

Gearity

GLOBE

John Carroll Partnership with CH-UH Schools

by Bill Kramer, Wiley parent

"We're neighbors," said Mark Storz. "It makes sense that we would work together for the advancement of our students." Storz, associate chairperson of the Department of Education and Allied Studies at John Carroll University, was talking about the origins of a four-year partnership between John Carroll, Wiley Middle School, and Gearity Professional Development School. Ongoing programs draw John Carroll students to the CH-UH schools, and allow CH-UH students to experience the university campus.

Currently, John Carroll student teachers are active in both CH-UH schools, and additional John Carroll students provide tutoring in reading and math. Education classes for John Carroll students are taught at both schools, including ones where the college students observe how public school classes are conducted. Everyone benefits.

"It improves student achievement," said Traci Jenkins, a Program Specialist at Wiley and the district's coordinator of the partnership. "And it improves the student teachers' experience." Storz echoed this last point. "The district offers a wonderful setting for our students to interact with children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and different economic backgrounds. And the school's diversity help prepare our students so they're able to understand what it means to be not only a developmentally responsive teacher but a culturally responsive teacher." Jenkins and Storz are working to expand opportunities for CH-UH students to spend time at John Carroll. "I wanted it to be reciprocal," said Jenkins.

Recently, Wiley's student council observed a John Carroll student government meeting. Summer math and reading programs have been held at the college. In the near future, CH-UH students may find themselves part of John Carroll science classes, writing tutorials, and athletic programs.

"We're trying to get our kids exposure to being on a college campus," explained Jenkins. "We want them thinking about the academic choices they make and how that translates into what they take in high school—which help shape the opportunities they have in college. Middle school children need to be able to touch it, see it, and feel it—versus just talking about college. This gives them that opportunity." 🌍



Village tutor Marcia Kline learning through play with Gearity preschool students.

From the Principal



by Sherry Miller, Gearity Principal

Visit Gearity and you'll feel a special energy and excitement. It drives teachers to innovate. It helps students to succeed. That excitement—partially the result of being rated Effective for the 2006-2007 academic year—creates the momentum we need to achieve an Excellent rating this year.

Gearity's formal name—Gearity Professional Development School—reveals much about us. Our learning community benefits from a close working partnership with John Carroll University, which began with the School of Education and now includes many other departments.

