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This past spring Karen and I visited Turkey and covered 2,000 miles of historic ruins, magnificent churches and beautiful mosques. Centuries old, and yet with a vibrant culture that spans the old and the new, modern Internet cafes are tucked into bazaars that have been operating since the time before Christ.

We walked in the city of Troy on a road that is 3,000 years old, with grooves from chariots, but still fully functional—so functional that our Governor would be green with envy over the quality workmanship and the durable infrastructure.

I stood on a stage in an amphitheater where Paul the Apostle preached to a crowd of 30,000—and you all know how much I like to give talks and preach, so the temptation was great.

The finding of Troy is an interesting story. Archeologists looked for the ruins all up and down the coast of Turkey where ancient writings, including Homer, indicated the city could be found. They found the seaport—one that saw the launch of 1,000 ships—four miles inland from the coast. The world had changed. Over the centuries silt and dirt had filled in and the ocean had receded.

We are finding ourselves in this same type of change environment. The world we were used to has changed before our very eyes. We have gone from writing on paper with pens and pencils, to typing with typewriters, to using computers and iPads. Our students know of typewriters only through pictures and museums. But to us, the IBM Selectric was the bee's knees and we were in hog heaven with its capabilities. In our day, not so long ago, this was cutting-edge technology.

During our last couple of days, we had the opportunity to cruise down the Bosphorus—the river that separates Europe from Asia—in Istanbul. Going under the bridge—half in Europe, half in Asia—I could feel the power of bridging the old and new.

This is the time in Michigan's education history to build a bridge to the future. It's time to leave our comfortable world and cross over to new technologies and systems that are evolving for our children.

Today's school leaders are the bridge; we have the responsibility to make that bridge as strong as we possibly can, using all the tools at our disposal.

The structure and the system are evolving. It is a work in progress. We need to be willing to explore all the possibilities. We have to walk boldly and not fear the new world ahead. We have to listen to the prophets—the Marc Tuckers and Michael Fullans of the world—and know that with well thought out change we can be the “bridge not too far” that spans their world, their continent, to ours.

It is exciting work and so rewarding. Let's keep building for those to come.
Thinking Together

Time for Tough Questions About Our Educational Systems

By David Campbell, MASA President

It is a privilege to have been elected President of MASA. MASA’s motto is “Your success, our passion.” I have always liked that motto as our success as school leaders is really important. It may be important to us, but it is far more important to the 1.6 million students we have been entrusted to educate. We have chosen and been chosen for a noble profession, one that makes a significant difference in the lives of young people and ultimately our society. Now that the global economy has taken deep and permanent root in our state, the realization that all students need to reach higher levels of knowledge, skill, and character is more important than ever. This makes our positions more important, and ultimately our success essential for our state, as we are successful when our students fulfill their potential.

So, the question I want to address is whether or not we (and subsequently, our students) are being set up for success by the governance and funding structures that uphold the educational systems in Michigan. This is a question our Systemic School Reform Committee is grappling with.

Governance and funding structures form the foundation upon which our systems are built. There seems to be a growing realization that the current structures may have fit the agricultural and industrial economies of the past centuries better than they fit the global knowledge-based economy we now have. Many ideas are being debated and some may even be law by the time this newsletter is printed, but I want you to know that MASA is trying to look at the issues deeply and systematically.

Governance and funding structures are not simple topics and cannot be successfully changed easily. We are looking at what some of the top-performing nations are doing to ensure their students’ success by providing outstanding, coherent, well planned instruction by highly skilled educators in a system that is supported by governance and funding structures that are highly coherent, logical, efficient, and effective.

Some of the questions we are daring to ask are:

- If someone were going to invent an educational system for our state in 2013, would they create something that looks like the system we now have?
- Why do we have a system based largely on competition when we are supposed to be collaborating with each other to ensure student opportunity and success?
- Why are some counties’ Career and Technical Education programs so well funded, while other counties have few CTE resources for students?
- Why do some ISDs provide outstanding instructional support for local districts, while others do next to nothing to support?
- Why do some counties have affordable access to post-secondary options and others do not?
- Why do some counties provide 100 percent reimbursement for special education expenses, and some provide very little?
- Why do we have a system in which K-12 education competes for limited resources with early childhood and community colleges when we all are supposed to be focused on what is best for the students?

There are many answers to these questions, some more valid than others. As a teacher, I valued the questions my students would ask more than the answers they gave often times. The Systemic School Reform Committee is asking the right questions and discussing and researching to find answers that will help move our systems in a more logical, efficient, and effective direction for 1.6 million students. We look forward to sharing with you what we are thinking and learning together.
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Flip Flippen, an internationally renowned speaker with an uncompromising mission: “To build relationships and processes that bring out the best in people.” He has worked with hundreds of thousands of individuals, including educators, K-12 students, executives, and athletes.

