

Grant provides students enrichment, new experiences



For several years Capital School District has actively engaged with community partners across Dover and beyond. So when the district's leaders wanted to provide a comprehensive, seamless system of wraparound services for students in middle school – one of the most-critical times for many students – they already knew they wanted to involve some of their partner organizations.

Capital Supervisor of Instruction Gene Montano and Central Middle School (CMS) Principal Shan Green reached out to non-profits with whom the district has had previous relationships. After discussing potential opportunities, they applied as a group for a 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) grant, which provides funding to schools serving low-income populations and their partner organizations to develop before-school, after-school and summer care programs for students.

Working with Junior Achievement of Delaware, the Dover YMCA, the Dover Police Athletic League, Wesley College and more, Capital created the CMS 21st Century Students with Amazing Goals (SWAG) program.

SWAG is held after school every Monday through Thursday with one Friday a month open to support field trips and other enrichment activities. Through SWAG, Students receive homework assistance and access to real-world learning experiences. SWAG families are provided workshops and other support.

Program content is developed based on data collected from surveys and forums conducted with students, families, staff and community members. For example, Junior Achievement of Delaware works with SWAG students to develop skills related to personal and professional finance, ethics, career exploration, job shadowing, and leadership. The YMCA brings trained staff to CMS to support summer enrichment activities. Wesley College provides college-aged mentors for students. The Police Athletic League (PAL) and Green Beret Project help SWAG students to become leaders who are goal-oriented and make good

choices, while at the same time building positive relationships between CMS families and local law enforcement.

“Our partners are a lifeline in continuing to make a positive difference in our students’ lives and are valued by Central Middle School,” Montano said.

To date, CMS data has shown an increase in attendance, good behavior, school connectedness, homework, and grades among students who have attended SWAG for 30 days or more.

“Each partner has agreed to operate under the single identity of CMS SWAG, bringing the services they are expert in delivering organized around the student’s home, school and community life,” said Natalie Way, the CMS SWAG coordinator. “The CMS SWAG Program meets the needs of our community’s most important resource – our children.”

Students at Freire Charter School in Wilmington also gain from participating in 21st CCLC programs. Through a partnership with Summer Collab, the Delaware Contemporary Art Museum, Junior Achievement and others, Freire offers more than 30 different after-school and summer-learning options funded by the 21st CCLC grant.

“Freire students have greatly benefited from participating in 21st Century programs,” said Nate Durant, Freire’s director of student activities. “Our students have had the opportunity to explore different interests, including computer programming, yoga, robotics, and college- and career- readiness courses. Every student has had the opportunity to learn, play, and explore in a safe and nurturing environment thanks to funding from the 21st Century program.”

Freire was able to create its 21st Century program after the co-head of the school, Felicia Wenell, approached SummerCollab Executive Director Catherine Lindroth to explore summer enrichment opportunities. At the time, SummerCollab had been supporting summer programs for five years and had just completed the first year of Tyler’s Camp, an academy for middle school students.

“Both leaders felt a synergy and wanted to create unique and empowering summer experiences for students,” Durant said. “The partnership focused on providing Freire’s students not only with extraordinary summer camp experiences but with early career opportunities and professional development as well. Our programming includes a path for students to work with SummerCollab in roles with increasing responsibility and to spend their summers growing as young leaders.”

Tyler's Camp allows Freire students to discover their talents in art, dance, rowing, music, basketball, wrestling, and lacrosse. Additionally, Freire students develop leadership skills by working with Strive's character-driven leadership program. They also participate in hands-on, problem-solving activities to develop a growth mindset and communication skills.

For these schools, the 21st CCLC programs have been a support during out-of-school hours as well as in the classroom.

"21st Century gives students opportunities to adapt to programs that they have never experienced," said Tommina Proctor, a Delaware State University student who works with SWAG at CMS. "Students have opportunities for flexibility among the programs they select. SWAG is more a family environment than a school day. We have a lot of kids who go through so much. SWAG gives them time to breathe. Students look forward to coming to the program."

According to Way, a majority of CMS SWAG students have already experienced 21st CCLC programs – some since fifth grade.

"I had the pleasure of educating and mentoring many of my students' parents when they were in middle school," Way said. "Their families fully embrace the program and enroll younger siblings and cousins. The students don't want to disappoint you. They want to do well for themselves. This is probably the most satisfying endeavor I have had the opportunity to embark upon."

21st CCLC: Mandatory RFP meetings

DOE is issuing a request for proposal (RFP) for eligible districts and charter schools to administer out-of-school-time academic enrichment programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. Initial grants will be at least \$50,000 annually for three to five years. Programs may be developed at all grade levels to support elementary, middle and high school students. Representatives from [eligible schools](#) or community programs must attend one of the following mandatory pre-bid meetings:

- **11 a.m., Monday, October 15** at Collette Education Resource Center in Dover, Conference Room C; or
- **1 p.m., Tuesday, October 16** at Collette Education Resource Center in Dover, Conference Room A.

*These meetings are mandatory as part of the competitive grant application process. Applications from those who do not attend will be disqualified from RFP evaluation. The application deadline is 2 p.m. on **Wednesday, Jan. 9**. See [online](#) or contact [John Hulse](#) for more information.*