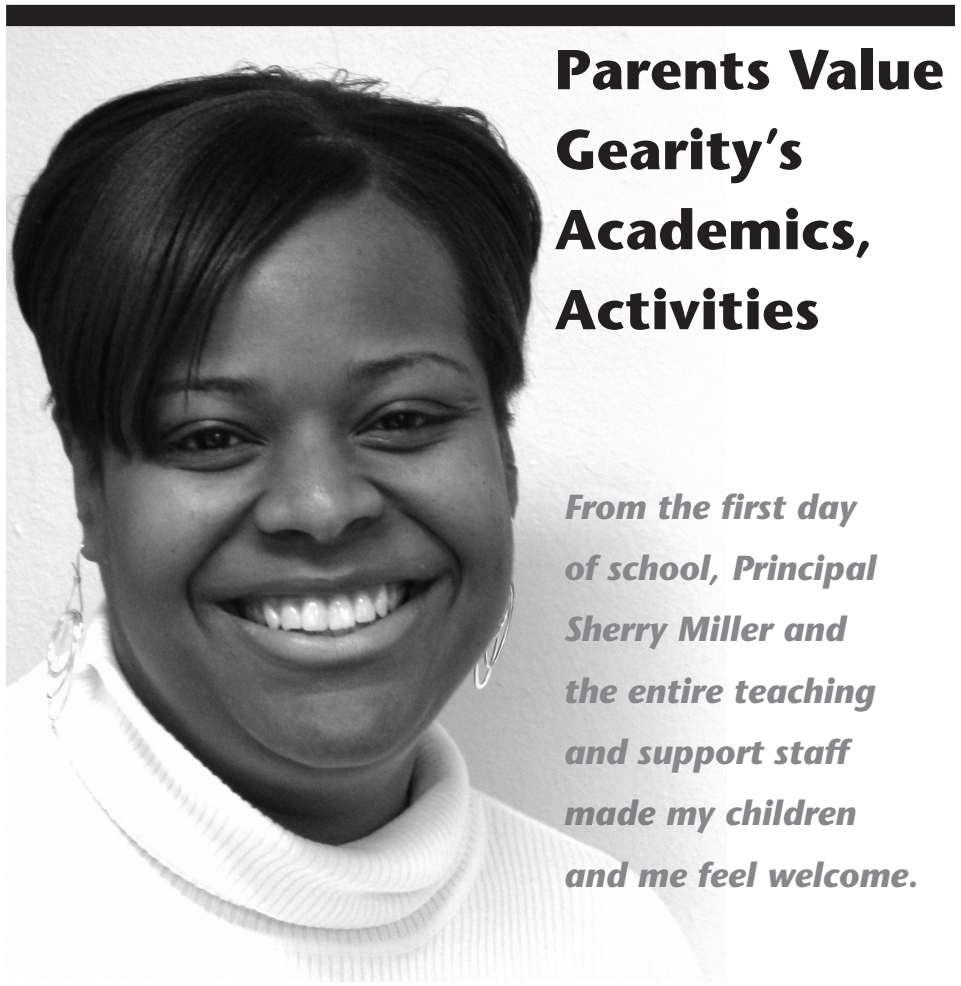
JCU professors and students observe and work in our classrooms. Our teachers chose Gearity because they welcome such input and are eager to implement the strongest educational research. Our laboratory classroom, with its two-way mirror for observation, enables us to utilize our math and literacy coaches in a unique way. Students from pre-schoolers to maturing fifth graders benefit from this wonderful exchange of knowledge and experience. The entire school, from youngest to oldest, shares common learning themes: Community; People Make a Difference; and the Environment. {Principal's letter continued on page 2}

Gearity Globe is published by Reaching Heights, a citizen organization that mobilizes community resources to support the Cleveland Heights-University Heights public schools.

Newsletters featuring news about each elementary school are written and distributed by Reaching Heights and a team of parent and community volunteers, under the direction of Reaching Heights Assistant Director Joy Henderson. Florence D'Emilia was the lead writer.

We welcome your ideas and help. Contact us at 216-932-5110 or joy@reachingheights.org. Learn all about Reaching Heights and see how you'd like to become involved, by visiting us online at www.reachingheights.org.

Gearity School is located at 2323 Wrenford Road. To contact the school, call 371-6515.



Parents Value Gearity's Academics, Activities

From the first day of school, Principal Sherry Miller and the entire teaching and support staff made my children and me feel welcome.

By Chris Lassiter, Gearity PTA President

{Principal's Letter continued from page 1}

This year, we're introducing students to new ways of understanding where they are academically, what they want to achieve, and how to get there. Data Wallets and Data Walls are two simple, concrete tools students use to track their individual progress. This developing sense of ownership and empowerment culminates when our fifth graders present portfolios of their work.

I must acknowledge the energy our 125 pre-schoolers contribute. There are many formal and informal learning opportunities — our first graders become the "big kids" when they share the lunchroom with pre-schoolers and our older students proudly model proper hallway behavior or share story-time with a three-year-old.

Gearity is a special school. At Gearity, all the energy, experience and research is fueling our charge toward this year's goal: an Excellent rating. 🌟

My family has been a part of this school for four years. I have two children who currently attend, Nylah age 9 and Alicia age 7.

From the very first day of school Principal Sherry Miller and the entire teaching and support staff made my children and me feel welcome. My children have enjoyed several activities during the current and past school year that has included: Lunch time Walking Club with Mrs. Miller, Lunch with Child Services Specialist Sarah Mrs. Coyne and being recognized for good citizenship as a Soaring Stars of Gearity. They look forward to these activities and recognition.

