Superintendent Kristi Teall equips district leaders and creates a win-win for everyone involved.

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  - Calories: 0


USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 23. The sugar and calorie data for fat free white and chocolate milk are representative of milk available in 2014-2015 school year – MilkPEP School Channel Survey. % Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.
It is with great pleasure that I write my first column for the Leader magazine! As you may know, I began as the MASA Executive Director last March, and since that time I have had the chance to talk with many of you over the phone, connect through email or social media, and meet many of you in person, either at one of your regional meetings or by visiting you in your school districts. As a career educator of 35 years, with 25 of those years serving as a K-12 or ISD superintendent, I am very excited about working with all of you to continue to ensure that we are all providing a quality education to each and every one of the 1.5 million students who attend public schools in Michigan.

As I move forward in this position, I will continue to focus on four core values for MASA: Service, Leadership, Collaboration, and Excellence. You will hear these words many times over the next year (and beyond) as we work extremely hard with all of you to ensure that your state association is fully meeting both your expectations and your needs. Some important words that you will also be hearing from the organization over the next year are: Inspire, Connect, and Equip. We are concentrating on Equip in this issue of the Leader magazine to ensure that all of our members are equipped with the tools necessary as we head into the 2015-16 school year.

To help you continue to be inspired, connected, and equipped, please consider joining me and hundreds of your colleagues at the MASA Fall Conference from September 23-25 at the Grand Traverse Resort in Traverse City. Your Conference Planning Committee has done an excellent job in putting together an agenda that will be both informative and instructive, and as always, the networking opportunities are second to none.

We will hear from national educational leadership experts in our general sessions, and many of your colleagues will provide you with breakout clinics that will offer great ideas to help your daily work. You will also get to experience an “unconference” session that will provide you with the opportunity to discuss current and relevant educational issues with colleagues from around the state. We will also have the opportunity to hear from, and interact with, the new State Superintendent of Public Instruction Brian Whiston, as well as Karen McPhee, the new Education Advisor to the Governor. This is going to be an exciting event, and while I know how busy things are for everyone in the fall, I would respectfully ask that you try to make the time to join us in Traverse City to focus on your professional growth.

I invite your feedback on how MASA is doing for you and your school district, and I want you to know that the voice of the membership will continue to drive the mission of your organization. Continued thanks for all of your support and kind words over the past several months. I truly look forward to working with each and every one of you for many years to come!

Chris
Another year has come and it’s time to find a theme, because that’s what we do in education. We lump things together to try and make sense of this complicated profession. This year’s theme is “Inspire. Connect. Equip.”

I think about how fortunate I have been to work with such amazing people, whether it is with my colleagues leading the charge with the Systemic School Reform Committee (SSRC), the Executive Board and Council, the Legislative Committee of MASA, or all my friends and colleagues working every day to make a difference in the lives of the students they serve. The complicated work that we do has a tendency to begin to define who we are, as people, as professionals, and as educational leaders. How do we equip, connect, and stay inspired as leaders? It all starts with PASSION—the passion to move our profession forward, while keeping our focus intact: providing quality education to all the children of Michigan.

I went into this profession 26 years ago as a wide-eyed, naïve teacher with one simple goal in mind, “Save them all.” Now after spending almost 18 years as an administrator, I have come to realize that I can’t save them all. What has happened to the 21-year-old getting ready to teach for the first time in a four-room schoolhouse in Brookville, Kansas? Was it the job that changed my thinking? Was it the kids? Why were there times that I lost my passion for the profession?

I imagine many of us have gone through a time when the love for what we do wavered. Why?

I suspect it could be due to the fact that we have watched our colleagues being chewed up by a system that was supposed to be designed to protect our children and the education profession.

The courageous leaders who take the helm and vow to protect, advance, and achieve greatness in student achievement are so quickly discouraged. Whether it is the negativity in the media, competition for nominal funding, a board of education that isn’t focused on what’s best for kids, or a community that is unwilling to change and becomes unforgiving and judgmental. We are all only human, and there are points in all of our lives where the will to succeed is overshadowed by the will to survive.