Anthony Muhammad, one of the most sought-after educational consultants in North America, whose most notable accomplishment came as principal at Levey Middle School in Southfield, Michigan, where student proficiency on state assessments was more than doubled in five years.

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n 2013, local farms have been taken over by corporations; factories are closing; and the days of medium-skill, high wage jobs are a thing of the past. Schools, especially school leaders, must be poised to move their focus and agenda beyond standardized test scores and into the lofty task of preparing students for a world very different from the one that they experienced as a child. School leaders must be poised to push an ambitious agenda, while maximizing scarce resources and creativity. This is not an easy task, but great leaders all over the country are stepping up to this task.

Jason Hillman, principal of Meadowlark Elementary School in Sheridan, Wyoming, is a prime example. His school struggled with maximizing human resources and improving student achievement. Jason and his staff embraced the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model of school improvement, and they were recognized in 2012 as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. Jason has been recognized for his innovative style of leadership and building a culture of dedication and sacrifice.

In an attempt to build healthy and productive school community, he initiated a contest to change the school mascot and colors. The students chose to be Bobcats. In support of the PLC philosophy of collaboration, the support staff defined exactly what it meant to be a Bobcat, including principles like wisdom, hard-work, and creativity. They developed eight traits, and treated each trait as a learning objective.

Each trait was used as a school-wide theme each month. The theme was highlighted on the daily announcements with examples and reminders. Classroom teachers hung posters of the trait of the month in their classrooms and discussed what the trait meant with students. Students were recognized by staff members for meeting the expectations defined in their outcomes. Students were given Bobcat Pride slips; these slips were displayed in the entryway of the school for the whole community to see. They established a weekly Bobcat Pride celebration.

Through the hard work of the staff, the school’s climate and achievement have drastically improved without adding staff or expenditures. The same staff members who were once feeling left out now take great ownership in the school. By using the PLC philosophy, they have created an outstanding behavior modification system, and the school community has sustained it. Effective leaders maximize the talent of their staff.

Kwame Stephens, the principal of Pontiac High School in Pontiac, Michigan, knows first-hand what it’s like to lead in changing and challenging times. He is forced to inspire a staff to improve student outcomes at the same time the district is facing serious fiscal austerity measures. Instead of complaining about what he could not control, he decided to focus on things that the staff had direct influence to control, and those things included climate and instruction.

As an instructional leader, he felt that he had to be clear about what effective teaching was and what effective teaching looked like. Once those were clear, he had to clarify how the staff would ensure that all students were exposed to effective teaching. Recognizing the gravity of the moment, the staff created a very detailed Instructional Learning Cycle (ILC) to initiate the process of ensuring that all students would be exposed to effective teaching.
At the center of the ILC were four instructional focus questions rooted in the PLC process (DuFour, DuFour, 2012). These questions focus on curriculum alignment, formative assessment, academic intervention, and academic enrichment. Each staff member was expected to implement the structure of the ILC, and regular feedback with each teacher was initiated to ensure implementation of the process with fidelity. The implementation and monitoring of the ILC removed the ambiguity from the teaching process and served as a road map that led to improved learning for students.

The power of the ILC concept is found in its creative and methodical development and implementation. Chip and Dan Heath point out in their book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* (Heath and Heath 2010), that critical moves must be scripted—meaning ambiguous goals must be translated into clear behaviors.

Implementation of the ILC organized the most critical process, the teaching process. The staff understood that in challenging times, self-discipline and organization were paramount. They needed to improve, despite dwindling resources and mounting challenges. This represents the challenge of the modern educator and it is one that we all must meet.

**Works Cited**

Bellanca, James and Brandt, Ron (2010), *21st Century Schools: Rethinking How Students Learn*, Solution Tree Press, Bloomington, IN


Anthony Muhammad, one of the most sought-after educational consultants in North America, will be a keynote speaker at the MASA Fall Conference. Muhammad’s most notable accomplishment came as principal at Levey Middle School in Southfield, Michigan, where student proficiency on state assessments was more than doubled in five years.
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There is a paradox to learning that I have not found a way around. Let me give you a concept and let's see where it takes us.

Good judgment comes from experience...but much of experience comes from making bad judgments. Granted, it comes from some good ones, too, but for the sake of discussion let's look at what we aren't learning from the bad ones.

It's interesting to me that we have such a hard time learning. We are, in fact, "educators," and yet we struggle to learn from our past or current mistakes. Why is it so hard for us to "be wrong" about something? Why do we have such a hard time owning the fact that we misjudge or misprioritize or misallocate or mis-hire or misfire or misdirect or flat out fail at something? I think that I have made every one of these mistakes multiple times—sometimes in one week.

