

# **The Coast Star (12/20/2012): Belmar Elementary School does not receive Race to the Top grant**

## **Will look elsewhere to fund one-to-one laptop initiative**

By Haley Behre

BELMAR — The Coastal Monmouth Consortium, which includes Belmar Elementary School, found out last week they did not receive the Race to the Top grant.

The Race to the Top federal grant [RT3D] emphasizes building personalized learning programs and strategies, with a focus on technology.

From the 370 districts nationwide which filed a proposal for the funding, 61 districts were named a finalist—including two from New Jersey.

The two finalists from New Jersey are the Newark Public Schools and the Coastal Monmouth Consortium that includes Belmar Elementary School, Bradley Beach Elementary School and Neptune Township and Neptune City school districts. The consortium applied for a \$13.2 million grant.

According to Lisa Hannah, assistant principal and director of curriculum, the Coastal Monmouth Consortium “placed 33 out of all those applications and first in the state of NJ,” but did not receive the grant.

If the consortium had received the grant, Belmar Elementary would have used its portion of the money to rewire the building for wireless Internet, staff development and for a one-to-one initiative for fifth- to eighth- grade students to have laptops that will be used to create portfolios and a personal learning environment, said superintendent/principal David Hallman. A personal learning environment is one that “uses differentiated learning for students in an environment that is very stimulating to children,” he said.

David Hallman, BES superintendent and principal, said the school was “disappointed we didn’t receive the grant” as they were “excited about the opportunity.”

Despite the fact the school did not receive the grant, Mr. Hallman said, “it was a wonderful experience” as he was able to learn a lot from other professionals.

Even though the school is disappointed it did not receive the grant, Ms. Hannah said “the bottom line is that [Belmar Elementary] is moving in that direction anyway” since those initiatives were part of the school’s strategic plan, which is a five-year initiative that allows teachers, parents, administration and community members to work collaboratively to envision the future and identify the necessary steps to reach that vision for the school.

“The grant would have made it a rather quick transition, which would have benefited the students and staff, but we are moving in that direction regardless,” Ms. Hannah said.

Belmar Elementary is looking at different outlets, such as the Gates Foundation, for grants to fund the one-to-one initiative for fifth- to eighth- grade students to have laptops.