

Academy prepares students for education jobs



Smyrna High School teacher Michael Hill-Shaner leads a student in the new Delaware K-12 Teacher Academy.

Smyrna High School teacher Michael Hill-Shaner knew early on that he wanted to become an educator. As a Smyrna High student in the mid-1990s, he became involved in Future Educators of America, now called Educators Rising, and went to college to study education.

After returning to his home town, Hill-Shaner taught Smyrna's educator preparation program for several years, creating more "homegrown" teachers along the way. This year, Hill-Shaner says he is excited to transition the educator prep program to the Delaware K-12 Teacher Academy, giving students more opportunities while still in high school to jumpstart their careers as well as provide future teachers for area schools.

"Future Educators of America helped mold me into the educator I am today and opened doors that I never would have imagined," Hill-Shaner said. "When given the ability to help establish the Delaware Teacher Academy and begin this journey in my own high school, I couldn't have been more excited. I am able to build my future colleagues and prepare students for greatness."

Part of the [state's Pathways to Prosperity program](#), the Delaware K-12 Teacher Academy is designed to provide students hands-on experience and early college credit in the high-skilled, in-demand career field of education. At the same time, the program is designed to build a pipeline of high-quality, local students who want to transition into the teaching profession.

The program goes hand-in-hand with Educators Rising, the student organization for Delaware students interested in becoming teachers. Educators Rising members participate in community service projects, compete against teams from other states and also access a virtual campus where students can meet other future teachers.

Laurel High School teacher Stacey Stump says she is excited about the program because it provides students real insight in education careers.

"This program allows students to experience the amazing influence educators have on children and the future," Stump said. "Through this experience, they will understand the struggles of teaching but also know the importance of collaboration and professional development to decrease those struggles."

For students, the program also provides an opportunity to determine if a career in education is the right fit prior to them selecting a college major. Students develop a realistic understanding of teaching while acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to sustain their interest in the profession. Students will understand the rigors of a career in education and participate in classroom and field experiences relevant to pursuing a degree in education.

"The Teacher Academy has provided me with a better insight into becoming an effective educator," said Lauren Williams, a Smyrna senior and the state's Educators Rising president. "It has also provided me with tools for my classroom and working in a professional learning community."

Delaware K12 Teacher Academy is in 14 high schools across the state with more planning to join next fall. The academy offers three years of courses. Once a student successfully completes each they will be eligible for certain dual enrollment courses at Delaware Technical Community College, Delaware State University or Wilmington University.

"We want students who complete the program to come back and become leaders in their school communities," Stump said. "Selfishly, I can't wait to see this."

The Delaware K-12 Teacher Academy is in place at **Appoquinimink School District's Appoquinimink** and **Middletown high schools**, **Caesar Rodney School District's Caesar Rodney High School**, **Cape Henlopen School District's Cape Henlopen High School**, **Capital School District's Dover High School**, **Colonial School District's William Penn High School**, **Indian River School District's Indian River and Sussex Central high schools**, **Laurel School District's Laurel High School**, **Milford School District's Milford High School**, **POLYTECH School District's POLYTECH High School**, **Red Clay Consolidated School District's McKean High School**, **Smyrna School District's Smyrna High School** and **Woodbridge School District's Woodbridge High School**.