Gearity is a big family and you feel it from the moment you enter the building. No matter if you are a preschool parent or if you have a fifth grader we have activities at school to meet of the needs of your child. Mrs. Miller and her staff encourage all children to fulfill their potential and become "Little Geniuses." Gearity strives for academic excellence and provides an excellent learning environment and after school PTA enrichment programs to achieve this worthy goal.

We have a diverse culture that makes this school a special and unique learning community.

Please call me (932-0661) if you have questions about the PTA or Gearity or if you would like to volunteer or to arrange a tour of the school.

Thank you for your continued support. 🌟

Something Exciting is Happening at Gearity Preschool

by Sherisse Johnston, Gearity parent

Everything's at eye level, colorful displays of artwork and educational material are at your fingertips. Friends are busy discovering and observing the world. Most everything around can be touched and manipulated. And it all stimulates brain growth. This is the world for the preschoolers at Gearity Professional Development School.

The preschool program, headed by Lorene Varley, moved to Gearity in 2006 from Milliken. There's excitement in her eyes when she describes how the program is becoming a model for early childhood learning. The professional staff includes early childhood teachers, special education teachers, assistants, and occupational, physical,



Gearity Preschool Director Lorene Varley

and speech and language therapists. The preschool includes full-day and half-day programs. The half-day classes are blended classrooms with typical and special needs children; one half day class is an intensive instructional program. Afternoon enrichment incorporates art, art history, music, motion, literacy, science, math and cooking.

Early childhood teachers have a bachelors or masters degree, while special education teachers all are masters prepared. Teachers become learners as they take part in professional development coursework. The preschool provides an opportunity for field placement for John Carroll students where they spend 20 hours per semester observing.

Parents are welcome — and strongly encouraged — to participate in the classroom, on field trips, and in activities, and are kept informed about their children's intellectual, emotional and social progress.

Being at Gearity provides bonuses: preschool and kindergarten teachers share ideas about transition; preschoolers visit kindergarten classes and older children get to be a "buddy" to the younger ones; parents get an early look at a CH-UH school, which helps the chances of them sending their child to the schools.

With all that Gearity Preschool has to offer, it's no surprise that there's a waiting list to enroll in this wonderful option for preparing children for elementary education. 🌟

LEARNING

with Data Walls and Data Wallets

by Bill Kramer, Wiley parent

It's an obvious statement: teachers constantly assess students. But teachers at Gearity Professional Development School have learned to motivate students by making the results of quizzes, tests, and written assignments visible every day in the classroom.

They're doing it with data walls and data wallets.

Data walls consist of posted charts that clearly show student progress. Teachers may even display pictures of their students with "I Can" statements and "Goals for the Month". Alternatively, a teacher may keep this information in an individualized data wallet where each student can check his or her achievements.

"I'm amazed by the creativity that teachers use to help students succeed," said fourth grade teacher Bill Fiordalis. "The key is that students feel ownership of their success and the responsibility to do their best every day."

With students able to see the big picture, the mystery is taken out of the learning process. "In the past," said Fiordalis, "a child may have received a certain grade and wondered why. Now we spend more time on expectations, so the guess work is taken out for the student."

"Ultimately," added third grade teacher Julia Howells, "the role of a teacher is to help individual students understand what they need to practice and how they can achieve those goals."

In Howells's classroom, students will look at the data wall and see what areas need further work. She also gives work back to students who may not have understood concepts the first time. Students can then reflect on what they did and make improvements. And while each student has different needs, Howells believes that students feel more connected to their work if they are striving for an obtainable goal. Data walls and data wallets help them see where they were and where they need to go.

"They love looking at the progress they've made!" said Howells.

For Fiordalis, it's about helping to change the way students approach learning. "Students are much more aware of their successes and the areas in which they need to focus more attention. It's always a cause for celebration when students can verbalize in depth how they see themselves academically — and make sense of it!" 🌟

Teachers As Learners

By Laura Weber Smith, Gearity parent

A little over a year ago, Gearity Elementary School began a partnership with John Carroll University and became Gearity Professional Development School. For anyone who visits there, the exciting change in attitude and practices is apparent.