Is that the leaders we want to be? Leaders who are afraid, defeated, tired, and sometimes even broken? The answer is still a resounding, NO! So how do we reignite the passion we had as young teachers, working every day to save every child?

First, always take time to ground yourself in the profession. Block out time in your busy calendars to visit classrooms, talk with students and the dedicated staff who are working to make a difference. Make time to call a colleague who may be struggling in his or her work or when he or she is celebrating a success. By helping others, we are quickly reminded why we chose this profession and it helps to support and foster our own passion.

This certainly is an exciting time, and I personally feel rejuvenated in what the future holds. During this time of change, take time to reignite your own passion for the work you do and don’t lose sight of why we chose this path! It is truly a pleasure and an honor to have the opportunity to serve as your MASA President this upcoming year, and I wish you much success in the year ahead!
1:1 Classroom Innovation

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For years, traditional behavior intervention efforts at New Haven High School provided the normal punitive sanctions—detention, suspension, and expulsion—or non-punitive interventions like counseling and therapy. In the 2012-13 school year, a Restorative Practices program was added to equip students with alternatives. As a result, many students are now encouraged, through a facilitated negotiating process, to formulate written or verbal agreements relating to dispute resolution.

In early 2014, Restorative Practices-related interventions were incorporated into the school’s behavior rubric for peer-to-peer, as well as general discipline issues. An effective working partnership between the Assistant Principal and the Restorative Practices Coordinator was designed with the objective of modifying undesirable student behavior through consultation, consequence adjustment, conflict coaching, and mediation with those involved.

Restorative conferences, peer mediation, and peacemaking circle processes have been well accepted by faculty and students alike and now allow for unique options for behavior interventions. The disciplinary process is still in place, but now offers an option allowing for active student involvement in the outcome. Restorative Practices programs are managed from the Office of Student Conflict Resolution. Students and faculty members have come to understand the purpose of the office and now visit it often, even to solve minor issues.

With assistant principal oversight, a staffed Testing/Mentoring Center is used to monitor an in-school suspension process. The Center provides any discipline required and serves as a central location for teachers to work with students assigned to the Center, thus maintaining an acceptable learning experience.

Communication is the key for all Restorative Practices at New Haven High School. The founding principle is communications-based coupled with restorative justice techniques, including facilitated peacemaking circle and student peer mediation processes.

At New Haven High School, a creative Classroom Only behavior intervention program has been established. To avoid suspending a student from the school building for misbehavior, this administrative option keeps the student in the educational process, but away from social interaction. Under this program, students are escorted from class to class by an adult supervisor. It has been highly effective in changing behavior.

Creativity has been used in bringing together behavioral intervention alternatives into one seamless set of options. While separate processes have been used elsewhere, we have combined many in order to offer options that fit the needs of students. The result has been effective collaboration among all involved—students, teachers, and administrators.

As an outgrowth of the various processes used to address behavioral issues, a program is now in development that will attempt to address general situations relating to culture and diversity issues found in the school’s student population. Sixteen trained student peer mediators will receive additional training and guidance so they are able to facilitate these learning circles, hopefully on an ongoing basis.

Since the introduction of the Restorative Practices program at New Haven High School, 162 referrals have been generated for mediation-related services. Of these, 138 have resulted in written or verbal agreements between

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New Haven, Continued from page 10

and among students—an 85% effective rate. There has also been a 55% reduction in behavioral incidents from 2012 to 2014. New Haven High School had only one student out-of-school suspension in the entire 2013-14 school year, remarkable for any high school.

A 2013 research paper by Fluke and Peterson (University of Nebraska-Lincoln) states: “Students who are unable to behave appropriately and follow school rules are unable to learn. Worse, these students may distract their peers and their teachers, decreasing the value of the classroom as a whole. Improving student behavior has been shown to improve academic performance (Lassen, Steele, & Sailor, 2006). Schools should therefore make teaching appropriate behaviors a priority.” We believe we are accomplishing that at New Haven High School.