One thing that I have learned as an entrepreneur (which many of you are as well) is that you have to make mistakes to find successes. Just don't make all the huge ones in one year.

Second, there are some wild things happening in education right now that are surprising and go against much of what we have thought works in the past. For example, many kids like online learning better than being with an overworked teacher. Another thing I see in India, where we have an office, is that kids can teach their peers as "paraprofessionals" as well as many teachers.

Another question I have is whether a teacher for the future should even go through the education that is required of them today. What does the future require of a "teacher" and how do we develop those skills/attributes? How can we better differentiate in educating kids at differing levels? Do we need more hours in the classroom or do we need more learning prior to coming to class? What are we doing with the neuroscience of learning and how do we integrate it into our classrooms—if we even still have classrooms? Each of you knows of things being tried that have great potential...perhaps. We have to take some chances and try some things and see what gets the best results.

When I look at the future of education, as well as so many other institutions/enterprises, I see some things that we need to consider and, in the process, perhaps change our own mindset. Let me point out that the guys that used to deliver ice to your ice box at your home (before my time, as well) weren't the guys who invented the refrigerator. The guys who first flew a plane didn't build a lasting airline company; the guys who built "on star" guidance systems aren't the ones who built your GPS guidance system for your phone. Paradigm change is usually not a nice curvilinear process, but rather a disruptive process that runs parallel to that curve and at times can be catastrophic in many respects.

Change is tough; if it were not, we would all be in great shape and eat right. Change is tough, but there are some things we have to grasp. Good judgment comes from experience, but lots of experience comes from bad judgment. One thing we do know about change is that there has to be a compelling reason to change—one that brings a sense of urgency (see John Kotter's work on change).

As long as we are somewhat comfortable, we tend to stay like we are. I am a better father, husband, friend, boss and person because I saw myself doing things that weren't working, for me nor for those around me. Many of them were due to my own bad judgment or lack of experience when trying to solve a problem or address an issue.

As people who love children, we have a deep commitment to our kids and staff—commitment that actually takes precedence in many ways over our own personal needs. That's what leadership is about. So let's change how we behave and quit criticizing others' attempts at change and start being part of the greater solution.

Continued on page 16
As people who love children, we have a deep commitment to our kids and staff—commitment that actually takes precedence in many ways over our own personal needs. That’s what leadership is about. So let’s change how we behave and quit criticizing others’ attempts at change and start being part of the greater solution.

And let’s take some risks. Many of them won’t work, but there are some incredible ideas out there that are working and they need refining (so do I, for that matter). Let’s quit whining about things that we can’t change and find ways to solve the issues of the future. My biggest fear is that if we can’t come up with the solutions, then those who aren’t in the trenches will be the ones to legislate solutions—and that has not worked well in the past.

Each of you is a leader in the education space…so let’s lead. And, let’s do it together with hope for a great future for our kids.

Flip Flippin is an internationally renowned speaker with an uncompromising mission: “To build relationships and processes that bring out the best in people.” He has worked with hundreds of thousands of individuals, including educators, K-12 students, executives, and athletes. Flippin will provide a keynote address during MASA’s Fall Conference.
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No doubt, like our nation’s bridges, many of the educational bridges designed to ensure the safe passage of students through early childhood, K-12, and post-secondary experiences are in dire need of repair. As superintendent, I am both challenged and supported by the clear and specific vision of my district to repair, build, and maintain bridges for students.

The vision for Southfield Public Schools (SPS) is to cultivate a continuously improving, collaborative, safe, supportive and high-quality student-centered learning experience that prepares dynamic, innovative learners who realize their maximum potential in a global society. Our mission is to equip all students with the knowledge, competencies, and attitudes for effective living. This is demonstrated by our philosophy and practice of valuing, believing in, and facilitating the positive potential of every student. We continually challenge ourselves to operationalize these principles.

In fact, we developed a graphic to illustrate our constructive approach to structuring systemic change to transform how the SPS community experiences K-12 education (See chart at right).

The outline below details how Southfield Public Schools used our Cycle for Operationalizing the SPS Vision, Mission, and Philosophy model to create bridges that allow students to realize higher academic achievement.

I. Strategic Planning
The district’s 2009-2014 strategic plan was approved by the SPS Board of Education and provides a clear and intentional paradigm for the leadership emphasis in the district. The strategic plan is the result of productive conversations and cooperative stakeholder activities facilitated by the district superintendent. The plan is focused on operationalizing the vision, mission, and philosophy of SPS in order to promote the success of all students. It articulates strategies, as well as identifies tools and processes, for making decisions and allocating resources.