The partnership brings JCU education students into the building to attend class once a week in a special room at Gearity. This room is outfitted with a two-way mirror, so that JCU students can listen to the explanation of a teaching method, then observe that method being applied in the adjacent room during a lesson being taught by Gearity teachers. The JCU students then enter the classroom, putting the concept they've learned into action.

Teachers at Gearity learn from each other in co-teaching classrooms where two or more teachers work together. Principal Sherry Miller says, "Co-teaching allows teachers to collaborate and sharing of information about students and instructional practice. It allows teachers to be more reflective about their own teaching, and about their impact on the students' achievement."

Another way for teachers to learn from each other is through teacher coaches, like Stephanie Myers, a math teacher at Gearity. Twice a month, she meets with her fellow teachers.

"We look at the state list of math skills that students need to know and prepare lessons that will teach the skills." They use results of student assessments to guide instruction, planning on more review when necessary for students who might have trouble meeting the state guidelines, or enrichment for those who have already mastered concepts.

One consequence of the professional development strategies at Gearity is that teachers are intrinsically nudged toward re-evaluating their teaching strategies, searching for what is most effective and eliminating what is not.

There is a continuous spirit of rejuvenation at the school; one gets a sense that the teachers are truly excited about teaching, and students can only benefit from such an atmosphere. 🌀

Mentors

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By Estee Gulden, Gearity parent

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and the adults at Gearity are taking that saying to heart with a program called "Adopt a student".

The "Adopt a student" program matches Gearity adults with randomly chosen students and provides time for them to form a special mentor/student relationship. They can do a wide range of activities together – homework, games, reading, art, shooting baskets or just a good conversation. These activities allow the student to form a special bond with someone who they might not otherwise get to know.

This program puts in play a very important core belief at Gearity, that every adult in the Gearity community is responsible for every child in the building. It helps to reinforce everyone's sense of community.

Both students and adults benefit from the program. Adults find it very rewarding to be a positive mentor to a student. The students feel special and love the attention of another adult in the building and the interaction help improve their social skills.

My child was in the program and I saw the smile on my child's face when he heard he would have time with his mentor, you would have thought he had won the lottery.

The "Adopt a student" mentoring program is one more way that Gearity teachers and staff strive to make Gearity students the best they can be, in and out of the classroom. 🌀

Student Governments Join Forces

by Bill Kramer, Wiley parent

Wiley student council president Geoffrey Golden watched the meeting and was impressed by the efficiency and order. No one spoke on at length, and no one spoke out of turn.

Of course, he was watching a student government meeting at John Carroll University, and those were college students running the show.

“What impressed me was how quickly they moved on,” said Golden. “So when one thing was approved, they moved on to the next issue. It was quiet and people talked when they were called on.”

Golden and seven other student council members were observing the meeting as part of Wiley’s ongoing relationship with John Carroll University. On this occasion, the idea of conducting joint service projects arose, and the following week, John Carroll student government president, Andy Costigan, came to Wiley to engage in a brainstorming session. Three ideas emerged: a community-based effort, a national project, and an international endeavor.

The community service project occurred on November 9. Members of John Carroll’s student government joined Wiley students in their annual leaf-raking day, where students bring rakes to school and put them to use on lawns in the surrounding neighborhoods.

“What impressed me was how quickly they moved on,” said Golden. “So when one thing was approved, they moved on to the next issue. It was quiet and people talked when they were called on.”

But the leaf-raking effort took up only half the day. The other half was devoted to the international project. Wiley student council members taught fellow students how to make beaded bracelets and special ribbons that were sold on December 1st - World AIDS Day. All the proceeds from the sale will go to an orphanage in Kenya for children who have lost parents to AIDS. The sale was conducted at Wiley, John Carroll University, and Gearity Professional Development School.

The national joint service project is set for April. Wiley students will join the John Carroll student body in an 18-hour fundraising event – either a dance-a-thon or a rock-a-thon with rocking chairs. The contest will be open to anyone in the community who wants to assemble a team, and all funds will go to Relay for Life, which benefits cancer patients throughout the country. 🌍

by Bill Kramer, Wiley parent

“It’s a whole new cafeteria,” said Steve Shergalis, Director of Business Services for the CH-UH School District. “There are a lot of exciting selections out there.”