Restorative Practices was only one of several programs implemented to increase academic achievement. In the 2014-15 school year, New Haven High School:

• Was named a Reward School by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE);
• Was ranked the fourth best high school in Macomb County on the MDE Top-to-Bottom list;
• Received a 2014 ACT composite score that was the highest ever achieved at the high school; and
• Beat the proficiency targets set by the Michigan Department of Education in reading, mathematics, writing and social studies.

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Will Timmerman is Principal of New Haven High School. Contact him at wtimmerman@nhav.misd.net.

David Gillis is Restorative Practices Coordinator of New Haven High School. Contact him at dgillis@newhaven.misd.net.

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A ny good leader appreciates practical advice, especially when it can be applied to improving student achievement. Periodically I get asked “How did you do it?” The questioner is seeking thoughts about how Lakeview Public School’s student achievement scores improved so dramatically over the past seven to eight years.

By way of comparison, which we are all so fond of with top-to-bottom lists from the Michigan Department of Education, Lakeview moved from the “bottom third,” to the “top of the top third,” with respect to the former State MEAP/MME scores in Macomb County Michigan. Lakeview High School, once at 17% proficiency on the top-to-bottom list, is now at 85%. The academic improvement in Lakeview came during a time when our free/reduced lunch population grew by more than 30%, and the number of transient students also increased dramatically.

Many intentional leadership factors have contributed to this success. However, one simple idea stands out more than others with respect to practical advice for anyone wishing to improve student achievement. Do your minutes focus on your mission?

The first way to answer this very practical question is to look at meeting agendas in your own district. Topics that would imply a focus on the mission for a principal meeting might include:

• Detailed analysis of student test scores (by building, teacher, or grade level);
• Investigation of achievement gaps for sub-groups;
• Sharing of achievement data-trend over time.

Another topic we know impacts student achievement is the instructional techniques employed in the classroom. Therefore, another important topic for principal meeting agendas might be the sharing of teacher evaluation trend data—strengths and weaknesses—by building or grade level. Expecting your principals to be engaged in discussion on these topics for several hours per semester sets the stage for their own behavior at their schools. So, the question for you when you get together is: Do the topics listed on your principal and/or administrative team meeting agendas suggest you encourage your team to focus on the mission of educating students?

In addition, as superintendent, do the meetings you choose to attend place a majority of time on things that we know have a positive impact on student achievement? Your choice to attend a particular meeting can have a lasting impact on the staff involved. Do you regularly attend curriculum review meetings with teachers?

Do you regularly attend a district school improvement team meeting, or drop by a school staff meeting when student data is present as a topic on the agenda? Do you personally review department or school staff meeting agendas to help your administrative team focus their minutes on the mission? As the leader of the district, you can have an immediate effect on the conversations principals and teachers are having by expecting meeting agendas to focus and prioritize time on the mission of student achievement.

A second way to answer the title question is through analysis of your personal use of email communication, particularly with administrators and teachers. Parent complaints, student discipline, union activity, local politics, financial struggles, county politics, MDE, State politics, media requests, FOIA—any of these issues can distract and cause you to lose focus on the mission.

Do the topics listed on your principal and/or administrative team meeting agendas suggest you encourage your team to focus on the mission of educating students?

So here is what you can do about it. Take a look at the past month of sent emails. What percentage of the emails you send to others focus on activities that will positively impact student achievement? If the answer is less than you expected, consider making a change. Superintendents have the ability to set priorities and make them a reality through modeling what is expected and through the choices they make.

You can make the priority of email communication focus on student achievement simply through the what you choose to send and to whom you choose to send them. They don’t have to be long or complicated, they just need to demonstrate a priority and focus on the mission. For
example, send a short note to a teacher noting how you observed students fully engaged in daily five activities during a walk-through at a school. Or, send a short note to a principal when you see “student writing prompt” on a staff meeting agenda. The choice of emails that are sent can have an immediate effect on the expectations and culture at a school, so be sure a majority of what you choose to write in emails models a focus on the mission. We all struggle with managing time; however, the time the superintendent spends on sending emails that focus on specific aspects of student achievement will have a ripple effect throughout the district. Analyze your sent emails to see if you are focusing this part of your day on student achievement.

Lastly, the superintendent can shape public opinion, including students and parents, with the various district communication tools employed. Again, take a look at your district.

