

# OFFICE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

We have exciting news to share with you in this issue of the *Office of Charter Schools Newsletter*. New Teachers College Dean John Jacobson joined the Ball State University faculty last summer. His vision to keep Teachers College at the forefront nationally is supported by a philosophy that includes innovation and effective research. Read more about our new dean on page 3.

Our featured schools are Aspire Charter Academy in Gary, Anderson Preparatory Academy in Anderson, and Indiana Math and Science Academy in Indianapolis. Their diverse environments are infused with creative and innovative academic programs and extracurricular opportunities.

Aspire Academy's story is on page 4. Learn how the school is building pride through its unique involvement of parents in the day-to-day school schedule.

Anderson Preparatory Academy is the only public school in Indiana with a focus on military science. The national award-winning academy instills its students with core values of integrity, service, respect, and excellence. Read more on page 5.

Although its focus is on science, math, and technology training, the Indiana Math Science Academy provides a full academic program to its students. Academic and athletic competitions and extracurricular field trips serve to further engage the school population. Read more about the college-preparatory academy on page 6.

The Building Better Communities (BBC) partnership with the Office of Charter Schools continues. In a story beginning on page 7, architecture associate professor and BBC mentor Pamela Harwood explains this year's work that has involved 12 Ball State

students. Visitations to schools both in Indiana and out-of-state are providing unique opportunities for observations that will enhance facility design and planning for Ball State's charter schools.

In other highlights, Director Larry Gabbert describes the continuing demand for charter schools throughout the state; we give a brief on two schools' 2009 commencement activities; and tell you about a major scholarship fund provided to Rural Community Academy.

As we come to the end of this calendar year, the Office of Charter Schools looks forward to 2010 with anticipation of continued progress and growth. We are gratified that our charter schools network is playing a major role in enriching the lives of students throughout the state of Indiana.

As part of their day-to-day curriculum, students at Indiana Math and Science Academy conduct a science experiment. The academy is featured on page 6.

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR: Larry Gabbert

We are excited with the addition of Dr. John Jacobson as the new Dean of Teachers College and Dr. Robert Marra, Coordinator of Special Education for the Office of Charter Schools. It was gratifying to see a great attendance at a reception in September, as we welcomed Dean Jacobson to Ball State University.

In the dean's first few months at Ball State, he has already established a good track record. These new developments have been implemented for our schools: 1) The waiver for some audit fees; 2) payment of 2009-10 NWEA fees; 3) agreement with Dr. Brian Carpenter, a nationally recognized expert in charter school governance, for board training;

and 4) hiring Dr. Marra to help us with special education.

Meanwhile, reports from the field are that Dr. Marra is making important contributions to a number of schools as they continue to develop their knowledge of, and practices associated with, the field of special education. We encourage you to contact Dr. Marra, who brings a wealth of experience and expertise to our efforts, as you have questions.

Demand for educational alternatives continues to grow, and the Ball State charter school program is positioned to offer Indiana students a quality, well-rounded academic option. We currently have 32 schools in operation with another four already approved for opening in

2010. Two additional proposals remain under consideration for opening in fall 2010, with final decisions by President Jo Ann Gora expected before the end of December. Applications for 2011 school openings will begin in January, 2010.

We are nearing completion of our fall 2009 SOAR meetings and are pleased to see the emphasis that so many of our schools are placing on student achievement. With this intensity we are looking forward to the results of upcoming assessments.

Larry Gabbert, Director  
Office of Charter Schools

Demand for educational alternatives continues to grow, and the Ball State charter school program is positioned to offer Indiana students a quality, well-rounded academic option.

## OPTIONS CHARTER SCHOOLS

### Combined Class from Carmel, Noblesville Graduates in May

Options Charter School-Carmel and Options Charter School-Noblesville conducted commencement May 27, at Oak Hill Mansion in Carmel. The two-hour ceremony was highlighted by speeches from Indiana State Representative Terry Austin; Options in Education Foundation President Kevin Davis; and the two school principals, Barb Maschino and Mike Gustin.

The most poignant speeches of the evening were given, however, by students of the combined 56-member graduating class. As they walked across the stage, students were given the opportunity to thank school personnel, mentors, family members, or friends who had helped and supported them. Some also talked about their post-secondary plans. The speeches were warm, heartfelt, and often brought tears to the eyes of the audience.

