New Smarter Analytics gives teachers more power over instruction

*Chief Academic Officer Michael Watson and Brandy Cooper, **Milford**'s 2016 Teacher of the Year, review Smarter Analytics with Milford teachers.*

When Brandy Cooper, a sixth grade math teacher at **Milford Central Academy** in the **Milford School District**, saw Delaware's new Smarter Analytics data system for the first time this past April, she said she immediately knew her colleagues needed to do the same.

Cooper, the 2016 Milford School District Teacher of the Year, was first introduced to Smarter Analytics during a Teacher of the Year presentation focused on enhancements to the way teachers access data from different classroom, district-level and statewide assessments, including the state's annual Smarter test each spring.

"Last year Smarter was more of a mystery. There was little direct info on how to interpret the data – just a score that didn't really mean anything," Cooper said. "Now the

data is presented in a system that's user-friendly, provides good comparisons and allows you to look at specific categories depending on your needs."

Less than a month later, Cooper arranged for all the English language arts (ELA), literacy and math educators in her school to interact with the system during one of their morning professional learning community meetings.

Crowded into a Milford Central computer lab at 7:50 a.m., Cooper and more than 50 of her colleagues logged onto the Smarter Analytics system and walked through their own student data, each witnessing the different features of Smarter Analytics for themselves, including the ability to view individual and class-level results, drill down to claim and target-level data, and sort students by trajectory across grades.

"It's been very exciting for all of us to think about how we're going to be able to use this to benefit our students," Cooper said.

Smarter Analytics, accessible to Delaware educators through the state's Identity Management System, allows teachers and administrators access to deeper-level Smarter score information than last year. Using the system, teachers have the ability to determine each student's understanding of the Smarter claims and targets and how they align to the Delaware standards.

Scores for multiple other standards-based assessments are available in Smarter Analytics as well, providing a more-comprehensive look at student assessment scores and demonstrating the importance of an entire assessment system over any one test to help guide instruction.

What is most unique about the system, though, is the way teachers can sort the assessment data provided based on their own needs. Smarter Analytics offers prepared reports but also gives teachers the ability to create their own. Users can then save and

share reports for use in professional learning communities, school-level planning, grade-level planning and more.

The system can be accessed 24/7 and allows reports to be exported in Excel and as PDFs. Additionally, since Smarter Analytics is an enhanced version of PerformancePLUS, it also links with eSchoolPLUS and the EdInsight Dashboard for seamless communication of information across different data platforms.

Cooper, who has taught at Milford Central Academy for more than seven years, says this is the first data system she has used as a teacher that offers such a deep level of detail and interactivity – features she knows are necessary as she works to translate assessment results into real outcomes for students.

The Delaware Department of Education's chief academic officer, Michael Watson, says the system was designed from the ground up specifically to address the needs of Delaware teachers. Before going live this spring, the system was enhanced based on educator feedback.

"This system allows teachers to view and analyze scores in new ways to make data-driven decisions for targeting instruction and increasing both individual student achievement as well as overall district achievement," Watson said.

Jesse Parsley, an eighth grade math teacher at Milford Central, says he was pleased when he saw the new features available to Delaware educators. After digging in to Smarter Analytics during the May meeting, Parsley says he is thinking about how this will impact teacher practice in the classroom.

"The analytics really make sense now. We can filter the data, look at our student lists and say, 'What can we do to help each student?' " Parsley said. "It will be interesting in August when we're looking at our new students."

This past spring, Delaware teachers were able to access more-comprehensive student Smarter scores using Smarter Analytics within three weeks of submitting the test for scoring. Moving forward, teachers should be able to access their fall rosters in Smarter Analytics beginning in August.

Delaware educators are encouraged to check out the system themselves using the resources below. For more information and to schedule face-to-face training, contact Brenda Dorrell at Brenda.dorrell@doe.k12.de.us.

Find training videos, a recorded webinar and self-paced courses at http://www.doe.k12.de.us/smarteranalytics.