



MAISD News

a quarterly publication of the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District

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Summer Brings Powerful Programs & Professional Development

A letter from the MAISD Superintendent, Susan W. Meston, Ph.D.

Hold onto your hat – this summer will be a busy one at the MAISD! We will be serving students and school staff with exciting summer programs and powerful professional development workshops that promise to positively impact our classrooms.

This summer educators have a variety of trainings from which to choose, including best practice approaches for challenging behaviors, specialized assistive technology software, crisis team and grief team training, behavior management, physical education, history, virtual economics and social studies, and environmental science. In addition, the MAISD will be

continuing the countywide effort to improve student writing by offering a K – 8 summer writing institute in June and a second institute in July. The summer will wrap up in August with the TLC Early Childhood Conference and PEAK's Teaching for Excellence Summer Institute which is co-sponsored by Reeths-Puffer Schools.

Students from throughout Muskegon County will benefit from two exceptional summer programs as well. The Muskegon Area Career Tech Center's **Summer Fun** program for students in 6th through 8th grades will take place over a two-week period of time in June. The **WINGS** program,

Widening Interests through New experiences for Gifted Students, for 1st through 6th grades, will occur during two weeks in July at Muskegon Community College.

I encourage you to truly make the most of your summer months. Read a good book, enjoy our beautiful lakeshore, and take advantage of the many learning opportunities that surround us. Please visit our website at www.muskegonisd.org to learn more.



Susan W. Meston, Ph.D.
MAISD Superintendent

American History Grant Continues its Positive Impact!

John Johnson, Teaching American History Grant Project Manager
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Now in its third, and final, year, the \$886,000 Federal Teaching American History Grant awarded to the MAISD, in partnership with the Ottawa Area ISD, in October of 2005 continues to play an important role in the professional development of many US History teachers.

This year 25 teachers from both counties have completed a three-part series entitled "Law and American Identity" which focuses on the role of the court system throughout US History. The series was led by Nisan Chavkin from the Constitutional Rights Foundation of Chicago. Court cases discussed included the *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, *Brown v. the Board of Education*, and recent civil rights cases in the state of Michigan.

Also this year 32 teachers attended an intensive three-day "History Colloquium" in early March. The event was led by the National Council for History Education,

which developed the colloquium model to bring together curriculum, content and teaching specialists to offer teachers in-depth content as well as innovative ways to teach it and assess its impact. The colloquium theme was "Trade, Tariffs, and Taxes" and focused on economic and public policy issues in US history.

To date 48 social studies teachers from Muskegon County have attended at least one of the 16 events offered through the Teaching American History Grant. Many have attended several events.

The Grand Valley State University Summer Institute will be held July 29 – August 7, 2008. Applications are available at www.tah.muskegonisd.org and are due June 2, 2008. Returning and first-time applicants are encouraged to apply!



On March 29, 2008, the MAISD received word that it will be awarded a second TAH grant! The \$999,999 grant will be split between Muskegon and Ottawa counties. In addition to continuing existing partnerships with GVSU and the National Council for History Education, a new partnership will be formed with the Smithsonian Institution. We are excited to build upon our successes with the first TAH grant and hope to involve even more social studies teachers from the two counties in the professional development events we will provide.



On The Cover

"Untitled" by Rebekka Thorsen, is one of numerous student artwork acquisitions to the MAISD Permanent Art Collection. Rebekka was in second grade in 1998 at Reeths-Puffer's Twin Lake Elementary when this picture was created. She says: "The thing I like best about this picture is that it is funny, cute, and makes me think of a circus."

Let's Go On A Picnik!

submitted by Diane Zoellmer, Instructional Technology Coordinator
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No, it's not a typo or a spelling error. Picnik (<http://www.picnik.com>) is an online photo editing program, and the best part is that it's FREE!!!

When it comes to photo organizing, editing, enhancing, and sharing, there are several tools available. I like Picasa (a free download from Google at <http://www.picasa.com>) for organizing my pictures, but its editing and enhancing features aren't especially strong. I do like the fact that I can easily upload pictures from Picasa on my computer to Picasa Web Albums online. You can choose to have your albums public – and link to them in your blog – or private – and email an invitation to those with whom you'd like to share.

Another tool that I've been using for editing and enhancing my photos is Picnik. The beta version was free for a while and then split into a pared down section of tools for free. The "Pro" version with expanded features is available for an annual fee. You can upload your photos from several sources, including Picasa (yeah!) and Flickr, and there are great editing and enhancing tools. These are now (almost) all free, including the ability to place text in, and frames around, your photos. Picnik offers several sharing options, and you can download the edited or enhanced photos to your computer to use in other applications. The only downside to the free version is advertising.

eIEP **Electronic, Efficient, Effective!**

With the goal of increasing effectiveness and efficiency in writing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEP), Kathy Fortino, MAISD's Director of Special Education, in collaboration with Mona Shores' Director of Student Services/Special Education, Penelope Miller-Smith, have introduced the MI-CIS electronic IEP to Muskegon County special education staff and administrators. MI-CIS, the Michigan Department of Education's database for special education, provides a free, secure, online electronic IEP (eIEP) to users across the state.