As the graduation ceremony ended, it was a nostalgic departure for students and staff from both schools. While graduates reflected upon many moments of their high school experience, the faculty expressed pride in knowing the collective expertise they had shared played a small role in helping their students succeed.

Laurie Serak, Field Representative  
Office of Charter Schools



Graduating seniors of Options Charter Schools in Noblesville and Carmel gather with sponsors for a group photo after receiving their diplomas.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH DEAN JACOBSON

### Dean Brings Extensive Background to New Position

Settling into his new Indiana home, Teachers College Dean John Jacobson says the strong reputation of Teachers College was instrumental in influencing him to join the Ball State University faculty.

"Ball State's nationally ranked and well-respected Teachers College has impressive credentials, offering many opportunities in research and learning," Jacobson says. He points to a talented faculty and diverse academic offerings, including nine doctoral degree programs, as particular strengths.

His extensive background in education and scholarly research makes Jacobson well suited for his diverse role at Ball

State. Obtaining his bachelor's, master's, education specialist, and doctoral degrees from Brigham Young University, Jacobson most recently was dean of the James I. Perkins College of Education at Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, TX, a position he had held since 2003.

In addition to numerous other related positions in higher education, he was an elementary school teacher and principal and, for a time, also served on a school board, which Jacobson says provided, "a different view of parents and of the school."

Among duties of his new position, Jacobson will oversee Ball State's Office of Charter Schools. Jacobson, who believes

charter schools enrich the educational experience beyond the traditional school environment, says he looks forward to helping Ball State University become the "best authorizer [of charter schools] in the country and to serve as a model that other states can use."

At a time when funding and possibilities of "talent drain" pose challenges to the state's educational landscape, Jacobson says Ball State is positioned to continue to attract top students as a leader in training well-qualified teachers and school professionals.

"As we face challenges of economic issues, changing demographics, and other factors that affect our work in higher education," he says, "it will take the kind of thinking, determination, and action that the folks at Ball State are all about. I am pleased to see the collaboration that faculty and staff have with the community, both locally and statewide, and the emphasis being placed at growing our presence, prominence, and influence nationally and internationally."

Jacobson's vision to keep Teachers College at the forefront is supported by his openness to innovation and eagerness for effective research. He says that programs, already among the best, continue to evolve and are receiving good assessments from alumni and other professionals in the field.

Those factors, says Jacobson, help establish a formula for success that will make Ball State University's Teachers College "better tomorrow than today."

The interview for this article was conducted by BBC Fellows team members Erica Hutt, elementary education; and Zackary Duncan, architecture.



Dean John Jacobson

## Hayden Generosity Benefits Rural Community Academy



Rural Community Academy (RCA) has received \$30,000 for scholarships from the estate of Harold Hayden of Graysville. The community nonprofit partner of RCA, Turman Township Youth Foundation (TTYF), also received \$20,000 from the Hayden estate for scholarships. Hayden was a 1940 graduate of Graysville High School, which now houses RCA. A founding member of the community nonprofit that came together to support RCA, he attended many school and community events in the school building. Pictured are Rural Community's Board President Amanda Estey, Hayden's son Gary, and TTYF Board President Connie Wampler.

Jacobson says Ball State is positioned to continue to attract top students as a leader in training well-qualified teachers and school professionals.

## ASPIRE ACADEMY

### Going to the DOGS—Dads Of Great Students, That Is!

In its second year of operation, Aspire Charter Academy in Gary applies a research-based approach to education. The back-to-basics philosophy at Aspire focuses on a liberal arts education that provides a sound academic foundation.

Aspire's curriculum includes a clearly defined discipline program, focus on moral principles, and parental involvement.

"We use specific grade-level action plans to address the needs of all students," says Aspire principal, Gloria Hall. She says there is an emphasis on bringing students up to their respective grade levels in reading and math, subjects Aspire officials believe provide the foundation for learning other subject matter.

Aspire's curriculum is supported in a learning environment that includes a seven-hour school day, a clearly defined and structured discipline program, focus on moral principles, and parental involvement.

Diane Hobbs, school/family liaison, explains the emphasis on involving adult role models. "Parental involvement creates partnerships that strengthen academics as well as character. You see it in the face of every child whose parent volunteers.

