



For Immediate Release: April 7, 2011

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Online Character Education Lessons Starring Garfield Debuted in Botetourt County Elementary School

Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright unveiled the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) latest collection of online instructional modules starring Garfield, the cartoon cat, during an event today at Botetourt County's Cloverdale Elementary School.

Botetourt County Superintendent Anthony S. Brads joined Wright for the debut as fourth graders at the school — a three-time winner of the Governor's Award for Educational Excellence — became the first students in the commonwealth to join Garfield and his friends for online lessons and activities focusing on character education.

"These engaging lessons and activities, featuring Garfield, Arlene, Nermal, Odie and other familiar characters, speak simply and directly to boys and girls about the virtues, values and attitudes that support healthy learning communities," Wright said.

The six character education modules debuted today cover the topics of diversity, giving back to the community, listening, peer pressure, self control and self esteem. Each unit includes an animated story, a follow-up activity and a quiz for students to apply what they have learned.

The modules are the latest addition to the Infinite Learning Lab (<http://learninglab.org>), an online resource developed by the VDOE in collaboration with cartoonist Jim Davis and the Professor Garfield Foundation.

"I am thrilled that students in Botetourt County are the first to use these new online resources," said Brads. "The Infinite Learning Lab will help teachers partner with parents in shaping the character of students."

"Garfield may have a reputation for laziness but he is positively pumped about promoting positive character traits in Virginia's public schools," said cartoonist Jim Davis, the fat cat's creator.

Legislation passed by the 1999 General Assembly requires local school boards to include character education in their instructional programs to improve the learning, promote achievement, reduce disciplinary problems and develop civic-minded students of high character.

The character-education content broadens the scope of the Professor Garfield's Infinite Learning Lab, which was launched in October 2009 with the first of four modules on Internet safety featuring the lasagna-loving feline and other characters from the popular cartoon strip.

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