The eIEP works both in HTML and PDF format. Users are directed through each IEP section, with cues to save work as well as to fix errors. When completed, the IEP is printed and brought to the IEP Team meeting as a draft plan, where team members adjust the IEP as needed to accommodate students' individual learning needs. Evaluations from training participants overall have been positive, with many service providers indicating that they will begin using the electronic IEP immediately.

**Submitted by Carolyn L. Smith-Gerdes
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Help for Schools Struggling with Cyber-Bullying, Social Networking, & Internet Dangers



By Kristin Tank
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The Internet Safety Action Committee of Muskegon County (ISAC) is now offering free services to schools that would like to help parents understand online dangers. ISAC is a collaboration of local law enforcement, educators and nonprofit agencies. Funding is provided by a \$20,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation through the Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County. ISAC's goal is to raise awareness of Internet dangers and educate adults on how to keep kids safe. According to ISAC, statistics show that 87 percent of teens ages 12 to 17 are online. That's about 21 million teens! Of those teens, one in four has had exposure to sexually explicit photos, approximately one in five has received a sexual solicitation or approach, and 33 percent have been victimized by a cyber-bully. This is a new frontier for parents and educators to navigate.

Members of ISAC are eager to schedule free presentations for adults who want to learn more about how to

protect children from online predators, enticement, exposure to inappropriate material, cyber-bullying, unsafe social networking and more. Kerri Roberts, Internet Safety Project Coordinator, said, "Schools can leave all the planning and presentation preparation to us. We have experience talking with parents at conferences, orientations, and parent nights."

Informational brochures that feature "cyber-shorthand" and tips on how to keep kids safe online have been developed by ISAC. Most recently the group established a new website, www.beenbullied.com, that features links to services and additional resources. "This site is a great resource for parents and would serve as a valuable link to add to school websites," Ms. Roberts added. For more information about ISAC or to schedule a presentation, please contact Kerri Roberts at the Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County at 231-728-6410.

“Two Sides of the Same Coin”

By Steven Vitto, Behavioral Support Consultant, 231-767-7279 or svitto@muskegonisd.org

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) are very closely intertwined school-wide processes of using student data to make decisions. Both PBS and RTI follow a tiered level of interventions in which student data is used to determine the intensity of the intervention. PBS uses common school-wide behavior processes to create a consistent structure that improves the interactions between students and staff. PBS focuses specifically on improving student behavior which directly impacts academic achievement of all students. RTI approaches, e.g., Michigan’s Integrated Behavior & Learning Initiative (MIBLSi), are broader in scope by directly addressing both academic and behavior performance of students through data-driven interventions. One of the components of an RTI process may be to implement school-wide PBS to address the behavioral needs of all students. In this regard, schools would optimally choose to utilize individualized evidence-based behavioral interventions (such as functional assessment-driven behavior plans that emphasize teaching replacement skills) rather than relying on a handbook-driven discipline approach.

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) is a behaviorally-based systems approach. It is designed to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to create effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occur. A major advance in school-wide discipline is the emphasis on school-wide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments.

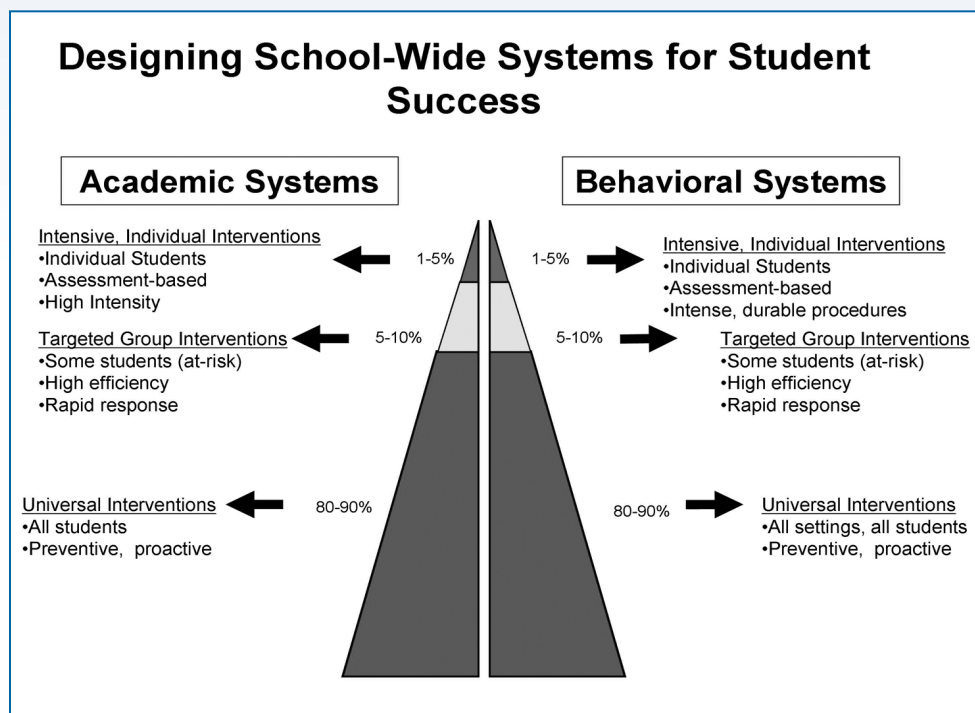
The Response to Intervention model is a process whereby schools are trained to analyze and target students’

