



# MAISD News

a publication of the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District

Spring 2013



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.....  
March 21 and March 25  
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# Changes in Truancy in Muskegon County

A letter from the MAISD Superintendent, David Sipka



Superintendent David Sipka

Many residents in Muskegon County have read in local newspapers about recent changes to the truancy process that our schools will be using. Many wondered why changes were needed. Some background information may help.

Most families with school-age children do a wonderful job of supporting their children and schools to make sure that school attendance is a priority in their homes. Unfortunately, some families struggle with sending their children to school on a regular basis. Muskegon County Prosecuting Attorney D.J. Hilson received a report from the state that indicated there were over 1,500 students in our county who had 10 or more days of “unexcused” absences during the past school year. While this seems like a startling amount, we must keep in mind there are approximately 30,000 K-12 students in our county, so the number of students with significant days of unexcused absences only represents five percent of the student population. 95% of the students are regular attenders.

In examining the problem with truancy, we have found that many districts have different definitions of what an “unexcused” absence is. The team that came together to examine truancy decided that we would not try to define what is an excused or unexcused absence. In some districts an excused absence occurred any time a parent called the school to report that the child was not going to be in school. We knew that some parents would choose not to send their child to school for really weak reasons, but they would still call the school and the child would be considered “excused.” Hence, the team said that “an absence is an absence.”

The beauty of the revised truancy system is that the school is the first filter for whether the child or family

is at risk for truancy. The schools will produce a list of those students who have missed five or more days of school - no matter the reason. The school team will know whether the child is at risk for truancy by examining why the child was absent, if the child is struggling academically, whether there are behavioral issues with the child, and other filters or considerations. If a child is considered to be at risk for truancy by the school staff, they can refer the child and family for some intervention services with the Family Resource Center in their district, Mediation and Restorative Services, and/or the Prosecuting Attorney’s office. These intervention options are the new aspects in the process.

**“Most families with school-age children do a wonderful job of supporting their children and schools to make sure that school attendance is a priority in their homes.”**

In the past, when our ISD submitted a truancy case to the Prosecuting Attorney’s office, it would take quite a long time to work through the legal system. D.J. Hilson and Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Tim Maat have committed to processing these cases more rapidly and will follow up with those children and families after the initial case has been prosecuted.

Unfortunately, some people look at these changes as punitive in nature. I believe the team that designed the changes is truly trying to keep this at-risk group of students in school and on-target for graduation. We will be reviewing how this new process is working at the end of the school year. If you have any questions please contact me.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Sipka". The signature is written in a cursive style.

To learn more about truancy prevention in Muskegon County visit:

<http://www.muskegonisd.org/adminservices/truancy/>



## On The Cover

All ISDs in Michigan are celebrating 50 years of leadership, innovation, and results. In Muskegon County, our ISD is celebrating with a 50-day book drive to collect both new and used books to distribute to all schools. Rotary Interact students have assisted with the sorting and distribution of the books. ALL Muskegon County teachers are invited to the FREE used book giveaways on March 21 and March 25 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Educational Services Center.

# iPads for Early Learners

*iPads and other tablets are increasingly finding their way into the small hands of early learners.*

## Why iPads?

iPads are true personal learning devices. If you give an iPad to a two- or three-year-old, he is able to navigate and use it in minutes. The graphical user interface (GUI) of the Apple iOS operating system on the iPad is intuitive and easy to use regardless of the age of the learner. The iPad can be turned on or off with the opening or closing of a cover, has a long battery life, and includes two built-in cameras, a microphone, and speakers. Surfing the web is easy using the Safari browser and a wireless connection, and when the iPad is rotated, the screen automatically senses the change and adjusts. The iPad has built-in assistive technology tools such as a screen reader, which can read aloud text from a web page or an iBook. The Apple Store has applications for just about all subjects and grade levels or tasks, with hundreds of thousands of applications (apps) available for easy downloading and installing. Many are free, others often cost less than a dollar. Is the iPad better than an Android, Nook, or Kindle tablet? Educators have been asked this question, and their answer has most often been, yes, the iPad is a better choice for students and staff than the Android tablet. They mention the abundance of apps, dependable operating system and ease of use. While an iPad is more expensive than a similar Android tablet, the iPad operating system and apps are controlled by Apple, and with control comes reliability. The iPad works as needed, every time. The Nook and Kindle are providing useful competition and may be worth exploring, particularly if reading books or viewing movies is the primary purpose.

