school staff all enjoyed a Three Kings Day feast.

Another Three Kings Day is over, but we continue to learn about and appreciate the cultural differences our students represent. We look forward to Millville’s Multicultural Week, May 29 – June 2, which will culminate in a celebration of cultures Friday night at the Levoy Theater.
All-South Jersey Symphonic Members

Congratulations to Millville Senior High School juniors Julia Terry and Jasmine Kinlaw who each made All-South Jersey Symphonic Band. Both students auditioned at Eastern Regional High School. Julia placed first chair on French horn and Jasmine placed 10th on clarinet. Julia also made All-South Jersey Orchestra. Best of luck as they both audition for All-State Band this coming February. Their instrumental music directors are Robert De-Santis (Senior HS) and Joseph Sino (Memorial HS).

It’s a First for Robotics Team

The Millville High School Engineering and Robotics club recently competed in its first-ever robotics competition. They had two teams competing: one girls, one boys team. There were three phases to the competition: a skills contest, qualifying rounds, followed by the elimination rounds.

In the skills competition the girls team finished 4th and the boys finished 5th. In the qualifying rounds the boys finished 4th and the girls finished 11th. Then came the elimination rounds where the girls finished 3rd overall and the boys went to the championship round and lost in a hard fought best of three finals match to finish second. The girls also won the innovation award for having the most innovative robot design at the competition. Above are the boys robotics team and action and team members from both teams, from left: Maggie Mayfield, Brianna File, Chrissy Zimmerman, Tristan Cossaboon, Nyshawn Burton and Matt Harris.

Fortunate for PRIDE, FAST Grants

The Child Family Center is extremely fortunate to receive funding through PRIDE and FAST grants. PRIDE supports various activities, including our home visit bags that our families get to participate in throughout the year. FAST funding provides projects that help support our children’s education and community building. Mrs. Eileen Roche facilitates and works very hard behind the scenes to make these projects and activities successful for all of our children and families. Above are Roman and Caitlin.

A Glamorous Occasion

On December 16, 2016, The Millville Senior High School Glamour Gals Chapter and LINK had the privilege of going to the Genesis Nursing Home in Millville.

While there, the Glamour Gals had the privilege of meeting the ladies at the nursing home while giving them makeovers. Glamour Gals is a national organization in the USA and has many chapters across the country in high schools and colleges. Glamour Gals is a great program for not only the students but also the nursing home residents. As someone who has been a member of Glamour Gals for the past three years and now currently president, it is a privilege and honor to be a part of this amazing organization. The opportunity to meet the residents and make them feel extra beautiful is important to me and my chapter as well as the residents.

Through Glamour Gals, I have learned so much about not only the ladies but also myself. I have learned to be a leader and I have made some great friends through this organization. Glamour Gals is a great way for anyone to become a leader and learn the importance of teamwork. I am very proud of my girls and their dedication to this wonderful group of ladies and the organization. Without their hard work and the help of LINK, none of this would be possible.

- Natalie McCarthy, Millville Glamour Gals Chapter President

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Silver Run Sharks Swarm for Breakfast in the Classroom

It has been said that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Research shows that when students eat breakfast, they score higher on standardized tests, make fewer trips to the school nurse and are less disruptive in class. These were driving factors in the decision to implement Breakfast in the Classroom at Silver Run.

As food service director of Millville Public Schools I worked alongside a dedicated and hardworking staff to develop and implement the Breakfast in the Classroom Program which began on the first day of school. This program allows students to receive breakfast in the classroom sitting with their teachers present. Since it started, Silver Run Elementary has provided over 2,000 more breakfasts in the first 45 days of school to hungry students compared to last year.

Breakfast in the classroom was a new idea to Silver Run Elementary School. As with anything new there are always questions, there are always concerns. We must take the approach that this is in the best interest of our students and our community and make it work. Our economically disadvantaged students eligible for free lunch through the National School Lunch Program are also entitled to free breakfast through the National School Breakfast Program. In spite of the free meal benefits offered our breakfast participation was far less than our lunch participation. Introducing breakfast in the classroom allows this important meal to be easily accessible to all students with free, reduced or paid lunch status.

Breakfast in the Classroom has been a collaboration of support from food service staff, teachers, custodians and administration. Engaging these stakeholders early in the process was essential to addressing potential obstacles such as cost, cleanup and lost instructional time. The increased number of breakfasts served and consumed by hungry students eliminates the additional cost factor and it has been reported that instructional time has increased due to students not lingering in the cafeteria and hallways. After eating breakfast students are already in their seats ready to learn.

Danielle Procopio, third grade teacher, Silver Run - “Now that we are approaching December, the students are successfully grabbing their breakfast, eating it, and beginning their morning work. There are no more distractions that come with eating breakfast in the cafeteria. In the past, I found that students would come to the classroom with some issues from breakfast, which delayed the start of their academic day. Now, the students are expected to go right to their class and eat under the supervision of their teacher, leaving no room for unnecessary distraction. I am a fan of the students eating breakfast in the classroom, and I believe that it positively sets the tone for the start of the day.”

There has been great effort put into establishing and maintaining this new program and I could not have done it without the help of an amazing group of people that are dedicated to providing healthy options to the youth in our community. I would like to thank the cafeteria staff- Doris Hall, Diane McMahon, Lisa Klawitter, Connie Smith, Dianne Lauser, Dawn Nessen, Marge Interlante, Jennifer Riley, Diane Hanby, Debra Gandy and Brandy Welch. I would also extend a big thank you to Mr. Reisseck for proposing breakfast in the classroom and his entire faculty for their open minds and cooperation.

Families of all backgrounds have been impacted by our economy and may need assistance. The breakfast program was a logical, sensible way to address the needs of our students and community. The benefits outweigh the management of the logistics.

-Kurt Himstedt, Food Service Director
Millville Public School District

Mr. DeCou’s AP United States History class from Millville Senior High School visited the Millville Army Airfield Museum. During the visit they toured the museum, “flew” in an actual Link Simulator, and listened to stories of the war in the Pacific from World War II veteran Owen Garrison, seen here.