

## Schools' 'bright spots' highlighted as educators share best practices



*Educators representing 53 schools gathered in Dover last week to share best practices and celebrate their school-based team's successes implementing the Common Core State Standards during the third annual Common Ground for the Common Core Bright Spots convening.*

For educators such as Dr. Terrance Newton, coming together with peers from across the state is an opportunity to learn from one another to benefit all their students.

“At the end of the day, it is about closing the (achievement) gaps,” said Newton, assistant principal at **Red Clay Consolidated’s H.B. duPont Middle School**.

Teachers and school leaders such as Newton gathered in Dover last week to showcase their innovative, replicable and results-driven strategies around implementing the Common Core State Standards. Governor Jack Markell joined about 250 educators representing 53 schools, 17 districts, five charters and the Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families at the third annual Common Ground for the Common Core Bright Spots convening. The keynote speaker was 2014 National Teacher of the Year Sean McComb.

Delaware adopted the standards in 2010. Last year, the First State’s third-graders were second in the nation in both English language arts and mathematics scores in the Common Core-aligned Smarter Balanced assessment.

For the past three years, the Delaware Department of Education has provided state-led professional learning for school-based teams through the Common Ground for the Common Core program. Common Ground identified principals and teacher leaders, engaged them in deep practices around the standards and concepts and analyzed student work to determine how to target instruction in the classroom.

In year one, the focus of Common Ground was on the shifts under the then-new standards. In year two, the focus was on ensuring a balanced assessment system, and in year three, the initiative focused on targeted approaches to closing achievement gaps and deepening literacy in other content areas. Next year, the state will be supporting professional learning targeted at the school level through its [Reimagining Professional Learning grants](#).

Bright Spots is a cumulative event that allows the school-based teams the chance to share what they learned and best practices with their peers.

DSCYF has participated in Common Ground all three years.

“We wanted to increase the rigor of our courses and align with the Common Core,” said Kathy Devine, DSCYF’s curriculum coordinator. “Our kids will transition more successfully if we are giving them a comparable education to what their districts would give them.”

Common Ground provided DSCYF’s educators with the resources they needed to take ownership of the Common Core, Devine said. “It gave our teachers a real chance to be leaders.”

Michael Watson, chief academic officer of the Delaware Department of Education, said every educator deserves access to professional learning that is geared to what teachers want and need for their classrooms: “At the same time we want to ensure teachers engage in the material in a supportive environment that allows them the time, resources, and coaching necessary to use what they’re learning to truly impact students. This is Delaware’s vision for all professional learning.”

Check out more photos and educator reactions to Bright Spots in this [Storify](#).