## iPads and Early Learners

The iPad is not a replacement for a computer. It is a different device which serves different purposes. For example, secondary students are often completing tasks and projects online where a

computer provides a more useful set of tools than available on an iPad. iPads are finding their niche with special education students and early learners. More districts are piloting iPads with Early Head Start and pre-school students up through second and third grade. There is an abundance of fun, engaging educational apps targeted to this age of learner. Visit <http://ipadsforearlylearners.wikispaces.com> to find recommended apps to use with early learners and Early Head Start/Head Start programs. These apps help students in the areas of literacy, writing, math, problem solving, and creativity. With the iPad's ease of use, an adult can simply hand a child an iPad with age-appropriate apps and stand back.

## Applying Safeguards

Schools providing students with iPads take advantage of built-in management tools to configure the iPad's settings and restrictions. Restriction settings assure that children don't stumble across inappropriate books in the iBook store or accidentally delete an app or make an in-app purchase. It is important that parents know how to set the restrictions on an iPad, iPhone, or iPod Touch which they may loan to their child or purchase as a gift. These important restriction settings are configured under the iPad's general menu in Settings. These restrictions are password protected and may be configured to disallow access to specific apps such as the camera or web browser. They can be set so a user cannot add or delete an app without the password. There are settings to restrict access to inappropriate content, the game center, and limit access to private information – such as location services.

The MAISD provides iPad workshops throughout the year as well as customized professional development and support for districts and for Head Start programs implementing iPads to support early learners.

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## MAISD News

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The MAISD News  
is a publication  
of the Muskegon Area  
Intermediate School District  
[www.muskegonisd.org](http://www.muskegonisd.org)



## 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, disability, or genetic information. 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.

# Changes to AdvancED for School Improvement

submitted by Pam Varga, School Improvement/MTSS/High Priority Schools Consultant  
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Building and district leaders are very familiar with the AdvancED website for completing their school and district improvement reports including school improvement plans. Schools have been required to develop and implement school improvement plans since Michigan originally passed PA 25 in 1990. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has a partnership with AdvancED to create a central website to provide tools, resources, and structures to support this continuous school improvement.

Beginning this school year, as school improvement teams update their plans and other related reports, they will use the new Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools (ASSIST) platform for accessing and completing all reports. Schools will still complete all the same components, but the interface looks very different. Administrators and teacher leaders will login to the AdvancED website the same as they have done in the past and can choose “School Improvement

Management System (MDE)” to access all reports from previous years and make changes to current school improvement goals, or they can click on “ASSIST” to go to the new pages and begin exploring and working on components of their plans. All schools and districts will be using ASSIST for all school improvement planning beginning this school year.

A few things to keep in mind as users begin exploring in ASSIST. All data analysis reports are now called “diagnostics,” which is a new designation and delineates data analysis tools from the “Reports” function. This function is much more flexible in this new platform and will give school teams the ability to create customized reports specific to a particular question or need. For example, once teams have completed their school improvement goals, they can create a report listing all strategies and activities related to parent involvement, or all planned professional development activities for the upcoming year.