Parental involvement is a necessary component for the success of any school," Hobbs says.

As an outgrowth of its emphasis on involving parents in the learning experience, Aspire has embraced a national K-12 initiative, known as "Watch DOGS" (Dads Of Great Students). Through the program, Aspire invites fathers, grandfathers, uncles, big brothers, and other father figures to volunteer at least one day per school year at their child's/student's school.

"This is Aspire's second year in operation and our second year participating in the program. The results have been spectacular," says sixth-grade dean, Rasheeda Green.

More than 80 dads and other "father figures", along with nearly 80 additional family members, attended this year's after-school kick-off event, September 30, according to Sylvia Diaz, school registrar. "We celebrated the fathers who are volunteering for a second year and welcomed our new DOGS," Diaz says.

Following presentations, the men in attendance signed up for days they will volunteer throughout the year. Opportu-

nities range from working in classrooms to assisting with arrival and dismissal, monitoring the halls, or just taking time to provide a listening ear for a student in need.

"We only have a few days on our school calendar not filled with at least one 'Dog' for the Day," says Rachid Kharchaf, dean of grades 3-5. Kharchaf adds, "Our program is overseen by a 'Top Dog' volunteer who partners with us to provide assistance at our school."

When the Dog for the Day arrives, he is greeted during the school's daily assembly. He is presented a t-shirt and ID badge he wears while volunteering. The students he represents also are given t-shirts with the imprint, "My Hero is a Watch Dog".

"Students beam with pride as they receive their shirts along with their Dog for the Day," Hobbs says. "Pictures are taken and then posted on our Dog Wall of Fame."

The Watch DOGS program has proven to be a huge motivating factor for students and staff at Aspire. Nicole Young, dean of K-2, says students and staff alike feel a sense of pride



"Dog for the Day," Demetrius Holman, joins son, Demetrius Holman, Jr., and daughter, Arlene, during his volunteer time at Aspire Academy. About the program, Holman says: "Kids need to have male figures around and it makes me feel great to volunteer."

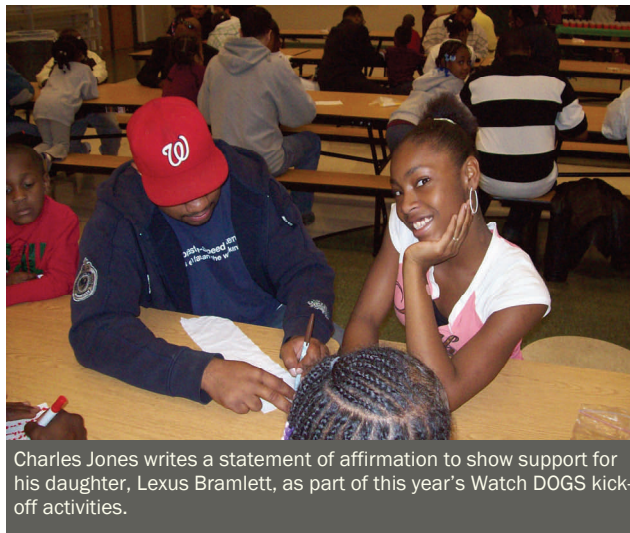
when there is a positive male presence in the building.

"Too often, we hear stories of the family structure breaking down or disturbing statistics about the number of single-parent households. We are taking a proactive stance and using the wonderful resource of our male figures," Young says.

"Programs such as this one are a testament to the strength we have been able to find within our school community.

"This program can be a great tool for schools seeking to prevent school violence and improve student performance. It truly does 'take a village to raise a child,'" Kharchaf says. "Our Watch DOGS are helping us realize our mission and purpose."

Gloria Hall, Principal  
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Charles Jones writes a statement of affirmation to show support for his daughter, Lexus Bramlett, as part of this year's Watch DOGS kick-off activities.

## ANDERSON PREPARATORY ACADEMY

### Instilling Academic Excellence

*We believe that a proper public education provides the foundation and training necessary to prepare today's youth to become tomorrow's leaders.*

—From the Anderson Preparatory Mission Statement

Anderson Preparatory Academy (APA) offers a rigorous college preparatory curriculum of liberal arts and sciences. It delivers in a setting that emphasizes leadership, character-building, and a commitment to community service and patriotism.