II. Alignment and Articulation of Goals with Professional Standards and Theoretical Models
The alignment of programs, services, and student outcome goals provides standard reference points necessary for data-focused action planning. This practice optimizes opportunities for outcome data collection and analysis. Of equal importance, the practice:

- Confirms transparency of leadership and documentation of accountability;
- Facilitates engagement of stakeholders and extended community partnerships;
- Provides tools for empowering students, parents, and educators in constructing a pro-social, strengths-enhancing educational environment where high expectations for success are communicated and students’ needs for belonging and relatedness are satisfied; and
- Models pro-active leadership for social justice and advocacy to promote equity in educational outcomes and closing the achievement gap.

III. Systemic Change Initiatives
A. Restructuring – Restructuring has been an on-going process across the entire PreK–12 educational system at SPS. It includes educational programs that are focused on enhanced student achievement as demonstrated by initiatives such as the secondary redesign. The secondary redesign was a complete overhaul of the system and included: adding eighth-grade programs to two high schools; ninth-grade, gender-separated core classes; and increased counseling support. In addition, the district also redesigned the social studies curriculum to align with the Common Core State Standards and moved it to a totally electronic format.

B. Transforming – At SPS we are endeavoring to change the way we practice our
craft as professional educators in order to revolutionize education. At the same time we are challenged with simultaneously managing pragmatic structural issues and limitations concerning time, funding, and human resources related to professional development, contractual, and work-place rules and litigation—to name just a few of the common obstacles. In spite of that, we strive to raise the level of our professional skills. For example, through our continued partnership with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards we obtained a grant which allowed 275 teachers to complete NBPTS Take One. Our goal is to have every teacher in the district certified through this process.

IV. Data-Focused Action Planning
The district is in a continuous data collection mode in all aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to support innovation. Planning for data collection, analysis, and dissemination is a consistent standard of practice at SPS. The results are used to enhance, expand, and pursue research-based approaches that support student achievement.

V. Evidence-Based Practice
The district’s academic curriculum is grounded in the Understanding by Design (UbD) theoretical model with an emphasis on differentiated instruction. Social Learning Theory, the Counseling Wellness Model, and Positive Psychology are the grounding theories used by the District-Counselor Advisory Planning Work Group to align the counseling curriculum with the American School Counseling Association National Model, with an emphasis on a Strengths-Based School Counseling (SBSC) approach. This group was formed to prepare for the 2013-2014 academic year, in response to the district’s 2012 Michigan Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program Audit. Both UbD and SBSC incorporate “smart goals” as the modality for planning, implementing, and evaluating curriculum and reporting student outcomes.

It is our hope that by sharing our plans, strategies, and experiences in restructuring schematics, tools, and processes, we will help school leaders not only survive challenging times, but also succeed in facilitating the design of structures and systems that give students 21st century roots and wings to thrive.

Dr. Wanda Cook-Robinson is Superintendent of Southfield Public Schools and is the 2013 Michigan Superintendent of the Year. Contact her at (248) 746-4366 or cook-robinsonwm@southfield.k12.mi.us.

Stand for Something.

More than a construction management firm
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It can be argued that we teach a generation of students that has no concept of chalk and a chalkboard. With so many resources online in this digital age, students now have constant access to anything they want; they also expect this in their classroom education. In an effort to create a bridge to the future for our students beyond K-12 education, Fraser’s focus is on student learning, blending the best traditional offerings with the best digital offerings to prepare today’s 21st century students for a world beyond the walls of school.

For students in Fraser Public Schools, learning environments have been redesigned and classroom instruction has transformed with initiatives that began over the last several years. In 2005, Fraser Public Schools had limited technology integrated into the classroom. Today, the Macomb County district of over 5,300 students completed the state’s largest iPad rollout in a K-12 environment during the 2012-2013 school year. The technology, purchased with the funds from a $19.9 million bond passed by the Fraser community in February of 2011, is a new instructional tool that has already aided in the transformation of student learning.

This new instructional tool, now available to Fraser students enrolled in grades 3-12, is a part of the district’s 1:1 initiative. With parent consent, students take their iPads home after school, encouraging learning anytime, anywhere. In grades DK-2, students have access to classroom sets of iPads that have been integrated into their daily curriculum. For all grade levels, these devices are used as another instructional tool in their learning environment, which also includes an interactive Promethean board, student response systems, document cameras, Apple TV, and other learning tools.

Additionally, district teachers also have a web presence and many provide online access to homework assignments, classroom updates, and instructional tools to help students and parents stay connected to their learning. Many teachers, predominately at the high school level, are using BlackBoard as a Learning Management System for online, blended, flipped and traditional access to class content. High school students in Fraser have access to hybrid courses, a blended opportunity for students to learn both online and in a face-to-face classroom setting.

With mobile devices in the hands of students both in and out of school, Fraser Public Schools implemented a new 21st century literacy curriculum to provide
students with the skills necessary for their success as digital citizens. For the 21st century learner, literacy extends beyond the functional skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to include visual, media and information literacies. The individual in this position teaches sections of 21st century literacy to students, while also assisting the teaching staff to better understand the technology tools accessible to them. This position researches and exposes teachers and students to new technologies as they become available.