academic and/or behavior problems so that quality and effective interventions can be implemented prior to labeling a child or referring him for special education services. Like PBS, children are generally found to be functioning at one of three levels in a three-tiered support model (see figure below). In tier one, approximately 80-90 percent of students in typical school programs can be successfully addressed by taking part in evidence-based universal or core curriculums. In tier two, about 5-10 percent of the school population emerges as being “at risk” – students who will require an additional level of evidence-based interventions to address their needs. About 1-5 percent of a school population will emerge in tier three – students having chronic or intensive behavioral or learning problems. These students will require intensive evidence-based intervention strategies based on formal assessments and individualized academic and/or behavior treatment plans that are evaluated through focused monitoring. The RTI and PBS models are essentially equivalent frameworks. With RTI and PBS, each school develops a multidisciplinary team

which receives on-going coaching in the following core principles:

- We can effectively teach all children.
- Intervene early.
- Use a multi-tier model of service delivery.
- Use a problem-solving method to make decisions within that multi-tier model.
- Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction
- Monitor student progress to inform instruction.
- Use data to make decisions.
- Use assessment for three different purposes: universal screening, diagnostic and progress monitoring.

To be successful, both models require systemic supports that facilitate a collaborative team-based approach, with a foundation of active guidance provided by administration at the building and district levels, and the ability to use school-wide data to make informed changes in developing effective practices for all students.



New Resource for **ACCESSIBLE** Instructional Materials



Submitted by Jim Kauppila, Assistive Technology Consultant
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Bookshare.org, a web-based system supplying accessible books in digital formats designed for people with disabilities, was awarded a \$32 million grant to provide its digitally formatted materials to qualifying students free of charge. Formerly, the organization made its materials available on a subscription basis to students with visual impairments, learning disabilities, or mobility impairments. The materials include novels, textbooks, and newspapers. To review a more extensive explanation of the service and its supports, visit www.bookshare.org.

Teachers are required to register as institutional users and provide Bookshare with a list of eligible students. Forms to complete the process are found on the Bookshare site. Once completed, teachers and students will have access to 35,000 books and documents. As a result of receiving this grant, Bookshare has set a goal of increasing its holdings to 100,000 books and documents within five years.

This site complements the MAISD Accessible Instructional Materials creation project. The MAISD Special Education

Department has undertaken an effort to adapt area school district core instructional materials; i.e., text and trade books. Currently materials are being scanned and digitally converted for use by Muskegon County special education students. Muskegon has joined forces with Eaton, Ingham, Clinton, and Livingston counties to produce and share these materials in PDF, MP3 and PowerPoint formats. To date, the collection totals over 1,500 school-related titles. To select books, area teachers should use the forms found at <http://www.muskegonisd.org/departments/special-ed/books/>. The forms allow for the ordering of PDF textbooks and novels, MP3 books, and PowerPoint books. A webpage has been created to explain the process, and it provides a link to Ingham ISD, where the available materials can be viewed – <http://rescue.wikispaces.com/>.

All material found on both sites can be accessed by students using the text readers found in the Premier Assistive Technology Suite. To submit books for conversion, or for more information, please contact Jim Kauppila at 231-767-7280 or jkauppil@muskegonisd.org.

Local Districts Begin Using MAISD Data Warehouse!

All MAISD school districts have completed “Phase 1” Data Warehouse training! Local district administrators, including superintendents, curriculum directors and building principals, participated in a two-hour training where they were given internet access to the powerful reporting and analysis capabilities of the new Data Warehouse tool. MAISD Director of Technology Randy Lindquist led the training sessions.