In its second year of operation, APA is the only public school in Indiana with a focus on military science, and the academy has received national recognition for being the first school in the country to have its entire student body as members of the Civil Air Patrol.

"Our school is unique in that we require all cadets to participate in the Cadet Program of the Civil Air Patrol, a civilian volunteer organization sponsored by the U.S. Air Force," Captain Robert Guillaume, commandant and academy CEO, says.

"The cadet program instills in American youth the core military values of integrity, service, respect, and excellence. Serving as a vehicle for our challenging academics, the cadet program also integrates aviation and technology into the classroom," Guillaume adds.

APA has been recognized for arranging for every student to fly in Civil Air Patrol planes. "It is a goal that all cadets get the chance to fly each year," Guillaume says.

Embracing the latest in technology, the academy successfully competed with other state public schools to receive a \$100,000 grant that is helping the school provide Kindle digital readers and computers for its

classrooms. In addition to offering a high-tech learning environment, APA has an online presence with a blog that posts assignments for every class at every grade level and a site providing access to cadet progress reports.

"We have a system where parents and students can view an online real-time progress report that reflects grades as they are entered in the teacher grade books," Guillaume says.

Guillaume stresses the importance of parental involvement. In addition to being encouraged to stay abreast of academic achievement, parents provide reinforcement by taking voluntary roles in the extracurricular programs of the academy. They assist with a host of activities, including cheerleading, dance teams, athletics, and school social functions such as the academy's semi-annual dances.

APA currently serves grades 6-9 and will eventually be a 6-12 school. The curriculum, according to Guillaume, meets and exceeds state standards.

"Starting in the sixth grade, our accelerated learning programs sharpen skills needed for the rigorous academics of college," he says.

Requirements of advanced reading, writing, communications, and mathematics skills give students more options in college and increases their earning potential in the workplace."

Test results are favorable for the young school. In its first eight months of existence, based upon NWEA testing, language scores improved 1.03 years, while math scores improved 1.22 years.

Rounding out the educational structure at APA is a requirement that all cadets complete 25 hours of community service each year. Projects have included fundraising for charities and weekends of helping clean

and beautify community areas. As a result, Guillaume says, "Our cadets are known as valuable members of the community with a heart and hand to help others and make Anderson proud."

APAs vision is to empower young women and men to be successful leaders, academically and socially. Guillaume believes the academy is succeeding, not only through the strength of its academic program, but also through developing core principles and instilling a sense of respect in the cadets.

"Our focus on character, patriotism, and self discipline makes the cadets proud of being part of something larger than themselves," Guillaume says. "Their sense of purpose is strengthened every day as they become the leaders of tomorrow."

Administrative team members Robert Guillaume, John Hayden, Brad Morgan, and Richard Thompson contributed to this article.  
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Embracing the latest in technology, Anderson Preparatory Academy successfully competed with other state public schools to receive a \$100,000 grant that is helping the school provide Kindle digital readers and computers for its classrooms.



Cadets at Anderson Preparatory Academy present the colors during a daily assembly in the school gymnasium. Students assemble by grade level to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, hear announcements, and respond to directions of student and faculty officers.

## INDIANA MATH AND SCIENCE ACADEMY

### Offering Solid Academic, Extracurricular Programs

In a learning environment offering small class sizes, individualized learning, and multiple instructional strategies, Indiana Math and Science Academy (IMSA) is an inner-city, college-preparatory public charter school serving students in grades K-10 in Indianapolis. Managed by Concept Schools, which operates 20 schools in the Midwest area, IMSA has been open since August 2007.

Although it is focused on science, math, and technology training, the academy offers a full academic curriculum.

"IMSA provides a values-based education to all students in its language arts, science, math, social studies, fine arts, foreign languages, athletics, and computer technology departments," says John Aytekin, the school's leader.

Aytekin says the academy also offers a wealth of extracurricular activities that broaden students' horizons and enhance their leadership skills.

"A diverse student body at IMSA benefits from educational and recreational field trips to local, national, and international destinations," Aytekin says. He adds that clubs, sports, science, math, and liberal arts competitions engage students for a well-

rounded educational experience.

