

## Press Release

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Harts Intermediate School Achieves Program Success** *Local principal receives honorarium for expanded learning program*

**Harts, W.Va.** – The Education Alliance is pleased to recognize a Lincoln County principal for her efforts to improve math achievement while developing a school climate and culture conducive to learning. Belinda Toney, principal at Harts Intermediate School, recently received an honorarium from The Education Alliance for implementing a Saturday Academy designed to increase math achievement. The program was a part of The Education Alliance’s Student Educational and Economic Development Success (SEEDS) Program.

SEEDS is an exclusive professional development experience for public school principals in West Virginia that links them with professional educational consultants and seasoned business CEOs. Together, they develop and execute a business plan that targets key challenges at their schools. The benefits of SEEDS include enhanced principal leadership skills, increased student achievement and community involvement, and improvements in facilities and management processes. David Lucas, a retired high school principal, served as Toney’s educational consultant. Tom Pressman, president of MIST Technologies, served as the project’s business mentor. Both diligently supported Toney and the Saturday Academy by offering guidance to ensure the initiative’s success.

Teachers and administrators at Harts were committed to delivering a unique educational experience to their students. To achieve this, Toney incorporated the Academy over five Saturdays; provided academic coaching assistance for teachers; implemented student clubs and incentive programming; and hosted ongoing parent trainings and progress meetings. During the Saturday Academy, teachers were able to enrich student learning by offering additional instruction in math and other core content areas. Teachers were compensated for working with the Academy, and students were given stipends for participating as well.

“We are encouraged by the progress we have seen among students who participated in the program,” explained Toney. “For example, seventh-grade students who attended the Saturday Academy on a regular basis improved their math scores on last year’s WESTEST by an average of 34 points. Also, the majority of the students at our school has become more interested in the learning process in general,” she said.

“We were able to think outside of the box and put together an impressive program,” explained Lucas. “We would never be able to operate a program like this without the funding from our SEEDS grant.”

“Expanded learning time is a valuable strategy to help students master content especially when there is a history of academic challenges,” explained Dr. Patricia Kusimo, president/CEO of The Education Alliance. “Ms. Toney and her team were able to get support from parents, the school and the community to make the Saturday Academy successful,” she said. “I hope others find value in what she has accomplished and duplicate it in other areas of the state.”

Harts Intermediate School received a total of \$50,000 in SEEDS assistance from The Education Alliance during the past two years to help meet the goals and objectives of its program.

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