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## District leader goes to school

### Christina superintendent visits on first workday

By *EDWARD L. KENNEY*  
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Newly hired Christina School District Superintendent Marcia V. Lyles jumped right in her first day on the job Wednesday by visiting summer programs at Bancroft Elementary School in Wilmington, introducing herself along the way.

"Are you the new superintendent?" asked Elizabeth Avino, who was teaching English as a Second Language to a class of second-graders when Lyles walked in. "Hi. It's good to meet you. Congratulations. Good luck."

Avino was happy to see the district's new leader for a variety of reasons.

"I love it," she said. "First, she's a woman. And second, she's a minority."

"And," she added, "I'm from New York, too."

Lyles served as deputy chancellor for teaching and learning for the New York City Department of Education before signing on to head Christina. She said one of the things that appealed to her was the district's relative small size -- even though it is the biggest school district in Delaware.

Moving from 1,500 schools and 1.1 million students to 29 schools and about 17,000 students will give her a chance to get to know more people, including community members, and that will help her become a more effective leader, she said.

Lyles, who signed a three-year contract with Christina and will be paid a \$175,000 salary, said her experience -- including as a former teacher and principal -- should help her be a good leader more than where she is coming from.

"I don't think that coming from New York City is going to give me an advantage," she said. "It's about my experience working with students and teachers and parents. I think those are the things. It's not geographic."

Lyles said she is well aware of the shoes she has to fill as she comes to a district formerly run by Lillian Lowery, who was tapped by Gov. Jack Markell in January to be the state's education secretary.

"It's big shoes, but it's not me walking in those shoes," Lyles said. "It's walking in the prints that were made by those shoes. Everyone talks about the wonderful job she did. Yeah, there's a little pressure there, because there has been a standard set. But I think that's a good thing, to meet those standards that have been set."

Lyles, who received her doctorate in education from Columbia University, said she plans to work closely with the Christina community to make sure each student reaches his or her potential.

She also will look to improve student outcome, concentrate on closing the achievement gap, pay particularly close attention to secondary schools, ensure a safe and orderly learning environment, include parents in the education process and make sure teachers are well-trained and prepared.

"It's not all about programs," she said. "It's really what happens in that interaction between the child and the teacher. And it really isn't an easy task. My goal is about saying where we need to be and how to get there."

But, she added, "Nothing resides with one person -- and certainly not with one group. It takes everyone working together to make it happen for our children."

Lyles, currently single, has two grown children and five grandchildren. The 60-year-old said she stays fit -- and more relaxed -- by working out.

"I started going to the gym in 1990 when I was a principal, just to de-stress," she said. "I like group exercise classes because I'm challenged. I'm not going to let myself slack off because there are other people around me working hard. I'm very competitive."

As she walked the hallways and visited Bancroft Elementary classrooms, Lyles stopped to sit and chat with the children.

"It was really important for me to visit a school," she said, as she wrapped up her tour. "I wanted to see the kids in action, see them in classes, see what they're doing and talk with them. That's always the best part of the job."

In just a short time, Lyles made a good impression on teacher Etienne Seck.

"I think she will do a good job," he said. "I think they did the right thing, picked the right person. And I think we can look forward to improving student learning."

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