Transitioning to this new 1:1 environment also met an important need for the district to provide technical support in conjunction with the 21st century instructional support. In addition to qualified and trained staff members providing technical support, the Technology Department integrated a series of upgrades to best fuel a collaborative environment that would blend well with the district’s initiatives. The district’s network infrastructure was redesigned within each building to increase connectivity for students and staff to network resources and the Internet. Filtered wireless Internet access was implemented district-wide to ensure connectivity for students, staff, parents and community members visiting any district campus.

The adjustments made during the district’s redesign now allow connectivity anytime, anywhere, rather than being tied to a desk. However, all of these implemented initiatives and changes in Fraser Public Schools boil down to one very important vision: Where Learning Drives Innovation.

It is not the technology driving the district; student learning remains the focus in Fraser Public Schools. By blending the best traditional offerings with the best digital offerings to prepare today’s 21st century students, the district aims to better prepare students for the transition from high school to college and career. Today’s students now have the knowledge of the world at their fingertips. They have the opportunity to own their own learning, look for their own content, and be taught by individuals from around the globe. Fraser Public Schools recognizes students may graduate and enter into a world with jobs that may not yet exist. The district acknowledges this and the responsibility to prepare students for this new world.

Dr. Dave Richards is the Superintendent of Fraser Public Schools. Contact him at dave.richards@fraserk12.org or 586-439-7005. Fraser is a school district of over 5,300 students located in Macomb County, Michigan.
This past April, I had the opportunity to deliver my *Courageous Journey*™ final presentation and earn the CJ Endorsement (http://gomasa.org/courageous-journey). As I reflected on my journey over the previous three years, I was struck by the fact that my systemic change work was centered on my new “Why” for education. The “Journey” and reflection have been at the center of my push to change the way we work with today’s students so we can meet the needs of ALL of them.

Most educational institutions’ strategic plans, mission/vision statements, or annual education reports make reference to ALL students. But ALL means ALL and that’s a really hard thing to get our heads around when we stop to think that there are roughly 1.6 million kids in Michigan schools. Add to that the fact that we aren’t educating these kids for our past, but for their future, and it becomes clear that educators are faced with an exciting challenge.

Our schools and classrooms continue to look like they have for a long time. While there is a push for any time, any place, any pace learning we still have a long way to go; but the bridge is being built. For me, the bridge has to be built with change around personalization, if we truly want to meet the needs of ALL students.

To personalize learning for our students we need to embrace available technologies and foster collaborative working and learning environments for our teachers, students and community. Educators will need to identify those practices that are working in our current system and continue to use those while they balance implementing new tools, strategies, programs and learning environments.

I have been and will continue to be a strong advocate for the effective and well thought out use of technology in our classrooms and learning environments. Personalization without the use of technology is a tough task and one that requires teachers to work harder than they would if they leveraged the tools that are available to them in today’s educational environment. We continue to add to our teacher and student toolkits as we build the bridge to our educational future.

At the same time, I am also a strong advocate that technology, alone, is not the answer to our educational needs. Our students need to connect with adults, to develop strong mentoring relationships that allow those adults to model the behaviors and life skills that will lead to success, not only in the workplace, but in all aspects of life. Our teachers are phenomenal, but with the large amount of diversity they see in their classrooms, our schools need support in finding mentors to connect will ALL of our students. As I continue to talk with businesses across our community I am inspired by their willingness to connect with educators and students. The conversation is very different when we engage them in terms of their expertise and the possibility of connecting with our students in an authentic way, versus with our hand out for money or financial support.

In this past year, we have had the chance to work with some amazing educators, businesses and organizations to create some very exciting programs that are...
allowing our teachers and students to learn in new and engaging environments. I believe that these partnerships will be the foundation for our educational future.

Hamilton Public Schools has partnered with:

• Outdoor Discovery Center Macatawa Greenway (http://www.outdoor-discovery.org/home) to create our nature-based preschool program

• Little Hawks Discovery Preschool (http://little-hawks-discovery-preschool.hamiltonschools.us/), and engage our youngest learners in a new and exciting way.

• West Coast Chamber of Commerce and local businesses who are working with a teacher who is completing his MBA to create the YEAR (Youth. Entrepreneurial. Advancement. Resource) Program, which will allow students to develop their entrepreneurial passion and skills.

• Model Communities Education Initiative lead by Herman Miller, Haworth, the West Coast Chamber, Lakeshore Advantage, neighboring public schools, a private school, a charter school and our ISD to create the “Connections” program. This program will create educational opportunities for teachers and students that will embed work relevant experiences, employer based learning, career exploration and employability skills into the school curriculum beginning in sixth grade and continuing through graduation.