In addition, some districts have also begun “Phase 2” of the training process. During this phase, key staff members within the district are trained. These key staff members

were chosen by the district’s administration and may have included school improvement teams, department chairpersons, special education staff, and, in some cases, all building staff.

Currently the Data Warehouse uses information from such sources as the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) and all of its components, the statewide Single Record Student Database (SRSD), and district student information systems. Information gathered from these sources, and many others, goes through an extensive “cleansing”

process to eliminate errors and create an environment where all data sources communicate using the same language. As a result, data from multiple sources can be used to create comprehensive and informative reports for the end user at the district, building, or classroom level.

While trainings continue and more users are given access to the Data Warehouse, additional data sources will be added as well. Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), as well as district standards and assessments from various sources, are examples of additional data services to be added.



Early Childhood

NEWS

Early Intervention WORKS!

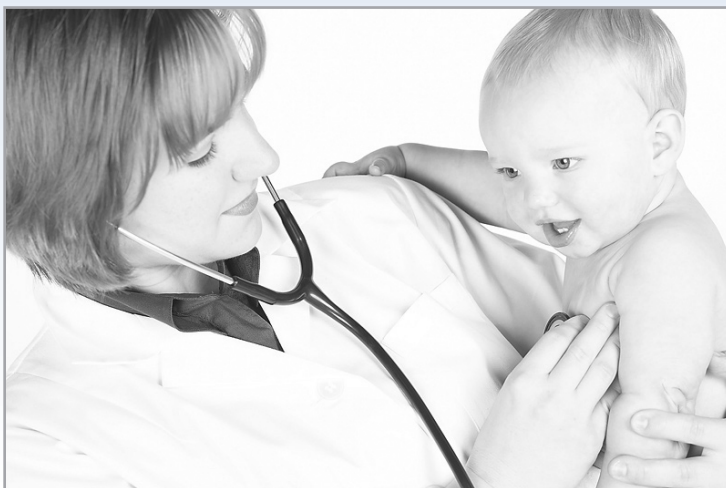
Very often in life the best intervention is an early one. This rule applies to an untold number of personal, family and other life topics. In the early childhood arena, this very simple concept often results in the best outcomes for the child, family, and society as a whole.

Early intervention is crucial for young children – often well before one turns school age – who are discovered to have, or who are at high risk to have, a condition affecting their development. A variety of interventions and services can be provided to such children and the family unit in order to decrease or even eliminate the condition and its effects.

A variety of research has established that the birth to five year range, and particularly the first 1,000 days of life, are the most critical years of human development and growth. At no other time in life will a human learn as much as during these early years. Thus, if a medical condition or other issue delays development of a young child, an intervention early in life is crucial.

Of course, identification of such developmental delays at such a young age is sometimes quite difficult.

Early On® – Muskegon can be of great assistance to both professionals and families of young children who may suspect a developmental delay with a young child. The Early On® system coordinates early intervention services for families of children aged birth – 36 months who are experiencing developmental delays or who have special needs. Examples of services provided to families – at no cost – include speech pathology, audiology,



complex infant feeding assistance, occupational and physical therapy, psychological services, medical services, social work services, hearing and vision screening, and nutritional counseling.

A key service provided by Early On® staff is the assessment of children suspected of having a developmental

delay. A well-trained professional staff from the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District and the county's special education units conduct thorough assessments in the homes of hundreds of Muskegon County families each year. Families do not have to “guess” whether a child may need specialized services; the assessment team works closely with families to determine whether a need exists, and, if so, what services are

most appropriate. Nearly all the services provided by Early On® are done in the child's home.

Studies have shown that early intervention is both effective in addressing children's delays and efficient in terms of costs to society. Children make exceptional developmental gains with early intervention and typically require fewer special education services later in life. About one

half of the children served by Early On® – Muskegon transition out of the program needing no further services.

For information, or to refer a family for an assessment for **Early On®** services, please call the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District at 231-767-7253 or 1-800-EARLY-ON.



Enroll Today... Preschool for All!

A quality preschool experience can be a great way to help get a young child "ready" for kindergarten and beyond. In addition to early literacy and other "academic" lessons which are learned, critical social development occurs in such a group setting, establishing the foundation for a successful school career.