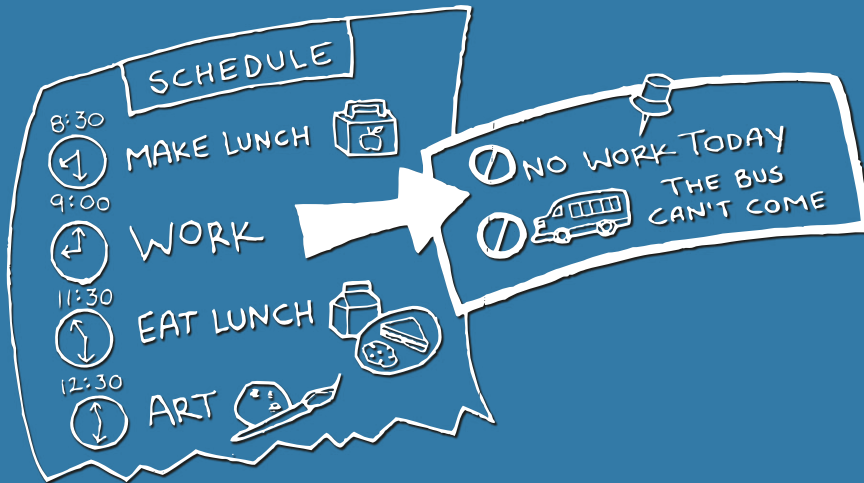
All schools and districts will be using **ASSIST** for all school improvement planning beginning this school year.

One of the drawbacks of this new platform is that no information or text will be pre-loaded from the previous years’ reports into the ASSIST platform tools, diagnostics, or school improvement goals. School improvement teams need to be ready to spend some extra time with these new tools. On the positive side, the tools appear to be much better aligned to various requirements schools may have, such as documenting their Title I School-Wide Required Components, and navigation seems to be more intuitive. AdvancED staff claim they have eliminated hundreds, if not thousands, of key strokes in this platform compared to the previous.

MAISD School Improvement staff are offering several sessions for school improvement teams to learn this new platform. Leaders are encouraged to attend one of the School Improvement ASSIST workshops. Please check MAISD Professional Development at <http://www.muskegonisd.org/development/> for the “AdvancED ASSIST Platform” workshops. Additional sessions can be scheduled based on need.



# WHAT ARE “Visual Strategies?”



Visual Strategies include anything that students can access visually to help them understand the world, expectations, and procedures or interact with others and navigate their environment. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders benefit greatly from the use of visual strategies because they provide more consistency, predictability and a framework for talking about changes. Visual Strategies also foster more independence. We are all reliant on visual strategies (stop signs, planners, to do lists, etc.), so the use of visual strategies isn't about creating dependence, but rather independence through the use of tools.

*Excerpted with permission from [www.UseVisualStrategies.com](http://www.UseVisualStrategies.com)*

## **Who can benefit from visual strategies?**

Visual tools have proven to be particularly valuable for children with Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and other Autism Spectrum Disorders. Most students with other special learning needs benefit significantly from using visual supports. Once we realize the benefits from using visual strategies to support communication, we discover that they can be used successfully in classrooms or at home for almost all students. Visual tools work for preschool age children, adults, and everyone in between. Almost everyone can benefit from using visual strategies.

## **Can you give some examples of visual strategies?**

Visual tools can range from low tech to high tech. Low tech visual supports can be things like photographs, line drawings, pictures from catalogs or magazines, food labels, signs, logos, real objects, and written language. High tech visual tools include smart phones, an iPod Touch or iPad, or a video. Visual supports can also include body language and cues in the natural environment, such as furniture arrangement. Some visual tools are things we use regularly, such as shopping lists, calendars, and cookbooks. Other visual strategies are specially designed to meet the specific personal needs of an individual.

## **Why do you use visual tools?**

One of the most important reasons to use a visual support is to give students information. Visual tools are used to help a child understand what is going to happen, when something is going to change, or what is going to be new or different.

Our goal is to discover when students are likely to have difficulty or need extra support. For example, handling

an unexpected change in the schedule is a time for a potential meltdown. After we identify that potential problem, we can give some information in a visual form to help them understand.

## **Do you use visual strategies for students who talk?**

This is a question that lots of people ask. The answer is YES! When you think about how visual tools help students understand better, you realize it doesn't matter if they are able to talk or not. It's very helpful to use visual strategies to aid understanding for both non-verbal and verbal students.

## **Are visual strategies just for young children?**

No. They are appropriate for individuals of all ages. Many visual tools we use for younger children will look different from what is used with older individuals, but adults can benefit from using visual supports just as much as young children. They'll probably use different supports and use them for different purposes than the ones for young children. Think about the visual supports you and I use to help organize our own lives. Shopping lists, calendars, cooking recipes... the list is long. Our students with communication challenges can benefit from the same tools we use; however they generally need more visual supports.