Evidence that IMSAs academic formula is working is displayed through 2008 results for PL221, Indiana's accountability law. The academy was ranked as an Exemplary Progress School after achieving a 10 percent improvement rating on ISTEP + scores. Scores were up an average of 50 points per student over the previous year.

Aytekin points to numerous reasons for the success. "A high degree of parental involvement through increased communication, parent-teacher activities, home visits, parent breakfasts, family fun nights, and access to student records via the Internet are all contributing factors," Aytekin says.

"Instructional and leadership teams involve teachers in the decision-making process. IMSA offers professional development opportunities and all teachers are committed to tutoring and advanced study teams offered after school and on Saturdays," he continues.

As an extension to their day-to-day learning, students have successfully engaged in academic and athletic competitions. In addition to acquiring high honors at Concept Schools' competitions in spell-

ing, math, and basketball, IMSA accumulated a number of statewide awards during the 2007-08 school year.

The academy received 16 medals at the Science Olympiad at Butler University, placed third in the Indiana Charter Schools Spelling Bee competition, and won in two categories at the Central Indiana Science Fair. Already in the 2008-09 school year, IMSA has claimed 15 medals, including six first-place awards, at Science Olympiad 2009, hosted at Purdue University.

Aytekin says a shared sense of responsibility is evident among all the school's stakeholders. "Students, teachers, parents, and staff share in establishing measurable goals for the school. [We all] have high expectations for academic achievement, conduct, and support which are non-discriminatory of background, culture, or economic status," he says.

"IMSA is dedicated to the pursuit of truth, academic excellence, and the advancement of knowledge in preparing our students for the colleges and universities of their dreams," Aytekin continues. "As stated in a quote by financier and philanthropist Paul Meyer: 'Whatever you vividly imagine, ardently desire, sincerely believe, and enthusiastically act upon, must inevitably come to pass,' IMSA students' minds are set to win."

John Aytekin, School Leader  
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Students at Indiana Math and Science Academy are winning awards at various academic and athletic competitions.

IMSA provides a values-based education to all students in its language arts, science, math, social studies, fine arts, foreign languages, athletics, and computer technology departments.

## BALL STATE BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES PROJECT

### Partnership Enhances Charter Schools Facility Design

As part of a continuing partnership that originated in fall 2007, an interdisciplinary Building Better Communities (BBC) project team is working with facility design and planning for Ball State University's charter schools.

Twelve students on the 2009 team are mentored by architecture professor, Pamela Harwood, and architecture graduate assistants, Tracy Autenrieth and Matthew VanSoest. The diverse group is working with charter schools in the state of Indiana to research and understand the unique ways in which they operate.

The goal of the team is for research work, documentation, and facility design recommendations to become useful tools to actively engage school administrators, teachers, students, designers, and community members in the development of charter schools.

The team's suggestions are meant to foster ideas and activate discussion on how a facility will best work to foster the unique goals of each school. By looking at exemplary case study educational environments at the national level, profiling selected Indiana charter schools, and of-

fering best practice design examples and recommendations, the team will help in the development of new charter schools or in the improvement of existing ones.

On September 27 the entire Building Better Communities Fellows Team traveled to Chesterton, Hammond, and Chicago. In Chesterton team members toured the new site for the Discovery Charter School, scheduled to open in August of 2010. The school will base its curriculum on environmental education, using the natural setting as its tool toward knowledge.

Ten acres of woodland and wetlands along with the Indiana Dunes State Park, which are adjacent to the site, will be utilized in the place-based curriculum. The grass-roots initiative stemmed from a nearby preschool, the field station, which also focuses on sustainable educational programs based on nature study.

Discovery Charter School will open with grades K-6 and will add one grade level per year, up to grade 8. The school's facility is an underutilized office building, which will be adapted to fit the educational needs of the students

and staff. BBC team members, who carefully assessed and analyzed the site and existing building, are currently gathering statistical, geographical, and structural information which will all be included in the final report and design proposal.

At the Hammond location, the team visited the future site of the Urban Academy Charter School. That facility, a new construction, is located on the site of the historic Masonic Temple of Hammond. The school, with a science- and technology-based curriculum, will be designed to fit into the urban context which provides numerous opportunities for community partnerships.