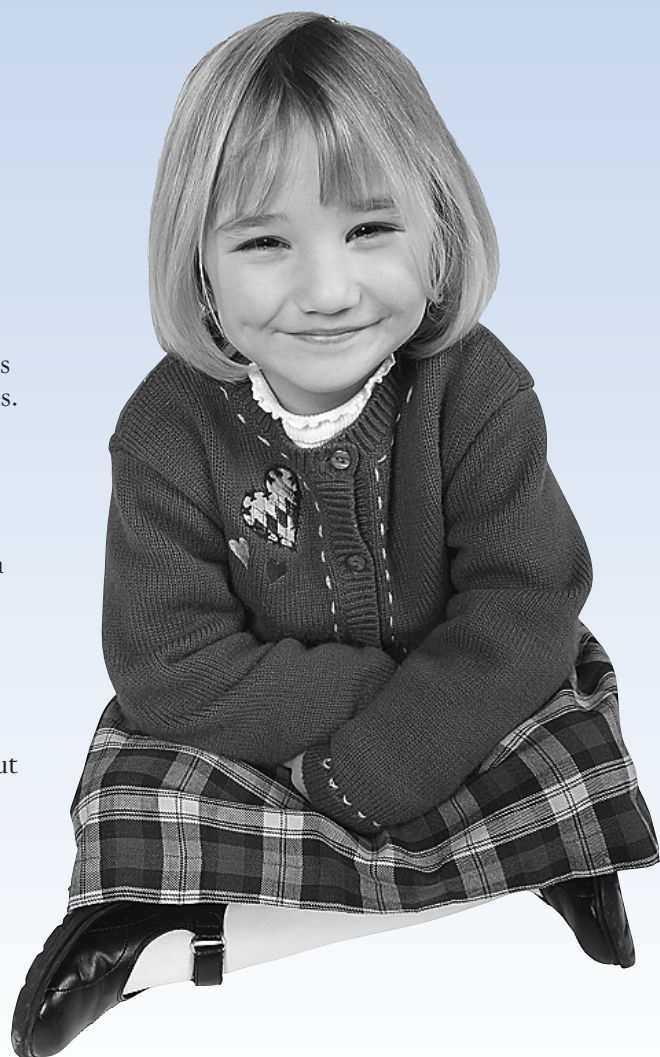


Numerous public preschool options exist for Muskegon County families. Head Start is a federally-funded preschool and child development program serving more than 1,000 three- and four-year-old children throughout Muskegon and Oceana counties each year. There is no cost to attend. The Muskegon Area Intermediate School District operates **Head Start** of Muskegon/Oceana in partnership with seven local school districts. To learn about eligibility and enrollment, please call one of these centers:



- Fruitport & Mona Shores Schools: 231-865-4016
- Hart, Pentwater & Walkerville Schools: 231-873-6340
- Muskegon Public Schools: 231-720-2560
- Muskegon Heights Public Schools: 231-830-3300
- Orchard View, Oakridge & Ravenna Schools: 231-760-1787
- Shelby Public Schools: 231-861-6629
- Whitehall, Montague, Holton, Reeths-Puffer & North Muskegon Schools: 231-893-0515

The *Michigan School Readiness Program* (MSRP) is another option for eligible four-year-old children. The majority of Muskegon County public schools offer MSRP classrooms for children who reside in their districts. The MSRP program has broader income and other guidelines for admission than Head Start and is also a free program. In addition, most public school districts and other entities within the county offer **tuition preschool** options at a cost to families. Information about either MSRP or tuition preschool can be gained by calling your local public school district.



Be sure to inquire as soon as possible in order to begin the enrollment process for 2008-09... and start your child on the path to success!

“Unwrapping” the Standards and Content Expectations

Shari Graham, Program Director for School Improvement and English Language Arts and Assessment Consultant
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I will never forget my first day on the job at the Muskegon Area ISD. It was in January 1997, and I attended a regional conference in Holland, Michigan, where the “new” Standards and Benchmarks were being introduced for the first time in the core content areas. At that gathering, I heard people saying, “if we wait long enough, these will go away!” Well, after 12 years, I think it is safe to say that standards – unlike so many passing trends in education – are here to stay! They may not look exactly like they did when first introduced, but they are definitely more important than ever before.

When No Child Left Behind mandated that all students in grades 3-8 be tested in math and English Language Arts, this caused the first of several refinements or clarifications to take place in the

original standards and benchmarks. Because each of these grades 3-8 tests had to directly measure specific learning targets, it was necessary to take the original standards and benchmarks and more clearly define what students need to know and be able to do. The end result of this work was the creation of the “content expectations” in the four core areas, which are now being used as the learning targets on all of the various MEAP and MME tests.

Now that educators have had time to become familiar with the content expectations, they are realizing that additional clarification is needed in order to develop aligned instructional plans and assessments. This is where the “unwrapping” of the standards comes in, and it really is the next logical step

in clarifying our original standards and benchmarks.

Larry Ainsworth, a leading expert in this area of curriculum development, describes “unwrapping” the standards in the following way: “Unwrapping the standards means to examine the standards and the grade-specific indicators (in Michigan – content expectations) listed beneath them to determine exactly what students need to (1) **know** (the concepts or content) and (2) **be able to do** (the skills) through a (3) **particular context** (what educators will use to teach students the concepts and skills).”