## **Anything else?**

Think of it like this: using visual strategies provides the support that students need to participate more appropriately and independently in their life activities. Our challenge as communication partners is to discover how using visual tools will make a difference for each individual student.

# MACTC Students Earn 7 First Place Awards; 25 TO COMPETE AT STATE

submitted by Stephanie Hoekenga, Student Outreach Specialist  
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On January 12, 2013, students from the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center (MACTC) had the chance to find out how their skills stack up against 429 of their peers from 18 other schools. The students participated in the 2013 Region One Business Professionals of America (BPA) Workplace Skills Competition at Davenport University.

The results brought smiles to their faces as 25 of the 36 students learned they would advance to the State Leadership Workplace Skills Competition in Grand Rapids in March. Six of these students won first place awards in their events.

Students from the Financial Management/Accounting and Internet, Network and Security Technologies classes at the MACTC competed in events related to administrative support concepts, advanced accounting, business spelling, computer network technology, computer security, extemporaneous speech, financial

math & analysis, fundamental spreadsheet applications, fundamentals of web design, information technology concepts, and keyboarding production.

First place medalists from the Internet, Network & Security Technologies class include Nicholas Kortman (Orchard View), Chase Barnard (Whitehall), and Charles Fairchild (Orchard View). Fairchild received two first place awards. From the Financial Management/Accounting class Ryan Slagle (Mona Shores), Jacob Duttlinger (Orchard View), and Emily Watson (Mona Shores) placed first in their categories.

BPA is a national co-curricular career and technical organization for middle school, high school, and college students preparing for careers in business and information technology. BPA is one of several extra-curricular Career Tech Student Organizations (CTSOs) offered by the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center. Approximately 200 MACTC students participate in CTSOs.



MACTC students won top awards at the Region One Business Professionals of America Workplace Skills Competition



## TECH STUDENTS EARN 12 MEDALS IN TECHNOLOGY & COMPUTER CONTEST

In December 2012, students from the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center's (MACTC) Computer Aided Design (CAD), Electronic/Computer Technologies (ECT), Internet, Network, and Security Technologies (INST), and Visual Communications classes participated in the Baker College Technology and Computer Challenge. MACTC students brought home 12 medals for events involving everything from electronics to web design.

From the CAD class, Dylan Tyler (Orchard View) placed first in AutoCAD, Renee Noom (Whitehall) and Ben Szot (Mona Shores) tied for second place, and Allison Percy (Montague) placed third. Percy took first place in Drafting and Design, while Szot took first in 3D Modeling. Three students from the ECT class also placed. Derek Masterman (Oakridge) placed first in Electronics, while Josh Sanford (Ravenna)

and Dylan Archer (Reeths-Puffer) placed third in Team PC Troubleshooting. INST student Tre Sydnor-Dodd (Muskegon) placed first in the Web Page Design category. This is the second time Tre has won in this category. The Visual Communications class, in their first year of competition, brought back two medals. Melody Stressman (Orchard View) took third place in Internet Search, and her classmate Micah Aldrete (Orchard View) placed second in the same category.

MACTC students have participated in the Baker Challenge since 2006. Each year they enjoy continued success. Visual Communications Instructor Aime Brown shared that this year's competition was the largest since the competition began.

Submitted by Stephanie Hoekenga, Student Outreach Specialist, shoekeng@muskegonisd.org or 231-767-3613

# Tech Center Student Wins \$1,000 Cash in State Contest with Relay for Life App



On Saturday, January 26, 2013, the Prima Civitas Foundation (PCF) recognized Travis Cochran, high school junior at Ravenna Public Schools and the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center, with a first place award and \$1,000 cash for Best New Mobile App as part of the statewide 2012 Young Innovators Competition.

Cochran's app is now available in the iTunes store and is called "Relay Laps - Kathy's Crew." The app allows participants in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life events to track laps, monitor local weather conditions, and even sketch to pass the time. The Relay Laps app tied with Lansing Community College Early College Food Pantry App for the first place award.