How do the various district level communication tools focus on the mission? Does every communication to the community talk about state politics and the need for more money, or does a student achievement topic get front page? The superintendent can set the tone and manage this message to focus on student achievement. Ask key staff members to look at the past year of district communications and be sure the next year is different.

In closing, we all know a great deal of research is available to school leaders about improving school achievement. Dozens of vendors are ready to sell you an app, a program, or a piece of equipment that will revolutionize student achievement. However, no new app or application of the research will get attention if school leaders fail to focus time on the task. Lakeview’s leadership team understands that one way to ensure student achievement as a priority is by making time for it. We put our mission on our minutes. Do you?

Karl D. Paulson is Superintendent of Lakeview Public Schools in St. Clair Shores, MI. Contact him at KPaulson@scslakeview-k12.com or 586.445.4015.
Since the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center (MACTC) opened in 2005, the programs offered have substantially changed. Waiting lists for classes and crowded classrooms became a concern. Demand grew for the MACTC’s meeting spaces. To properly prepare students for 21st century careers, the MACTC recognized it would need to expand in size, programming, and technology.

In March 2013, an expansion began. The first class affected was Catering & Culinary Management. The conference room adjacent to the kitchen was converted to a Food Theory Lab. This space features areas in the front and back for demonstrations. Individual workstations allow students to follow along. The new setup also allows for live video demos.

Former Catering & Culinary Management student Rebecca Hinton applauded the change, saying, “I wish we had all of this when I was here. It’s great that these students are able to do so much more.”

The former Student Services Office was remodeled and turned into the new Academic Resource Center or ARC.

The former Catering & Culinary Management classroom was merged with an existing computer lab to create a new

Before the renovation, the space that is now home to the MACTC Food Theory Lab was a conference room. The new Food Theory Lab provided MACTC students with the space needed to collaborate on a project with local middle school students.

The new Academic Resource Center was designed to radiate energy and feel inviting for students.

Continued on page 16
Criminal Justice room, offering separate areas for lecture and hands-on training. Students can easily transition from lecture to hands-on application without moving their desks.

“Before, we had a difficult time learning and practicing. The new room gives us the space we need for all aspects of the class,” said Criminal Justice student Nic Sapone.

The Graphic Production Technologies (GPT) class, formerly held at Muskegon Community College, was moved to the main campus. The new 1,962 square foot classroom features multi-tiered computer seating, individual drawing tables, additional storage, and more space for displaying student work. The 2,100 square foot state-of-the-art printing lab features a large format printer, digital printer, laser-etching machine, screen-printing, and darkroom.

The Graphic Production Technologies classroom has ample space to showcase student work.

One of the many high-tech additions to the Graphic Production Technologies program was this laser-etching machine.

There is even a student store to sell student-made goods.

The health science curriculum was restructured to accommodate more students. Instead of three different health classes, MACTC now offers a five-class academy. Three introductory health classes known as Allied Health Technologies were added with two second-year options for qualified seniors. The second-year program builds on the foundational skills of Allied Health Technologies.

Student support services were also improved. The Student Services Office moved to a larger location next to the student entrance. This space offers additional storage, a small conference room, and bright offices. The former Student Services Office was remodeled and named the Academic Resource Center (ARC). The ARC is home to the math and English/language arts consultants, college credit specialist, and teacher consultant. The space also features a common area with moveable workstations, high-top tables and

Continued on page 18
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The former Student Services Office was remodeled and turned into the new Academic Resource Center or ARC.

The new Academic Resource Center was designed to radiate energy and feel inviting for students.

chairs, and a computer cart for student use. Card readers, buzzers, and security cameras were installed at the main entrances. A secured driveway and parking lot for customer vehicles provides improved traffic flow and a secure entrance complete with video camera, card reader, and buzzer.

The largest addition, a total of 5,000 square feet, is the new conference facility. This room, which includes a retractable divider and four projection screens, provides space for student assemblies, job fairs, sophomore tours, middle school summer fun programs, conferences, counselor meetings, and outside groups. The space also includes a service kitchen.