Mr. Ainsworth and colleagues have developed a simple process for unwrapping standards and content expectations. This process includes identifying the important *concepts and skills* contained within the standards and content expectations; identifying the *Big Ideas*, or lasting understandings, embedded within these concepts and skills; and writing *Essential Questions* that frame the instructional units for both students and teachers.

Unwrapping the standards and content expectations has been happening to some degree at the K-8 levels for several years; and now that there are high school content expectations in all core content areas, and testing and graduation requirements are so closely tied to these expectations, it is critical to initiate this process at the high school level. The Muskegon Area ISD has already begun facilitating this work in science and plans to involve local teachers in the unwrapping process in math, English Language Arts, and social studies before the end of this calendar year.

Unwrapping standards in the content areas is not work that will be completed quickly, but the results of this work will assist educators in improving achievement for all students by focusing on the concepts and skills students need for success. Based on the curriculum work done during the past decade at the state and national levels, I would say standards, benchmarks, GLCEs, and HSCEs are here to stay!

MACTC Students Create Plaque for Muskegon High School’s Theater Program

Submitted by Stephanie Germaine, Student Outreach/Resource Specialist
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Students from the MACTC’s Auto Body Technology, Machine Tool Technologies, and Architectural & Mechanical Computer Aided Design (CAD) classes at the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center (MACTC) recently worked together on a special project for Muskegon High School’s theater program. To commemorate theater students who have earned scholarships, a plaque was designed and built by MACTC students and staff.

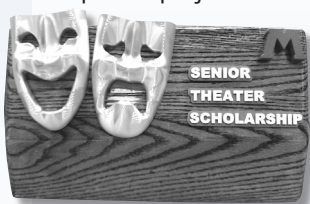
In May 2007, Drama Teacher Karli Baldus met with MACTC CAD Instructor Bruce McClain and asked his class to create a unique plaque geared toward theater students. CAD student Kaylea Radloff designed the comedy and

tragedy masks affixed to the plaque using the software program SolidWorks. The prototype was then printed on the MACTC’s new Dimensions 3D Printer. This printer creates a 3D version of the design in ABS plastic.

After proofing the prototype, the CAD design was sent to Machine Tool Technologies Instructor Al Wahr. Using a program called Mastercam, the CAD design was converted to a code readable by the Haas CNC mill used to form the metal version of the masks.

To finalize the piece, Mr. McClain built the wood backing for the plaque, and Auto Body Technology students painted the letters, thus completing the project.

Last month the plaque was delivered to Muskegon High School, where it is now on display in the main hallway. Each year, the names of students who have received theater scholarships will be added to the plaque. Theater Leader Karli Baldus was thrilled with the final piece, as were her students. “I really appreciate all that the MACTC did to help my program,” commented Ms. Baldus, “and how they helped my students feel important.”



DIGITAL LITERACY:

A KEY 21ST CENTURY SKILL

By Diane Zoellmer, Instructional Technology Coordinator
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One of the more challenging aspects regarding Digital Literacy is defining it. To add to the confusion, such terms as digital literacy, tech literacy, and information literacy are used interchangeably. Since technology is rapidly evolving, digital literacy is dynamic, and we must continually redefine it. While we can't all agree on what digital literacy means, what is clear is that the proliferation of technology and internet access in our schools has not only changed our definitions but also dramatically increased the need to ensure that all of our students are technologically literate.

Traditional literacy refers to the ability to decode and comprehend words, images, and other content. Until the last decade, readers primarily used written sources to find information. Today's readers use the internet to find information, with Google being the top search engine.

In order to use a search engine effectively, several skills are needed. The first skill needed is the ability to create search terms that will generate accurate results. Most students only look at the first page of any search, making effective and efficient searching crucial.

The second skill is the ability to critically evaluate the results of the search for accuracy, authority, objectivity, and currency. Anyone can publish anything on the web. While

some web sites are harmless – the velcro farm in California or whale watching in Lake Michigan – others are pure propaganda or exist solely to promote the views of the writer. Not only must students know how to critically evaluate textual content, they must also know that many of the digital images they see have been edited or enhanced on the computer. While some work doesn't alter the "truth" of the image, others severely misrepresent it. Take a look at the edited version of the photo that was taken when Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald at <http://www.pbs.org/ktca/americanphotography/features/digital.html> or the movie for the creation of the Dove ad at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCnOjf46U>. Audio content isn't exempt from digital editing either. Audacity, a free audio editing program, allows even a beginner the ability to edit recordings with ease.

The third skill is being able to use the information that was "harvested" from the search results. What will be the final project or product? Do students know how to use the new Web 2.0 tools, including blogs and wikis? Will students be able to provide evidence of the accuracy and reliability of the products they create? Do they know how to attribute works they've downloaded? Can students choose the appropriate tools for their message?