Cochran, who travelled to East Lansing to receive the award, is enrolled in the Internet, Network and Security Technologies Program at the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center. He designed the app to bolster participation and interest in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life events that occur throughout the nation. The app is named after Travis' Great Aunt Kathy who lost her battle with cancer. Travis' family, known as "Kathy's Crew," participates in the Relay for Life every year in her honor. With Relay Laps, users can keep a count of the number of times they have circled the track on their iOS device. Information about Relay for Life and what motivates people to participate is also included. While tracking laps, users can check the local weather and draw on a small sketchpad. According to Cochran, the app will eventually post a user's lap count to Facebook! All proceeds

from the sale of the 99-cent app benefit the American Cancer Society.

Cochran hopes the app will breathe new life into a well-known fundraiser, bolster participation, and make the event even more fun for participants.

The competition was conducted under PCF's C.S. Mott Foundation-funded "Moving Ideas to Market Entrepreneurship Initiative" which challenged 6th – 12th grade students in Michigan to submit business ideas for new products, solution-focused ideas, and mobile applications. One dozen volunteer judges with entrepreneurial support, economic development, and technology expertise evaluated more than 100 submissions from nearly 220 Michigan students. PCF awarded \$10,000 in total cash prizes to students who submitted ideas that ranged from food pantry apps to water purification devices and represented a wide geographic range of Michigan cities that included Ann Arbor, Detroit, DeWitt, Dexter, Flint, Grand Ledge, Holt, Lansing, Muskegon, Perry, Traverse City, and Williamston.

submitted by Susan Rhem-Westhoff, Internet, Network and Security Technologies Instructor, Muskegon Area Career Tech Center, [swesthof@muskegonisd.org](mailto:swesthof@muskegonisd.org) or 231-767-3676

## Culinary students learn to prepare sushi during virtual field trip

submitted by Kyle Fiebig, Principal  
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Without leaving their classroom, culinary students from the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center (MACTC) learned how to prepare sushi from an instructor in Adrian, Michigan, utilizing video conferencing technology.

Referred to as distance learning, this approach allows students to receive instruction from teachers in other locations, saving travel time and cost. Connecting to remote locations via the Internet, students can see and hear the instructor as he conducts the lesson.

During a recent session, Chef Jake Graf of the Lenawee Career Center demonstrated his techniques for preparing ingredients and rolling futomaki, a form of sushi rolled in nori, an edible seaweed. After viewing Graf's demonstration, students made their own futomaki as Graf watched via the two-way connection.

MACTC Culinary Instructor Elissa Penczar stood by to assist students and to add to the instruction provided by Graf.

This was one of several sessions that will be conducted between the Lenawee facility and the MACTC. The next session will originate at the MACTC, during which Culinary Instructor Rhonda Derks will teach the Lenawee students proper table set-up and serving techniques.

An upcoming session will include students from the MACTC's health occupations program connecting with the Lenawee facility and the St. Louis University School of Medicine.



Video clip of students preparing sushi:  
<http://www.viddler.com/v/4e1e95ff>

# Common Misconceptions about Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Excerpt used with permission from [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

*Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: History, Defining Features, and Misconceptions* by George Sugai and Brandi Simonsen, Center for PBIS & Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, University of Connecticut, Version: June 19, 2012

submitted by Jennifer Briggs-Russell, ASD/Behavior Consultant, [jrussell@muskegonisd.org](mailto:jrussell@muskegonisd.org) or 231-767-7259 and Stacie Hopkins-Schrumpf, Behavior Consultant, or [shopkins@muskegonisd.org](mailto:shopkins@muskegonisd.org) or 231-767-7279

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a research-based framework aligned with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) based on the belief that all children can exhibit appropriate behavior. School-Wide PBIS focuses on teaching behavioral expectations to students in the same way staff would approach teaching academics. A range of evidence-based interventions can be applied school-wide to groups or to individual students as related to student need based on data gathered through regular progress monitoring. As more of our districts are moving to this model of behavior prevention and intervention, it is important to understand how PBIS can positively impact all of our students. Listed below are some common misconceptions about PBIS and information that explains the fallacy in this belief.

