



# PARTNERS POST

Our Schools • Our Communities • Our Future

Your Partners for Public Education Newsletter

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## Good news stories in Pennsylvania public schools



Every November, the nation marks **American Education Week** — but as Partners for Public Education, we celebrate public education every day. In this issue, we honor those who make a difference in the lives of millions of children with stories about some of the great things happening in our schools right here in Pennsylvania.

### Students thank local veterans



Fourth-graders at Russell Elementary School in Warren County marked Veterans Day last year by writing a few "Thank You" notes to local veterans.

The experience was so positive that teacher Heather Bunk turned it into a yearlong learning opportunity.

The students made holiday gifts for the veterans in December and on Memorial Day sent them potted marigolds with an American flag and a patriotic poem.

Throughout the year, letters of appreciation arrived from veterans addressed to individual students at Russell Elementary.

"It was quite a learning experience for the students to realize that what they did, even just a letter, made someone's day a bit brighter and did make a difference and matter to someone," Bunk said.

### Coffee and a lot of learning



There's nothing like that first cup of coffee in the morning. For the students and teachers of Stroudsburg High School, that cup comes with a friendly smile — and a lot of learning.

Two years ago, the school opened a coffeehouse on campus, called Common Grounds, that is run by students with special education needs. Common Grounds has a simple slogan that sums up the mission of the project: "Brewing acceptance one cup at a time." It has clearly helped students with special needs build critical life and work skills, but it is more than that to the people whose lives are touched by the effort.

Educators say it has been a great learning experience for everyone at the school — student customers and baristas alike — and a terrific example of what can happen when a school community thinks outside the box.

### Museum exhibits student art

Every year, art teacher Connie Calvanese takes a student group from Garrettford Elementary School in Upper Darby to visit the nearby Brandywine River Museum of Art.

This year, students are doing more than visiting the museum; they are exhibiting their artwork.

Brandywine invited Garrettford Elementary fifth-graders to display their art projects at the museum.



**Watch a video:** See the Garrettford Elementary student artists and their teacher discuss the magic of art online.

# Celebrating the men and women who help our children succeed

They are often the first school employees to greet your children each morning and the last to see them off at the end of the day.

Across Pennsylvania, tens of thousands of education support professionals — classroom aides, cafeteria employees, bus drivers, building maintenance staffs, and many others — work day in and day out to make our schools run smoothly. Here are just a few ways that education support professionals help students learn.

## Classroom aides and other paraprofessionals help students learn by:

Being supportive of students' needs and interpreting information for them.

— Tammy, paraprofessional, Danville Education Support Professionals Association

## Custodians provide a safe environment in which students can learn by:

Removing snow and ice, mopping up spills, and having an idea of who should be in the schools.

— Mark, custodian, Mid-West Education Support Professionals Association

## Secretaries help students learn by:

Keeping students informed of activities, report cards, progress reports, dates, and additional resources, such as tutors.

— Jacqueline, secretary, Woodland Hills Education Support Professionals Association

## Cafeteria employees help students be healthy and reduce food waste by:

Encouraging new foods and healthy eating.

— Helen, cafeteria worker, Western Wayne Education Support Professionals Association

## Let's make sure our public schools remain the best in the nation

Pennsylvania public schools are among the best in the nation, according to many objective measures and research from respected institutions. For a decade, student achievement has been improving, thanks to the efforts of teachers and education support professionals who work with our children every day.

According to a study by the Brookings Institution, the performance of Pennsylvania students on the math and reading components of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in both fourth and eighth grades places the state among the nation's top 10 performance gainers, in both the short term (since 2003) and the long term (since 1992). The NAEP is the most appropriate test for comparing student performance among states.

Policymakers should be aware of this success and make critical investments in public education to continue to foster student achievement. For more good news statistics from Pennsylvania's public schools, read the Pennsylvania State Education Association's *Solutions that Work* at [www.psea.org/solutionsthatwork](http://www.psea.org/solutionsthatwork).

### There's more:

Find more good news stories about public schools, education policy updates, and resources for parents at [www.partnersforpubliced.org](http://www.partnersforpubliced.org). If you have a story idea for us, drop us a note at [partners@psea.org](mailto:partners@psea.org).

### Partner Benefits: Find big savings through grocery coupons

Did you know that your Partner Benefits discounts can help you save money at the grocery store checkout?

Visit the Partner Benefits page to find more information about the Access program and look in the lower left corner of the Access page for a link called "Grocery coupons." Simply select the coupons you'd like to use to "clip" them, and send them to your printer.



### About Partners for Public Education

*Partners for Public Education* is working to provide you with resources about public education in Pennsylvania because we are committed to the success of every child. It is brought to you by the *Pennsylvania State Education Association*, an organization made up of the dedicated employees in your Pennsylvania public schools.

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