Many educational technology gurus are now writing about 21st century literacies, encompassing all of the literacies needed by students in our schools today. David Warlick states in his blog at <http://davidwarlick.com/2cents> that "...our notion of literacy must expand to address a rapidly changing information landscape where information is networked, digital, and overwhelming."

New definitions for new literacies mean new technology standards for educators and students. Michigan is one of only a handful of states that has created a state set of technology standards for technology literacy, requiring that schools report the number of technology-literate students. The Michigan Educational Technology Standards (METS) can be found at <http://www.michigan.gov>.

The new National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS), a result of the NETS Refresh Project, were recently released. The new standards are: Creativity and Innovation; Communication and Collaboration; Research and Information Fluency; Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making; Digital Citizenship; and Technology Operations and Concepts. For more information on the NETS, please visit http://www.iste.org/Content/NavigationMenu/NETS/ForStudents/2007Standards/NETS_for_Students_2007.htm.

West Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative

Submitted by Dave Krebs, Coordinator, Regional Mathematics and Science Center, 231-767-7317 or dkrebs@muskegonisd.org

The MAISD Regional Mathematics and Science Center recently received funding from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust to establish a regional hub for place-based education (PBE) and environmental stewardship. The award is part of the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI).

GLSI is a unique model that connects schools with their communities to create learning experiences for students that have lasting impact on the environment. Through regional hubs, teachers receive professional development to better facilitate inquiry-based learning and problem solving. Collaboration between schools and communities provides students with the opportunity to address local environmental issues. The resulting vibrant, hands-on learning experiences are designed to increase student achievement and help young Michigan residents become lifelong advocates for the Great Lakes.

Overview

The West Michigan GLSI will strengthen the skills of teachers and the capacity of schools to engage students in the meaningful work of their communities as they achieve academic and environmental stewardship goals. The counties served by the West Michigan GLSI include Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana and North Ottawa. The initial funding period extends through June 2009, with further funding subject to successful achievement of program evaluation outcomes.

All educators in the region will have access to the resources, activities, and services of the West Michigan GLSI's Hub of community organizations. Interest in PBE among teachers in the region is exceptionally high. Two levels of participation will be sponsored – full and mentored. Teams of two or three teachers from up to 14 schools will be selected for full participation. These groups will have full access to Hub resources, including professional development, outreach, community partners, stipends, mini-grants, and paid release time during the school year. At the mentored participation level, a maximum of 12 schools with high interest but a limited ability to participate will be selected. Teacher teams from these schools will have access to many of the same resources. All educators in the region will be invited to spring and fall 2008 Resource Summits to learn more about the Initiative's mission, outcomes, and activities. Program staff and representatives from the Hub's partner organizations will be available throughout the project to guide schools to a higher level of readiness for PBE.

Launching the Program

On May 14, 2008, the MAISD Regional Mathematics and Science Center launched the West Michigan GLSI with morning teacher meetings and an afternoon Resource Summit designed to introduce educators to the Hub's partner organizations and environmental science curricula available through the Initiative. Teachers attended resource presentations and met with members of "Youth and Environment-Yes It Matters!," a full spectrum of community organizations, to learn about potential environmental projects.

The Summit culminated with the first of three public forums to raise awareness for the Initiative and to discuss community environmental needs.

Separate five-day summer professional development academies will be offered this summer to participating teachers, based on their previous experience with PBE. One academy, geared toward teachers with less experience, will be held in June, and an academy for those with past PBE experience will take place in August. Members of community organizations will participate in various ways throughout both academies, culminating in commitments to partner with schools on specific projects and the creation of preliminary proposals.

Forging partnerships

Action teams composed of students, teachers, and community members will convene during late summer and throughout the 2008–09 school year

to strengthen partnerships, identify community needs, develop projects, and acquire resources. Mini-grants up to \$1,500 will be available for material costs of the project, release time for teachers, transportation costs for students, and support for community partners. Project budgets will be developed collaboratively by the school's action team.

Professional learning continues into the school year with dinner and dialog sessions and daytime meetings. The daytime sessions will be closely linked to the evening events and will provide school teams with opportunities to learn new content, discuss progress, and refine their project design.

In addition to classroom PBE projects, students will be encouraged to undertake a school stewardship project. Teachers will learn how to mentor students who choose and design stewardship projects outside the school day. Mini-grants will be available to each of the schools to aid in the implementation of stewardship projects.

A Youth Stewardship Symposium will be held in spring 2009 as the culminating event of the program. Students will present and display their work to the public at this event. Presentations will be followed by a luncheon, where students will have the valuable opportunity to interact with teachers and community members who value their work. After lunch, a panel discussion will allow participants from all stakeholder groups to share successes, challenges, and insights into successful school/community partnerships.

