PA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SUCCESS
STARTS HERE

Campaign shares positive news of public education

BY STEVE ROBINSON

Educating nearly 2 million students. More than 130,000 graduates a year. Those are the big numbers in Pennsylvania public education. But behind those statewide statistics are thousands of success stories taking place every day in school districts, career and tech centers, and intermediate units across the commonwealth. That's the idea behind a new campaign called Success Starts Here, which officially launched Sept. 15 with a news conference

and the start of television, radio, web and print advertisements.

The Success Starts Here campaign is a multi-year statewide effort to share the positive news about public education through advertising, web, social media, traditional media and word-of-mouth with the goal of raising understanding of the value of public education in Pennsylvania. The campaign relies on the buy-in and support of a wide variety of supporting organizations to

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fully leverage the financial resources available for the campaign. Success Starts Here is NOT an advocacy campaign, although increased understanding of the great things taking place in our schools certainly won't hurt.

"While successful alumni certainly speak to the strength of public education, this is not a campaign about what 'was,'" said PSBA Executive Director Nathan Mains. "This campaign will highlight current strengths, innovations and accomplishments."

In initial research conducted during the building of the campaign, surveys showed that the closer a person was to public education, the more positive feelings he or she had toward it. A goal of the campaign will be to further strengthen these feelings, but also to increase understanding of regular citizens who perhaps don't currently have children in their local school.

This research also tested various messages to see what impacted our audiences most. The most impactful message revolved around the fact that Pennsylvania public schools provide a foundation for college, careers and life. The various ads and other creatives of the campaign will drive this message home.

"PSBA has developed this campaign and is supporting it financially, but it is not a PSBA-branded campaign," Mains said. "This is truly about public education."

To that end, PSBA is working with several supporting organizations to help spread the word and gather stories from its members. To date, the following organizations have pledged their support of the campaign and will be promoting it in various ways: PA Association of Intermediate Units, PA Principals Association, PA Association of School Administrators, PA School Public Relations Association, and PA State Education Association.

While public education in Pennsylvania and around the nation faces real challenges, we want to balance the public conversation with robust examples of quality, commitment and innovation happening at all levels and across all districts. Today, nearly 90% of students and their families choose public education. We need school entities across the state to join the campaign and show that success truly does start here. Following are several success stories.

NORTHERN LEBANON SD
Robots in Fredericksburg

At Fredericksburg Elementary School in Northern Lebanon SD, students in Tiffany Hogg's first-grade class have added a new subject to their skill set – computer programming. Using their school issued tablets, the children create a path or set of commands for the robot to follow. They revise their code, or "debug" it, until the robot performs the desired result.

Fredericksburg Elementary teacher Tiffany Hogg helps first-graders program a robot.

Hogg was inspired to order the robots as a way to involve her students in the Hour of Code, a global initiative that seeks to expose children to computer coding. She was able to fund the robot's purchase through Donors Choose, an online crowdfunding organization for teachers.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SHOW SUCCESS STARTS HERE?
The most important part of the campaign is the stories schools share on the campaign's website – www.SuccessStartsHere.org. Schools are partners in bringing this campaign to life, and there are many ways you can help do this. Each school entity has a page on the campaign website allowing them to post stories of success. An online tool kit also is available in the resources section of the website, including the campaign logo to use in newsletters and websites, social media how-to's, and a template news release.

Hogg says she has enjoyed seeing students who normally struggle with academics, excel when presented with this new challenge. Working with the robot has not only taught them coding, but also other important life skills such as collaboration, problem solving and persistence.

MARS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Mars Area students learn science while helping their local community

Mars Area SD high school students are honing skills in science and analysis while performing community service for Adams Township in Butler County. Through the Mars Area Water Protection Program, students are helping the township complete required annual water quality tests, among other services.

Each year about 100 Mars Area High School students are trained in biological, chemical and physical analysis of the local Breakneck Creek watershed as part of their classroom curriculum and an all-day stream field trip. In turn, the students act as instructors to classes of fifth-graders from Mars Area Centennial School. Under the guidance of the older students, the fifth-graders test the temperature, depth and speed of the stream as well as pH levels. The group analyzes the data, then sends it to the township administrative office for submission to the state.

A second component of the program involves the PA Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4 PA)

Mars Area SD students test water in Breakneck Creek

water testing program. Volunteer students from the high school locate their houses on a map the school has generated and a Global Positioning System (GPS) is used to identify all outflow pipes that enter the stream. The school has identified every pipe, its condition, material it's constructed of and exact coordinates, placed on the map of the township.

In addition, the student volunteers find the stream nearest their house, perform a stream walk to identify the pipes, take samples of any discharge and of the stream itself, and bring them to the school to perform chemical tests on them. The data is submitted to the township, to fulfill annual state requirements. The students receive volunteer hours for community service and contribute to a longstanding database of stream monitoring.

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SHOW YOUR PRIDE
Window clings with the Success Starts Here logo were mailed to all school entities. As part of the campaign, we encourage these window clings to be displayed prominently on main glass doors leading into school buildings.

Take a photo and tweet it out using #PASuccess and tagging @SuccessStartsPA

GO VIRAL
Use of social media will help drive this campaign to all corners of the state. Share your own success stories and be sure to use the campaign hashtag #PASuccess. Success stories posted on the website will have a feature to easily share them through Twitter, Facebook or email. The campaign also will have an Instagram account at @SuccessStartsHerePA and a Twitter handle of @SuccessStartsPA. Follow us and share.

SOUTH FAYETTE TWP SCHOOL DISTRICT
South Fayette students win national award for bus safety app

Few things are as scary for a parent than not knowing where your child is. That's why a group of South Fayette Township SD (Allegheny Co.) high school and middle school students joined together to develop an app to help parents track when their children get on and off the school bus. Their efforts won them a National Infosys Maker Award for BusBudE, including a $10,000 grant for the district.

The app, which is still in beta testing, uses Near Field Communication (NFC) tags attached to students' backpacks. Upon entering or leaving the bus, the students scan the tag with an NFC reader on a smartphone. The student information is then sent by text message to the child's parent or guardian providing them with time and location of the pickup or drop off.

Students also are partnering with MIT Media Lab to develop the app. The students are even serving as guest bloggers on the MIT site.

The team includes co-project Managers: Joe Cavanaugh (grade: 11), Parv Shrivastava (grade: 8); Director of Computer Programming: Sam Cohen (grade: 11); Computer Programming Team: Anish Thangavelu (grade: 8), Vinay Pedapati (grade: 9); and Director of Business Marketing: Meghan Banerjee (grade: 12). The group is part of the Emerging Innovation Leaders Program led by South Fayette's Director of Technology and Innovation Aileen Owens.

Find out more on South Fayette's website http://bit.ly/BusBudE. **B**

Read more success stories and share your own at www.SuccessStartsHere.org.

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LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION
To launch the campaign, one 30-second television ad has been produced using a story about first-graders doing computer programming to control a robot. Watch the commercial and a longer form of it at www.SuccessStartsHere.org.