1. **“PBIS is an intervention or practice.”**  
Although PBIS is comprised of research-based behavioral practices and interventions that have been shown to improve social behavior and academic achievement, PBIS is more accurately described as a “framework” or “approach” that provides the means of selecting, organizing and implementing these evidence-practices by giving equal attention to (a) clearly defined and

meaningful student outcomes, (b) data-driven decision making and problem solving processes, and (c) systems that prepare and support implementers to use these practices with high fidelity and durability.

2. **“PBIS emphasizes the use of tangible rewards which can negatively affect the development of intrinsic motivation.”**

The PBIS framework includes practices that provide students with feedback on the accuracy and use of their social skills and behaviors, in the same manner that feedback is provided for successful and accurate academic performance. When new and/or difficult social skills are being acquired, more teacher and external feedback systems might be used to give students information about their social behavior. However, as students become more fluent in their use of social skills, external feedback systems are reduced and replaced by more natural environmental and/or self-managed feedback (Akin-Little & Little, 2009; Akin-Little, Eckert, Lovett, & Little, 2004). Although intrinsic motivation is difficult to conceptualize and measure from a behavior analytic perspective, little evidence exists to suggest that the

use of positive reinforcement, rewards, acknowledgements, and recognition has negative effects on academic and social behavior achievement (Cameron, Bank, & Pierce, 2001; Cameron & Pierce, 2002; Cameron, 2005).

3. **“PBIS is something new that was designed for students with disabilities.”**

The phrase “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports” was first coined in the reauthorization of the IDEA; however, the practices, principles, and systems that characterize PBIS have been described, studied and implemented since the early 1960s and 1970s (Carr, 2007; Carr et al., 2002; Sugai & Horner, 2002). PBIS is a marriage of behavioral theory, behavior analysis, positive behavior supports, and prevention and implementation science that has been developed to improve how schools select, organize, implement, and evaluate behavioral practices in meeting the needs of all students (Sugai et al., 2000).

4. **“PBIS is for behavior, and RtI is for academics.”**

Response to Intervention (RtI) is best conceptualized as a framework for developing and implementing multi-tiered systems of academic and behavior support, and is comprised of (a) universal screening, (b) continuous progress monitoring, (c) continuum of evidence-based practices, (d) team-driven data-based decision making, and (e) implementation fidelity evaluation (Sugai & Horner, 2009). The PBIS framework is the application of RtI principles to the improvement of social behavior outcomes for all students. PBIS is often described as the “behavior side” of the RtI multi-tiered continuum; however, this description misrepresents the actual integrated implementation of behavior and academic supports (Sugai, Horner, Fixsen, & Blase, 2010).



# PBIS Success @Wesley School

submitted by **Stephanie Lathrop**  
LLMSW Wesley School Social Worker/Behavior Specialist  
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Wesley School is currently in its fourth year of implementing Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS). During this school year, Wesley School has refined the third tier of intervention designed for students needing very intense and individualized behavioral and sensory support. Throughout the last three years, the number of behavioral referrals has decreased tremendously. Data is kept on behavioral referrals through a system called School-wide Information System (SWIS). The system allows data to be tracked for both individual students as well as school-wide.

During the current school year, data has been compared on the number of behavioral referrals, seclusions, and restraints over the last three years. The data has supported that PBIS interventions have worked and continue to show improvement in our students and response to behaviors by staff. The number of restraints and seclusions has decreased by at least 50% each month for the last three years. Wesley staff members have all been trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI), and have worked diligently to show proactive and positive reinforcement. This has proven to be highly effective in improving behaviors at Wesley School over the past four years.