Out there means right here: at four onsite kitchens in the three middle schools and at Heights High, where lunch is prepared daily for all 12 buildings in the district.

Chartwells School Dining Services is the new food sheriff in town. It’s providing more than a million meals this year to CHUH students — with an emphasis on choice and nutrition. At the middle schools and high school, five stations are available daily.

- **Origins** has hot lunch and food bar selections that are Balanced Choices;
- **Trattoria** offers three different pizza selections;
- **Fresh Grille** serves up hamburgers, chicken sandwiches and fries;
- **Sandwich Central** gives students whatever they want in a sub sandwich;
- **Garden Emporium** has fresh salads like chef and chicken caesar, fruit salads, and veggie plates.

Although the elementary schools still have a monthly menu of hot meals, each will soon add a food bar with cold selections.

“We’re making sure that every child has a decent meal for lunch every day,” said Allison Hager, Chartwells’ Director of Dining Services. “We’re working hard to have nutritionally sound selections.”

Let’s face it: it’s hard to get kids to eat nutritious food. “But what Chartwells brings to the table,” said Shergalis, “is a wealth of experience in 1,200 other districts throughout the country. They’ve learned ways to cook nutritious foods that kids will actually buy and eat.”

And this comes without having to raise prices for school meals. It’s a win-win deal for the district and parents.

“Parents want kids to eat nutritious foods and so do we,” said Shergalis. “This is a chance for kids to try something new. They may be pleasantly surprised.” 🌍

Twelve Heights High seniors were recognized as Merit and Achievement Scholars based on their PSAT scores.

Heights Scholars Excel

The National Merit Semifinalists are Andrew Brandt, Sarah Dion, Andrew Donley, Alexander Kraus, and Jane Lindsay. The National Merit Commended students are Maria Evangelista, Owen Lowrie, Chelsea Steffen, Hannah Tatar, Victoria Williams. The National Achievement Semifinalist is Victoria Williams, and Daley Baker and Adam Katt are Outstanding Achievement Participants.

Making the Leap to High School: Teachers Help Freshmen Succeed

The transition from middle school to high school can be challenging. Teachers in the PRIDE and Legacy schools are making that transition more comfortable and successful.

PRIDE School:

One element of the plan, Freshmen with PRIDE, has the 85 PRIDE freshmen spending half of their lunchtime in a classroom with a PRIDE teacher and other PRIDE students working on habits of success. Students identify their academic goals and the actions they will take to achieve them.

Freshmen with PRIDE teachers — Jenel Chang (social studies), Melissa Egbert (math), Judy Goral (English), and Lorna Coffey (science) — work with teachers in the targeted classes to help the students craft an action plan to meet their goals.

Other elements of Freshmen with PRIDE include:

- Online grade books students and families use to check student progress;

- A common organization system for all students;
- Daily informal meetings and more formal meeting two or three times a week to plan for student success;
- Proximity; teachers' classrooms are adjacent to each other; and
- A Family Room stocked with school supplies for after school homework help

Legacy School:

Legacy Teacher Leader Karen Kastor and science teacher Stephanie Loncar coordinate the Legacy Freshman Seminar that is held in the 25 minutes before students' lunch period. "Often the fear of the unknown and lack of knowledge about high school creates frustration, resentment, and apathy in students," Mrs. Kastor said. The seminar content is designed to help students gain skills that will defuse hostility, frustration, and negativity.

One of the first activities was designed to familiarize students with the school's basic layout and services. They

went on a scavenger hunt to find the main office, where they bought workbooks, to the nurse's office, and to meet the small school secretaries and guidance counselors.

On Wednesdays, students form study groups for specific subject areas. Some days are spent in team activities.

Other elements of the Legacy Freshman Seminar include:

- Development of organizational and study skills using the Cornell Notes system;
- Lessons on conflict resolution – dealing with disrespect;
- Instruction on how to be an effective member of a team; and
- Help in making a four-year high school plan. 🌀