



# Advocates for Community and Rural Education

Weiner's last two chiefs have been women. Betty McGruder, the current superintendent, says, "I like to think Charlotte [Wright] did such a good job the board felt confident in hiring me."

## Weiner is proud of academic and athletic achievements

Nestled in the flat farmlands of eastern Arkansas, the rural school of Weiner has achievement results that are anything but flat.

One of the state's smallest school districts at 372 students in kindergarten through 12th grade, last year Weiner was named #9 of 10 Golden Apple Award schools in Arkansas for having the ninth highest scores in the state on the SAT-9 and the Benchmark exams.

In spite of living on the edge by barely meeting the state's minimum enrollment number and courting the fiscal distress classification every time fluctuating enrollment takes a few thousand dollars from its \$1.2 million budget, Weiner keeps focusing on providing a top-notch educational opportunity for its children. **Great academic program**

Weiner's elementary children get a good grounding in the basics, as shown by their high scores on state tests. Last year's benchmarks showed 89% proficient in both literacy and math in the fourth grade, 77% proficient in math and 74% proficient in literacy in sixth grade, and 53% proficient in math and 61% proficient in literacy in the eighth grade.

Its high school offers, besides the required 38 units, Advanced Placement classes and concurrent enrollment. At least a third of the 120 high school students also take advantage of the opportunity to do advanced computer technology work in the school's EAST Lab.



Teryin Wixson, a senior at Weiner, is their third National Merit Scholar in less than a decade. Teryin has a full scholarship to Texas A&M to major in pre-veterinary medicine.



The sign says it all: Awarded the Golden Apple Award for academic achievement and state basketball champions.

Pam Hogue, EAST Lab teacher and also district technology coordinator, lists mapping water lines and a new subdivision and designing a new city park with a walking trail as projects her students have completed.

"I love teaching at Weiner," says Hogue. "Having small class sizes allows teachers to focus on students' deficiencies, and students don't get lost in the crowd."

Besides small classes and dedicated teachers, Superintendent Betty McGruder says they have no special reading programs in elementary, although they do use a prescriptive diagnostic teacher, and each child in K-6 has his or her own Academic Improvement Plan in math.

McGruder also attributes

Weiner's success in part to its smaller size. With smaller classes, she says, teachers can focus on areas where students need extra help and promote individual talents.

### Nationally recognized students

Teryin Wixson, Weiner's third National Merit Scholar in less than a decade, agrees with this assessment.

Asked if attending a small school has had any significance to her achievement, Teryin says, "I think it's helped being in a small school because teachers have given me a lot of personal attention." For example, she says when the librarian would get a new book that the librarian thought she needed to read or would interest her, she would tell Teryin about it.

"Teachers are here because they love it and they really (cont. Weiner.... Page 2)

### Weiner is proud of academic and athletic achievements, cont.

encourage kids to do well,” she adds, “and teachers push everybody to do their best and don’t let anyone slip through the cracks.”

Teryin has felt challenged at Weiner despite its small size, obviously scoring high enough on the PSAT and the SAT to be named a National Merit Scholar, in the top one-half of one per cent of graduating seniors in the nation. She also scored a 4 on her AP English exam, an above average grade that qualifies her for college credit for her high school English class.

She has a 4.0 grade average and scored 32 on the ACT.

Teryin has had the opportunity to participate in many extracurricular activities at Weiner. She has been on the student council, in the school play, and a member of FFA, FBLA, Science Club, and the tennis team. She was on the March of Dimes Youth Council and helped raise \$4,500.

The daughter of a fourth-generation rice and soybean farmer and a speech therapy and Spanish teacher, Teryin has had offers from several colleges but has chosen to attend Texas A & M University on a full scholarship to major in pre-veterinary medicine.

Another nationally recognized student, **L.J. Bryant**, says, “My small school has allowed me to go from ‘Weiner to Winner.’”

L. J. is the current National Vice President of Finance for Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America.

As part of the ten-member National Executive Council of FCCLA, he participated in a five-day leadership training in Reston, VA in January. During their one-year term, these ten national officers help direct programs for a membership of over 220,000.

Before being elected to national office, L.J. served as the president of the Arkansas FCCLA (11,560 members).

“FCCLA...allowed me to overcome personal obstacles such as epilepsy and the death of my father. FCCLA also helps students put classroom skills in action such as financial skills in our Financial Fitness program or health knowledge through our Student Body program. Most importantly, we are the only in-school student organization with family as its central focus,” says L.J.

L.J. was on the student council at Weiner

for three years and has been very involved in his community, logging 300 plus hours a year. He has helped raise funds for the March of Dimes and the Arkansas Children’s Hospital. He also participated in Heart Walk and the March of Dimes Baby Walk. He has served as president of the United Methodist Church youth group and has been very active in his church at many levels.

L.J. also currently serves as president of the Poinsett County Young Democrats, which he founded. A look at his web site, [www.ljbryant.com](http://www.ljbryant.com), shows him with many political notables, including former president Bill Clinton, State Senator Jack Critcher, and Attorney General Mike Beebe.

### Community a factor in school success

Superintendent McGruder says community involvement in her school and a stable workforce add to its success.

Even though the school can only afford to pay the minimum teacher salary, she says, “When teachers come here, they tend to stay. You can’t buy what they experience here: safety and a sense of accomplishment at the end of the year.”

In spite of the continual threat of closure under the provisions of Act 60, Weiner

### L.J. Bryant, a senior at Weiner and National Vice President of Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America



residents hope that their excellent achievement scores, success with kids, and thousands of dollars awarded to their graduates in scholarships each year will be enough to keep them in business.



**City park designed by Weiner students in their EAST lab, where about one third of students in grades 9-12 gain advanced computer skills.**

**Save Our Schools**

The Rural School and Community Trust has just released *Why Rural Matters 2005*. This report highlights 22 indicators that define the condition of rural education in each of the 50 states. “*Why Rural Matters 2005* is one of the most important resources on rural education.... These numbers tell a story about the urgent need for states to address rural schools—and the recommendations made by the Rural Trust are concrete and proven,” said Richard Riley, former U.S. Secretary of Education. The Arkansas page of the report is reproduced here. The entire report can be found at [www.ruraledu.org](http://www.ruraledu.org).

## Save Our Schools

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## Advocates for Community and Rural Education



# Delta students recognized for outstanding art achievement



Seventh grader Reginal Golden attends Altheimer middle school. The thirteen-year-old won first place in the Southeast Regional Art Association Art Show and in the state competition held at the AETN building in Conway on April 2, 2005, where his art is on exhibit during the month of May.

Although Reginald is a gifted artist, his true love is science. His goal is to be an archeologist or a paleontologist. He also loves to play chess and do puzzles.

Chastity Hurst is a junior at Earle High School. She is the seventeen-year-old daughter of Georgia Milow and Tyrone Hurst.

Chastity has won awards for her art, but perhaps her greatest honor is to have her painting, given as a special gift, hanging in her principal's office

Chastity is a good student with a 3.6 GPA. She is considering two possible careers.

She wants to either go to college and major in commercial art or to become a child care professional with her own facility.