To launch the new addition, the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual fall Business for Breakfast in the new conference space. The business community’s response to the expansion and upgrades was overwhelmingly positive. Our Career Tech Center and new conference facility are recognized as truly valuable assets.

Stephanie Hoekenga is the Student Outreach/Resource Specialist at the Muskegon Area Career Tech Center (MACTC). For more information about the MACTC expansion project, contact her at shockenga@muskegonisd.org.

Equipping Muskegon, Continued from page 16

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Mark A. Edwards is a superintendent whose creative thinking and productive partnerships have put his 5,800-student district in west-central North Carolina at the forefront of the nation’s effort to infuse learning technology powerfully into the lives of teachers and students. During his first five years in Mooresville, NC, Mark took a district that ranks 100 out of 115 in North Carolina in per-pupil funding and led it to be a district that ranked 3rd in graduation rate and 2nd in academic composite, propelling him to national recognition as AASA’s Superintendent of the Year in 2013. Mark will open the conference during the Wednesday afternoon session.

Andrew Bennett is an experienced leadership consultant and coach to organizations of all shapes and sizes around the world. A member of The Magic Circle, the oldest and most prestigious society of magicians in the world, Andrew uses magic to enable leaders to simplify and accelerate organizational transformation. Andrew will deliver Thursday morning’s keynote address.

PRECONFERENCE EVENT
MASA will offer pre-conference event options that focus on board-superintendent relations, district governance; and communication during challenge, conflict, or crisis. Choose among two options:

1. Newer Superintendents are invited to attend both days of this Success Start Pre-conference Academy, which begins Tuesday morning, September 22, and continues through noon Wednesday. Any member is welcome, but sessions are targeted to superintendents in their first two years of leadership.

2. All MASA members are invited to attend day two of the Academy, which features workshops by keynote speaker Dr. Mark Edwards and Dr. Curt Bechler of Venture International.

View the full agenda at gomasa.org

FEATURED BREAKOUT SESSIONS

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As he sits down to finish a science project after lunch, St. Johns Middle School sixth grader Josey Kingsbury begins telling a friend about his sister’s three babies.

The teacher walks by to check on his progress, and Josey can no longer contain his glee. He remembers what day it is.

“April fools!” he says.

His teacher, Colleen Howard, laughs heartily. Josey, who has autism spectrum disorder (ASD), has recently started making jokes, and Howard is delighted that he continues to step outside his comfort zone.

Josey’s school and family have worked hard to support the 12-year-old’s effort to get to where he is today. With help from Statewide Autism Resources and Training (START) and a strong partnership between Josey’s family and school staff, Josey has been able to grow and gain independence while still getting the support he needs.

When Josey walked into class, Howard was amazed. Who was this pre-teen who had no problem using a pencil, looked people in the eye, and cracked jokes? Josey is popular with his fellow students, and was recently celebrated as a student of the month. He likes doing projects in science class but dislikes reading and math. He enjoys watching movies, playing basketball, and hanging out with his bulldog, Gunner, for whom he has a handful of creative nicknames. He also loves the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (“times ten,” says his dad, Mark Kingsbury).

With the exception of math and reading, Josey spends most of the school day in general education classes. He is doing well in the general education curriculum, says Abby Brewer, Josey’s Caseload Manager. And even though Josey dislikes reading, his vocabulary and reading scores improve with every test, she says.

When Josey was first diagnosed at age four, his parents, Louella and Mark Kingsbury, wanted to give him the best possible opportunities but weren’t sure how or where to begin. Then they heard about START, which provides evidence-based training and guidance for educators and families of students who have ASD.

Throughout the years, Louella has invited Josey’s support team members to participate in START trainings, which are geared toward school teams that work with a specific student who has ASD. The trainings also build a foundation of support for all students with ASD in a school building. Topics range from behavioral and educational supports to developing an effective individualized education program (IEP). Teams use what they’ve learned to enhance support for students with ASD.

At first, Josey’s parents were nervous about sending him to middle school. Fortunately, St. Johns Middle School offers robust supports, including two ASD coaches—Abby Brewer and Missy Vitek—who collaborate with fellow teachers to implement effective supports for students with ASD. Brewer is certified in special education, and Vitek provides a general education perspective. The two coaches attend START trainings, help their school team implement new strategies, and provide guidance to general education teachers who have students with disabilities in class.