There is an old saying: “It takes a village to raise a child,” and I believe that if we truly want to prepare ALL kids for success, then it will: “Take a community to educate ALL children.” If we continue to work collectively, our future is bright. It can be a future that will bring with it the confidence to say every child leaves our system equipped with a love of learning, real life educational experiences, and the ability to solve any problem they encounter as they take the next step in their courageous journey toward success in life.

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Intern Livingston: Keeping Local Talent Local

By Timothy M. Jackson


Generally, these headlines seen around Michigan in the last two or three years are correct. Many entry level workers are deficient in one or more area of skills necessary for the workplace, our new college graduates are choosing to live in other states, and we do have good paying jobs that are unfilled. All of these problems warrant major efforts to remedy.

Livingston County took a step back to consider efficient ways to address all three, and the result is the initiative known as “Intern Livingston,” a comprehensive, county-wide effort to expose high school students, college students, and displaced adult workers to the benefits of living and working in Livingston County.

In the spring of 2012, the Livingston County Educational Advisory Group (EAG) reformed and rebranded itself as the Livingston Business and Education Alliance. As its first initiative, the LBEA looked at the data around the three issues listed above, then began a series of brainstorming activities on how to address any or all of them. Additional data gleaned from surveys of high school alumni one and five years after leaving high school showed that many young adults were unaware of the high-paying, high-skill, and high-demand jobs available close to home.

It was from these sessions that the committee began to connect the dots; we have talented young people unaware of what the employer community has to offer, and we had a host of employers unaware of how to tap the local talent market. Plus we found unique needs among employers who offered short-term, project-specific employment opportunities. Out of these came the idea of establishing a single point of contact to create a pipeline, connecting the future workforce with employers who have a short term need.

“Intern Livingston” is establishing itself as that pipeline. Kate Roberts, Intern Livingston placement coordinator, is the face and voice behind the initiative. Kate’s primary responsibility is to work with the business community to define, develop, and publicize internships, while being the single point of contact for a business interested in bringing an intern on board.

“No longer does an employer need to make five phone calls to five different high schools to find the right person for an internship,” says Kate. “Intern Livingston knows which schools have the right technical program and talent to meet an employer’s needs.”

Whether the employer need is in robotics, metal working, marketing, or hospitality management, Kate can match the opportunity to program participants, thus ensuring a perfect fit between student and the experience.

For business:
Employers can bring on technical help that is pre-screened and matched to their needs without making a long term commitment for employment.
Employers can use internships as a trial period, and then ladder interns to full time employment.
Employers can orient interns toward education that meets the needs of the marketplace.

For the intern:
Internships allow a young adult the chance to experience the workplace in a potential career area prior to making the investment in post secondary education or training.
Interns learn and benefit from employment close to home.
Interns build a resume and expand their education at any level.

For the community:
Our local talent is exposed to the many benefits of staying in the county as adults.

www.internlivingston.org
www.latec.us
hospitality management, Kate can match the opportunity to program participants, thus ensuring a perfect fit between student and the experience. Kate’s reach extends to community college partners, and one of her single biggest successes occurred when she assisted a whole class of 12 machinists from Mott Community College with the hiring process at Moeller Aerospace in nearby Wixom. Overall, Intern Livingston placed 215 students during the 2012-13 school year, with 90 percent of the internships being paid experiences.

Working with Intern Livingston makes bringing on short term help a smooth process for business people as candidates come pre-screened for technical skills. The initiative also provides training sessions for businesses considering internships.

“Many people don’t know how to configure a successful internship experience to meet both the business and intern’s expectations,” says Kate. “We find that a two hour session with the business representatives makes everything work better.”

The result is an experience that broadens the education and experience of the intern while at the same time meeting the need of the business. Internships may be volunteer non-paying positions, or in most cases, paid employment. Either way, all internships require that the candidate have an interest in a career in the area, and that the intern understand the experience is short-term and limited to a time or specific project. Employers are encouraged to use young talent to not only address a need, but also use internships to attract well qualified full- or part-time, long-term employees. Several Livingston County companies now start all permanent employees as interns, but offer tuition reimbursement and advancement as inducement for talented workers to stay close to home. One even offers to make college loan payments in return for a long-term commitment to employment after an internship.

Bottom line, Intern Livingston creates a benefit for both the business and education communities (see sidebar on previous page).