## Transition Students to Benefit from move to “THE HUB”

Wesley School Transition Program students and teachers will begin classes in the fall of 2013 at “The Folkert Community Hub,” a high-tech facility on Seminole Road in Norton Shores. The Hub will become home to about 100 students ages 17- to 26-years-old currently served at six different classroom sites within the community. The move is being prompted by a need to improve and expand opportunities for students, while ensuring student safety and achieving cost efficiencies. According to Cathy Burr, Wesley School Principal, students will enjoy the newly renovated facility, have access to more job opportunities, and have more recreational space. Teaching staff will benefit by being in one location where they can more easily collaborate on instruction. The new location will allow students to walk, use the MATS bus system, or ride in school vans to access job sites within the area. The Hub will be similar to a college campus with common areas where students will practice their social skills in a safe learning environment. Owned and operated by the non-profit group “No More Sidelines,” the 50,000 square foot facility was formerly occupied by engineers with General Dynamics. Future plans include the development of a banquet/conference center and coffee shop.

submitted by **Catherine Burr, Wesley School Principal**  
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## Wesley School Students and Staff Create Snowflakes for Sandy Hook Students

submitted by **Catherine Burr, Wesley School Principal**, cburr@muskegonisd.org or 231-767-7303

On December 20, 2012, Bonny Marsicano, a neighbor of the Sandy Hook Elementary PTA President, emailed several schools requesting handmade snowflakes. The snowflakes were needed to hang in the windows and halls of the school building the Sandy Hook students would be returning to on January 3. Wesley School students and staff created about 40 very glittery snowflakes. In true snowflake fashion, they were all different sizes and designs. Wesley School Teacher Katrina Ellis said, “It felt really good bringing the box to the post office and knowing that in some small way we could offer support and joy to a hurting school community. By getting a box all the way from Michigan they would know people across the country, that don’t even know them, are thinking about them and caring for them.”



# 2013 MASA Winners' Circle Awards

*Each year, MASA presents Winners' Circle Awards to some of its members. The goal of the Winners' Circle is to give recognition to members whose leadership has launched or adapted an effective program or practice that achieves results and could be replicated in other districts. This year, Muskegon County was fortunate to have three winners.*



Montague Area Public Schools superintendent **Nathan Robrahn**, along with middle school principal **Curt Hansen**, and community member **Dave Pickard** developed The Cookin' Club. This club has met in Montague to help sixth graders know more about working in the kitchen, healthy meals, and meal planning. Following six after-school classes, the eight students prepared a full meal for their parents. Part of the program came from Muskegon's "One in 21" initiative from the Muskegon County Health Department. It is Montague's desire to help students learn basic skills that will then transfer to their home environment. Skills include measuring, kitchen safety (knives, burners, etc.), and economics of meal planning. Students met new peers and positive mentors from the community.



MAISD superintendent **Dave Sipka** was awarded for his leadership in establishing the Kindness Journal Program. Students in grades three to five recorded their observed acts of kindness each day for six weeks in January and February and then wrote a reflection on the importance of the activity. Students reported a 50% increase in acts of kindness in the school setting during the six-week period (as reported by teachers in participating schools through a post-program random survey). 87% of parents indicated changes to their children's attitudes during the six-week period regarding positive behaviors at home (as reported by parents of students in participating schools through a post-program survey).



Orchard View superintendent **Patricia Walstra**, middle school principal **Jim Nielsen**, dean of students/instruction **Kelli Arnold-Wegner**, counselor **Laura Wiles**, and teachers **Shelly Dorm** and **Ryan Wilson** also received a Winners' Circle Award. "Area 51" is Orchard View Middle School's eighth grade Academic Recovery Model (ARM). Located in Room 51, ARM is in its second year and has seen wonderful results. ARM allows students who struggle in middle school to have a second chance in a new environment.

The program keeps students on track for high school by providing high school credit in English, Math, Physics, and Study Skills using a blended learning approach. Students transition to the high school as early as November, at the end of the first trimester, or in March, at the end of the second trimester. Students are supported by highly qualified teachers, E2020 online

learning, and counseling services. The reduced number of distractions, stringent attendance requirements, smaller class size, incentive to get to the high school, and fewer teachers in a family-like environment all work together to show students they can overcome barriers and be successful in school.

