



State sets its course with Moyer response

July 18, 2010

Reopening Moyer Academy Charter School this fall has implications beyond the greater potential for quality education for students whose repeated academic failure led to the school's closure.

The federal government has **vested** much confidence in Delaware as the lead winner in the first round of the Race to the Top education grants and its approach to education reform.

The **Department of Education's** evidenced-based proposal won a surprising buy-in from the state's teachers union.

And just two months ago, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan appointed Gov. Jack Markell to the National Assessment Governing Board. This is the panel **responsible** for deciding the structure of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the nation's report card given to students.

Indeed, Delaware is center stage as this country decides how to restructure reading, writing and math in and outside traditional classrooms. And with an eye on global competitiveness.

So it's important that DOE attack the challenges the state's other public schools face as zealously as it tackled the problems at Moyer Academy.

As News Journal education reporter Nichole Dobo points out, Moyer Academy was closed for more than just test scores.

State officials cited a 90 percent student turnover rate and deficiencies in the curriculum, and noted that there hasn't been a "highly qualified" math teacher there in two years.

Moyer holds no patent on these "deficiencies," particularly the inadequate curriculum and the lack of highly qualified teachers in core subjects.

On Friday came news that struggles in reading continued their downward **trend** for students

statewide.

The decline was caused in part by a change in the way some students were given the test. Fewer special-needs students -- similar to many at Moyer Academy -- were given an accommodation on the test, meaning they had to take the test in the same way as their peers.

The state's Race to the Top application outlines a template for addressing these kinds of disparities going forward that can best be summed up as: A healthy respect for lessons learned from underperforming and highly performing schools, and a voracious appetite for what works best, regardless of how old or **innovative**.

Parents and property owners, whose taxes support the bulk of public education, also have **vested interests** in this stewardship. State Sen. Margaret Rose Henry's remarks at the Moyer reopening announcement are instructive for each of the 19 school districts.

"This is our community and these are our children. . . We're all here to pledge our support and our commitment to our young people. To pledge that we're not going to let you fail, that we're going to pick you up, advise you and help you along the way."

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Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

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