Timothy M. Jackson, Ph.D. is the Director of Career and Technical Education at the Livingston Educational Service Agency. He is a passionate supporter of career-focused education and contextualized mastery of core academic concepts.
Wyoming High School Wolves, in name, may seem typical to Michigan’s 500+ high school names and mascots. But, in school year 2012-13 in the City of Wyoming, a suburb of Grand Rapids, this was far from typical. In the fall of 2011, Wyoming Public Schools opened with two comprehensive high schools, Rogers and Wyoming Park. Along with the loyal gold and maroon of the Golden Hawks and white and blue of the Viking faithful—who for more than 50 years attended and graduated from one of these two high schools—and future graduates from eight feeder schools with their own colors and mascots, Wyoming Public Schools was facing economic, educational, and opportunities crises. Facing declining enrollments, academic reductions, rising costs, flat revenue, challenged athletic performances, transitioning to full-day Kindergarten and more, the Wyoming School Board and administration chose to look beyond the normal pathway of cuts. For students who are expected to be better prepared than any generation prior and try to get ahead of the financial curve, a difficult and sad decision was made.

On Monday, March 12, 2012 the Wyoming School Board voted 4-3 to close both of the existing high schools and to reopen in the fall as a single high school district with feeder schools under a new consolidated name.

Given that Wyoming Public Schools had to use existing facilities, our plan included a transformation of not only school names, colors, and mascots district-wide, but to use this as a challenge to provide educational opportunities in a manner that provided new levels of success. So, although both high schools were to be used, they would need to be re-configured, re-named and re-painted in five months. We knew the mental change was going to be a much greater challenge than the physical, but with dedicated employees, families, and students helping throughout the process, we re-opened on Thursday, August 23, 2012 as the Wyoming Wolves, kicking off with a ribbon-cutting celebration and community parade and ending with our first high school football game to a sell-out crowd—a win.

In between these dates, school names were changed, district-wide mascot name (colors, logo, and school song) developed; grade level configurations, programs, and staffs were relocated; and many staff, students, parents, and families began to get to know the “other side” of the district. Communication and continuous transparency throughout the process was key to informing and including everyone who wanted to participate in the process.

A blueprint was created outlining actions necessary to pull this off with timelines and individuals responsible. The biggest decision was which of the existing high schools would be the “new” high school. Given the size, location, and future potential, Rogers High School would become the new Wyoming High School serving grades 10-12 (previously 9-12), and the Wyoming Park High School would become the new Wyoming Junior High serving grades 7-9 (previously Newhall Middle School serving 7-8). The remainder of our schools are Wyoming Intermediate serving grades 5-6 (change from Jackson Park), four elementary sites serving grade K-4, and Huntington Woods Early Childhood Center. Wyoming Public Schools had completely transformed.
Hurricane Mitch was the most destructive of the 1998 Atlantic hurricane season. In addition to its 180 mph winds, it saturated parts of Central America with over six feet of rain in three days. Yes, six FEET of rain!

Honduras was particularly hard hit. A mountainous country laced with rivers, Honduras counts on bridges to connect its people and its commerce. When Hurricane Mitch finally left for Florida, it had destroyed ALL but one of the country’s 150 bridges... the Choluteca Bridge. The bridge was a testament to modern engineering. But the hurricane would not be denied. The bridge wouldn’t budge, so Mitch decided to move the river!

Over the years, the Choluteca Bridge story has come to symbolize the difference between “survival” and “relevance.” Most times, it is used by long-standing, history-laden organizations (healthcare and organized religion come to mind) as a “wake-up” call that the industry is experiencing significant “shift,” and fortifying the status quo will likely result in irrelevance to those the industry seeks to serve.

Public education is in the midst of such a shift. Political, for-profit, and public interests; exploding choice fueled by technology; the rise of global challenges; the changing nature of work; the morphing interests of students; and the realities of our families have all resulted in a hurricane-force gut check: will we fight for status-quo survival or will we reform and innovate for relevance?

The Systemic School Reform Committee (SSRC) is grappling with that challenge. To be sure, it is difficult work. Over the course of their first four-and-a-half days together, the committee members have begun to build a common understanding around the needs of Michigan’s 1.6 million students. They have shared research; data; the work of education thought leaders; the realities from their own backyards; and the stories of remarkable success, of acute failure, and of hope. They have explored the public education systems of other states and nations and yet acknowledged that, while these places provide important learning, none of them is Michigan.

They have faced the difficult reality that some indefensible things have happened “on our watch.” They have worked to understand why these things have happened and are forging recommendations for the “here and now.” At the same time, they are thoughtfully and laboriously wrestling with “near term” systemic recommendations that will help us reform and retool for our quickly evolving industry.

They have deliberated over why public education exists (or should exist) and what we cannot compromise, like equitable opportunity for all students and the importance of restoring and honoring the professional educators’ right to lead.

Some of the work has resulted in laughter and good-natured camaraderie. Some of the work has been painful and quieting. The committee members have represented you and your 1.6 million students with passion. It has been a privilege to facilitate their work on your behalf.

History would suggest that long-standing formalized industries are rarely successful at reforming themselves...that the status quo mongers will always pummel industry-changing innovators in a delusional attempt at self-preservation. But eventually disruptive innovation, like hurricanes, will not be denied.