Area 51 is a single classroom with 16 to 22 students. All have been retained from eighth grade. 80% of the students maintain good attendance and earn high school credit. In 2011-12, five students transferred to the high school in November with 1.5 credits. The remaining students started the 2012-13 school year at the high school with three to seven credits. This year, eight of the 16 students transferred to the high school this November with up to two credits. The remaining students all have one credit completed thus far. Good attendance has increased and disciplinary referrals are down significantly. We are certain these students would have dropped out of the high school if they did not have this opportunity.



West Michigan Student Showcase 2013 will take place on Wednesday, March 20 and Thursday, March 21 starting at 7:00 p.m. at the Frauenthal Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Muskegon.

Student Honorees in the areas of Academics and Athletics, and Student Nominees in the areas of Literary Arts, Performing Arts, and Visual Arts will be introduced on-stage. Performing Arts entries will be performed for the audience and judges. Winners will be announced and presented with medals and trophies at the end of performances on Thursday, March 21.

Tickets are available at the Frauenthal Box Office or through StarTickets, [www.startickets.com](http://www.startickets.com). Tickets for adults are \$8.50 and tickets for students and senior citizens are \$6.50.

Visual Art entries are on display in the Bettye Clark Cannon Gallery at the Frauenthal Center for the Performing Arts through Thursday, April 10. The gallery is open Monday through Friday, 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

West Michigan Student Showcase is an annual celebration of excellence for high school youth of West Michigan. Students are selected by their respective schools in the areas of academics, athletics, literary arts, performing arts, and visual arts. Since 1981, high school students from Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, and Ottawa counties have had an opportunity to be recognized. For many of our student nominees, this will be the shining moment of their high school years - for others, the beginning of amateur or professional careers as actors, musicians, writers, athletes, and artists.

The 2013 West Michigan Student Showcase logo was designed by Kathryn Rogers, a student at Ottawa Area ISD's Careerline Tech Center. Her logo was chosen from 18 entries from around West Michigan. For her winning design, she received \$100, two tickets to Showcase, two Showcase T-shirts, five copies of the Showcase program, and she will be recognized in the program.

For more information about Showcase, visit [www.WestMIShowcase.org](http://www.WestMIShowcase.org).

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## 2013 WINGS Summer Program Getting Started

Enrollment in the annual Summer Widening Interests through New Experiences for Gifted Students Program (WINGS) is about to begin! For many students, WINGS is an annual tradition in their family. Many parents remember taking part in WINGS when they were young. They love that their children can experience the same program they did. WINGS 2013 is the 33rd year of the program.

WINGS 2013 will take place July 15-18, 2013, and July 22-25, 2013

with both morning (9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon) and afternoon (1:00 – 4:00 p.m.) sessions. Student registration will start on Monday, April 1st. Class availability is first come, first served.

Last year, over 400 students attended classes at the Summer WINGS



Program held at Muskegon Community College during the last two weeks of July. WINGS is an MAISD and MCC co-sponsored program that provides in-depth summer study experiences for students in grades 1-6 who show exceptional interest and/or talent in focused subjects. Classes are designed for passionate learners, curious minds, and "outside-of-the-box" thinkers.

Check out the WINGS website at [www.SummerWINGS.org](http://www.SummerWINGS.org) for more information and to register.

# Middle School Amusement Park Physics

The MAISD Regional Mathematics & Science Center is excited to offer Muskegon County students in grades 5 – 8 the opportunity to be involved in applying mathematics and science skills in a real-world setting at Michigan's Adventure Amusement Park. Middle School Amusement Park Physics 2013 is scheduled for Wednesday, May 22, 2013, at Michigan's Adventure in Muskegon.

The MAISD is offering a Dinner & Dialogue learning session in April to familiarize teachers with the content and materials for a successful experience at the park. During the session, direct connections to the Common Core State Standards for content will be made as well as conversations around how to use Amusement Park Physics problems to engage students in the Standards for Mathematical Practice. The training is funded by the MAISD Regional Mathematics & Science Center and is open to all teachers, new and returning.

All required forms and additional information may be accessed at <http://bit.ly/AmusementParkPhysics>.

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