“I wanted to help him, but I just didn’t know how,” says Louella Kingsbury. “And I knew he was in there. I had to figure out a way to go in and get him. That’s what START helped me do. It was that significant for us.”

START: www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter

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St. Johns Middle School also participates in the LINK program, START’s peer-to-peer support initiative. In the program, general education students, or LINKs, provide support, encouragement, and friendship for students with ASD for one class period during the school day. Depending on the student’s needs, he or she may have LINKs during just a single class period or may be served by several LINKs throughout the day.

Since first grade, Josey has attended schools in St. Johns that offer the LINK program, so he’s right at home at the middle school. Currently, more than 30 students at the school support 12 students who have ASD or other disabilities, says Principal Adel DiOrio.

The program doesn’t benefit just students with disabilities. Students at St. Johns Middle School who are struggling with academics or behavior are considered for placement as a LINK. Because the LINK opportunity counts as an elective, the school has been able to place some students in the program who require academic intervention. One student was earning poor grades and had trouble turning in homework assignments, says DiOrio. After he became a LINK, his grades started improving.

“Giving students legitimate responsibility on which other students rely gives them a reason to get out of bed,” says DiOrio. “It gives them a reason to come to school and really engage in what they’re doing—not for the sake of a grade, but for their peer’s personal outcome.”

Being a LINK makes a positive impact beyond academics. Josh Weinberg and Jordyn Jones, both 14 and already successful eighth-graders, have benefited in different ways from working with Josey.

Both students have a parent who works in special education, but neither knew what to expect from being a LINK. After meeting Josey, Josh realized he needed to start choosing better friends—ones who weren’t as judgmental of other students’ appearances and mannerisms.

Jordyn says her friends are jealous that she gets to work with Josey. “Josey is super nice,” says Jordyn. “I think of it more as helping my friend. When we first met, I walked in and right away he gave me a big hug.”

After transitioning in elementary school from paraprofessional support to a classroom aide with peer supports, Josey now relies mainly on his LINKs for natural support during the school day.

At home, Josey’s parents make sure to provide support that is consistent with what he receives at school. When he was younger, his parents began explicitly teaching him how to act appropriately in social situations. Even now, says Howard, Josey will start talking to someone, stop, and start over because he forgot to look at the person.

Ask anyone who knows Josey about what they think he can achieve in the future, and you’ll get the same type of response: The sky’s the limit.

“He has an awesome, supportive family that is going to make sure he gets every possible opportunity he can get,” says Brewer. “He’s so outgoing and a hard worker. I think whatever he ends up doing, he’ll be successful.”

Whenever Josey himself asks his mom whether he’ll be able to do something anyone else can do—like cook for himself when he grows up—she never wavers. Her answer is always yes.

“People always think that, because your child has a special need, you modify your wants and desires for him. You don’t. If anything, you amplify them,” Louella says.
Being a school district leader today is much different from what it was in the past. We have to embrace change around every corner. We face financial issues yearly. We are continually asked to do more with less. Additional expectations create stress on everyone, yet we persevere through it to create positive change. We can become paralyzed with too much change too fast.

With that said, change is a necessary part of what we do. In an effort to change successfully, we have had to tackle things from a bigger, yet simpler picture. By looking into staff behavior and understanding that behavior, our district has discovered a way to motivate staff and drive change.

In order to affect people, we have to understand their frame of mind, how they work, and what their motivations are. Once learned, we can change behavior by changing the environment that surrounds it or simply by changing how we, as leaders, operate.

Our District Crisis

The change encountered at our district was actually a crisis. I entered the district on July 1, 2014 facing an on-site review that began in January 2014 before my arrival. I realized on day one that the on-site review findings were worse than expected, covering 63 findings and not one compliance plan written or addressed. The on-site review follow-up deadline of January 2015 gave little time for me to wrap my head around the compliance issues, processes, and procedures that were missing, as well as determining who should be responsible for what. It took me about three weeks to accomplish that. Our district needed to be ready to go on the first day of school so we could implement right away. Next came the process of pulling staff together to create 63 compliance plans and determining how to do what was necessary to have the on-site review approved and put sustainable practices into place to improve achievement.