And then...shift happens.

Karen McPhee is superintendent of Ottawa Area Intermediate School District, and serves as facilitator for MASA’s Systemic School Reform Committee. Contact her at kmcphee@oaisd.org.
The older I get the more I appreciate the privilege of growing up and living in Michigan. Some of my earliest and fondest memories include time spent outdoors with my parents and seven siblings. Both of my parents were English teachers, and each foray into the woods was a learning experience. While fishing, hunting, hiking or canoeing, my parents took advantage of every opportunity to enrich our education. My parents shared their love of learning with their eight children and made sure we were exposed to the great storytellers, both current and past. I remember listening to Garrison Keillor and the Prairie Home Companion on public radio and Paul Harvey on radio station WKLA. Both were great orators; however, I especially enjoyed Paul Harvey and “The Rest of the Story.” Mr. Harvey had a voice that was captivating and pleasant. His stories usually began with a narration that would evoke some emotion and challenge my thought process. As he weaved his story, he would lead in one direction and then, without missing a beat, he would deliver a completely different perspective. He would end each broadcast with, “I’m Paul Harvey and there you have the rest of the story.”

During the past 25 years the American education system has encountered some interesting obstacles and challenges, some of which are systemic and others that are societal. I would like to focus your attention to the talk, the truth and a crucial conversation about our K-12 public schools. Malcolm Gladwell’s book Outliers suggests that the way in which education has been discussed in the United States is backwards: “An enormous amount of time is spent talking about reducing class size, rewriting curricula, buying every student a new laptop and increasing school funding all of which assumes that there is something fundamentally wrong with the job schools are doing. However, the data does not support this notion. In reality, schools do a very good job educating students between September and June. Schools work. The only problem with school, for the kids who aren’t achieving, is that there isn’t enough of it.”

Suddenly the causes of Asian math superiority become even more obvious. Students in Asian schools don’t have long summer vacations. Why would they?

Over the past 25 years, in addition to reading, writing, science, arithmetic and social studies, schools have been directed to include:

- keyboarding & computer education
- global education
- multicultural/ethnic education
- nonsexist education
- English as a second language & bilingual education
- teen pregnancy awareness
- Hispanic heritage education
- early childhood education
- jump start, early start, even start, prime start
- full-day kindergarten
- preschool programs for children at-risk
- after-school programs for children of working parents
- alternative education
- stranger danger education
- antismoking education
- sexual abuse & prevention education
- expanded health & psychological services
- child abuse monitoring
- conflict resolution & peer mediation
- HIV/AIDS education
- CPR training
- America 2000 initiatives
- inclusion
- expanded computer & internet education
- distance learning
- tech-prep and school-to-work programs
- post-secondary enrollment options
- concurrent enrollment options
- Goals 2000 initiatives
- expanded talented & gifted opportunities
- at-risk & dropout prevention
- homeless education
- gang education
- service learning
- bus safety
- bicycle safety
- gun safety & water safety education
- No Child Left Behind
- bullying prevention
- anti-harassment policies
- expanded early childcare & wrap around programs
- body mass index evaluation and obesity monitoring
- organ donor education
- personal financial literacy
- entrepreneurial & innovation skills development
- media literacy
- contextual learning skill development
- health & wellness programs
- Race to the Top

Cultures that believe that the route to success lies in rising before dawn 360 days a year is scarcely going to give their children three straight months off in the summer. The school year in the United States, on average, is 180 days long. The South Korean school year is 220 days long. The Japanese school year is 243 days long. Asian students are not smarter than their American counterparts; rather, they spend more time in school. Last year Jamie Vollmer, the author of *Schools Can’t Do It Alone*, visited Livingston County and spoke at venues in both Howell and Brighton. Mr. Vollmer discussed myriad problems facing public schools. One big issue was the fact that we live in an information and service society, yet unlike other countries, we educate our students based on an agrarian calendar. In addition to the time on task issue, he identifies several pages of duties and responsibilities that have shifted from parents and society to public schools (see sidebar).

The list of added responsibilities does not include the addition of multiple, specialized topics within each of the traditional subjects. It also does not include the explosion of standardized testing and test prep activities, or any of the onerous reporting requirements imposed by the federal government, such as four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates, parental notification of optional supplemental services, comprehensive restructuring plan and reports of adequate yearly progress. All of these have been added without adding a single minute, hour or day to our school year.

Our schools are doing a good job preparing students to work in an industrialized society using an agrarian calendar. The problem is we are no longer an industrialized society and our children need to be competitive in a global economy.

We can and must improve our education system to give our students the education they will need to be competitive in the global economy. However, this can’t be accomplished without expanding our school year. And now you have the rest of the story!

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