For more information, including a complete calendar of events and a professional development schedule, please contact Melissa Maxson at the MAISD Regional Mathematics & Science Center (231-767-7336), or go to www.muskegonisd.org/departments/mathscience/westmichiganglsi/.



New Movement Underway to Prevent Students from Dropping Out of High School

Submitted by Kristin Tank, Public Information Officer, 231-767-7263 or ktank@muskegonisd.org

On May 8, 2008, a community conference on how to “Create a Graduation Generation” in Muskegon County was held. The conference was designed to explore drop-out prevention strategies that have worked in other communities. It was emceed by the Honorable Gregory C. Pittman, Family Court Judge. Many people from various sectors attended, including social service, government, education, parents, community agencies, the faith-based community, business, health services, and other youth-supportive groups.

Christian Moore, M.S.W., an internationally renowned author, speaker and advocate for at-risk youth, served as the main speaker. Mr. Moore founded WhyTry, an intervention program for at-risk youth, which is now used in thousands of schools, correctional facilities and mental health agencies in the United States, Canada, and Australia. The conference also included student dramas and small group sessions to examine strategies that involve offering mentors, support for parents, curriculum, and community-based activities for students.

Educators from Muskegon Public Schools attended both the fall 2007 and spring 2008 conferences of the National Dropout Prevention Network and first saw Mr. Moore speak at the spring conference. In the fall of 2007, John Brown, Pastor Emeritus of First Baptist Church in Muskegon, began his own intense research on

drop-out prevention. “I learned that many of the reasons kids drop out of high school have nothing to do with school. The community needs to take a role in helping these kids,” said Rev. Brown. Rev. Brown has met several times with superintendents at both Muskegon and Muskegon Heights schools to learn more about the issues involved and to find out how the faith-based community can help. The Council of Cooperating Churches has asked for support from the Community Foundation for Muskegon County to help coordinate groups of churches that would work together to mentor and provide

activities for at-risk students to help them stay in school and graduate. Statistics for the 2005-06 school year, the most recent on record at the Michigan Department of Education’s Center for Educational Performance and Information, show that 44 students officially dropped out of high schools located in Muskegon County in 2006, while an additional 122 students did not graduate, and their status is unknown. This adds up to potentially 166 county students who were slated to, but did not, graduate from high school in 2006.

The effort to “Create a Graduation Generation” began with the leadership of Muskegon Public Schools, Council of Cooperating Churches, and the MAISD. It has been endorsed by more than a dozen local organizations, including Muskegon Community College, Baker College, Community Coordinating Council, Great Start Collaborative of Muskegon County, Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County, Muskegon County Department

of Human Services, Muskegon Area Chamber of Commerce, United Way of the Lakeshore, Muskegon Area Children’s Agenda, and Muskegon Opportunity. The program was made possible in part by a grant from the Community Foundation for Muskegon County. The Muskegon Area Children’s Agenda is now the host organization for the committee that continues this effort. To learn more, and to track this group’s progress, please visit www.graduationgeneration.org.



creating a graduation generation!

Redefined Graduation Rates

Late this summer the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) will release redefined graduation rates for every public school in the state. Instead of the past practice of utilizing an average retention rate, a new formula will be applied beginning with the class of 2007. The new rate will be calculated by tracking individual students who first enrolled in ninth grade in fall 2003 and graduated four years later with a regular diploma. Continuing students, who were not reported as diploma recipients, will be recorded for accountability purposes as “off-track.” The recent practice of assigning Unique Identification Codes (UICs) to each student in Michigan has made the use of this new formula possible. Some students, on a case-by-case basis, may obtain a one-year extension to the four-year requirement. These include students enrolled in middle colleges, English language learners, students with disabilities, and medically fragile students. The use of this new formula will mean decreases in the graduation rates for all schools in Michigan. To learn more visit www.michiganedusource.org, scroll to Communication Tools, and click on Graduation Rates Toolkit.

Track Our Progress on www.graduationgeneration.org



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MAISD Mission Statement

The mission of the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD) is to provide the leadership, programs and services which complement and enhance the efforts of constituent school districts in extending educational opportunities to all students.

It is the policy of the MAISD that no staff member, candidate for employment, program participant, or recipient of services shall experience discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, creed or ancestry, age, gender, height, weight, marital status, or disability. The MAISD is an equal opportunity employer. Inquiries related to issues of discrimination on the basis of disability should be directed to the Assistant Director for Special Education at (231) 767-7249. All other discrimination inquiries or requests for special accommodations to participate in a program, event, or activity should be directed to the Human Resources Program Director at (231) 767-7213.