In Chicago, the BBC team visited Perspectives Charter School at the Rodney D. Joslin Campus and the Gary Comer Community Youth Center, which contains Noble Charter School. Both of these learning institutions are located in urban settings in south-side Chicago.

The nearby area was transformed and enhanced by Perspectives School and Gary Comer Center and children are a focal point in the community.

From the three visitations, the team concluded that new or existing charter schools not only impact the neighborhoods in which they are located, but also have the power to positively transform an entire city because of the desires to provide safe destinations and better education for youth.

The comparison of the two educational environments in their

The goal of the team is for research work, documentation, and facility design recommendations to become useful tools to actively engage school administrators, teachers, students, designers, and community members in the development of charter schools.



BBC team members have observed both in class and extracurricular environments as they work to recommend facility designs conducive to learning for charter schools.

## BSU BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES PROJECT

### Charter Schools Facility Design and Planning

urban contexts allowed the BBC team to consider how to create connections and build relationships within the Indiana contexts of Hammond and Chesterton.

In October, a BBC group of four students traveled to Columbus to visit the International School of Columbus. Located in a shopping complex, the school facility was partially funded by the community and generous contributions from local construction companies.

The school is “bare bones” and is in need of finished ceilings and floor materials, but is operational and provides a stimulating curriculum and environment for grades 7-12. A major goal of the school is to expand into adjacent building space and to make connections with the exterior environment.

Among recommendations, BBC team members propose to accentuate the school by re-planning spaces within the building, enhancing programs and

connection to other academic facilities, and better utilizing the site. New classrooms should contain skylights for natural daylighting and adequate storage space for better organization of interior space.

Creating more outdoor green space for science studies and play areas, along with giving the school better identification and signage, would allow the school to connect to the outdoor learning environment and the Columbus community. The team also suggests that the Columbus school partner with local businesses that already exist in the shopping complex as well as surrounding institutions.

Another BBC group visited West Gary Lighthouse Charter School in Gary. The new charter school facility is nestled in a residential neighborhood and the exterior facade’s home-like design allows the building to fit well within the residential context surrounding it.

At the school, team members

observed the discipline and obedience of students, who were quietly reading books and not conversing while waiting for lunch-time activities to start. The central gathering space of the facility displays the S-H-I-N-E qualities: self-discipline, humility, intelligence, nobility, and excellence, all qualities that the school believes can turn children into responsible young adults. Some walls display the personality of the students through artwork.

The team proposed that the uniqueness of this program and the ability for the physical environment to support the educational program be highlighted to the community. More public events and community use of the facility is suggested as ways to embrace the local residential areas.

Team members continue to study national best practice examples and profiled three other Indiana charter schools. As the BBC team makes design recommendations and proposals, one thing remains clear: the immersive learning project has been, and will continue to be, an enlightening experience for Ball State students involved.

Future career paths may be shaped through this opportunity and have helped interdisciplinary students work together to not only solve real-world problems but to also take on active roles in the charter school movement of Indiana.

Pamela Harwood  
Associate Professor  
Department of Architecture

For more information on this project, contact Harwood, [pharwood@bsu.edu](mailto:pharwood@bsu.edu) or (765) 285-1900.

The central gathering space of the West Gary facility displays the S-H-I-N-E qualities: self-discipline, humility, intelligence, nobility, and excellence, all qualities that the school believes can turn children into responsible, young adults.

### BBC Project Team Boasts Diverse Disciplines

The fall 2009 Building Better Communities Project Team for Charter Schools Facility Design and Planning consists of: Jaren Cooley, Jessie LaFree, Jonathan Raichel, Amanda Auron, Cara Burkhart, Drew Schenk, Dalen Faughn, Rachel Fairbanks, Erica Hutt, Laura Remley, Zak Duncan, and Gregory Black. Architecture professor Pamela Harwood, along with architecture graduate assistants, Tracy Autenrieth and Matthew VanSoest, mentor the 12 interdisciplinary students, who have concentrations in urban planning, psychology, architecture, natural resources, environmental management, education, and industrial science.

**BALL STATE UNIVERSITY**

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This issue's featured schools offer diverse learning experiences. Learn about Indiana Math and Science Academy (top left), page 6; Aspire Academy (bottom left), page 4; and Anderson Preparatory Academy (right), page 5.