When this was all rolled out to the entire staff, the anger, denial, and disbelief of our current situation set in. We began to observe staff behavior and recognize that it was imperative to identify who needed support and how to position our staff to create the environment that would get us through this intense and difficult period of change.

Identify Stage of Grief

First, we identified what stage of grief each staff member was falling into. This was very important, as change can be a painful process. When our staff members go through a change process such as the one we are in, they grieve. Grieving is a part of letting the past go. By understanding the stages of grief and knowing where each staff member fell, leaders watched staff progress toward acceptance and used this information to position staff in helping others.

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This information was also helpful in knowing who to separate. We found a direct relationship between behaviors exhibited and the stage of grief an individual was in. If there was a large group behaving a certain way, we found it was because they were somehow connected to one another. We learned to separate them. Leadership decisions were easier to make based on this data.

**Deploy The Right Kind of Support**

Second, we identified our staff according to the work of Dr. Anthony Muhammad, found in his book *Transforming School Culture* (©2009, Solution Tree). People fall into one of four categories: fundamentalist, survivor, believer, or tweener. Fundamentalists do not want change, while survivors are in need of their own personal support. Believers will do anything in order to achieve success, and tweeners are looking for a place to fit in.

This was key in providing the right mentor support for our new teachers. It also helped in addressing problem areas and determining who needed triage immediately. This was done to support our staff.

Throughout this year, we have seen positive results. When we triangulated the information discussed above, it was interesting to see that our fundamentalists were also in the denial and anger stage, while our believers were in the acceptance stage. We could also watch staff move between the stages. Once they got beyond the bargaining stage, they were becoming believers. This motivated us because we knew we were making progress.

As a district, we have watched entire buildings evolve. Buildings moving toward acceptance have embraced change and are shining. Buildings that are still in the anger, denial, and bargaining stages have not evolved and are lagging. All in all, we have made great progress in influencing staff behavior to follow our vision simply by understanding that behavior.

Behavior is an interesting thing; it is the key to change. How we choose to behave will impact achievement. Equipping the leaders of tomorrow with the ability to understand people and their behavior—and how to guide them in how to change that behavior—creates a win-win for everyone involved.

Kristi Teall is Superintendent of St. Louis Public Schools and a graduate of Courageous Journey Tier 2, Cohort 8. Contact her at kteall@stlouisschools.net or 989.681.5160.
For over two decades, I have been working with leaders to create work environments where people can thrive. In the process, I’ve learned that the most effective leaders focus on three categories of action to equip people for high performance.

**Appear:** Get clear about what you’re working to create. This allows you to focus all of your energy and resources on what matters most. It also provides the clarity to engage stakeholders in a noble purpose that will be a source of energy to take action and persevere.

- Articulate the organization’s deepest purpose—the purpose that adds value to human life, a purpose that brings all stakeholders together.

- Continually engage stakeholders in an ongoing conversation about what the future looks like as a result of living out your purpose.

**Disappear:** In order to focus all of your resources on creating what you want to create, you must make tough decisions. You simply cannot do it all.

- What do you need to stop doing? What do you need to say “no” to (particularly where you’re spending time and money)? What tolerations do you need to let go of?

- What limited thinking and language are getting in the way?

- How can you create an environment where colleagues hold each other up to a high standard of the best that humanity has to offer? In other words, how do you positively support one another in speaking and acting in ways that move your organization forward and reflect the best of the human spirit?

**Restore:** The Restoration Act is about healing and restoring hope.

- What stories about your organization are outdated or no longer useful? Is it time to write a new chapter?

- What stories from the past continue to hold you back? Analyze them one last time to extract the learning you need to move forward, and then let them go.

- Recommit to living by your values, those foundational principles and behaviors that you want everyone to demonstrate.

We’ll be exploring these ideas together at the MASA Fall Conference. I’m looking forward to seeing you there.

**Andrew Bennett** has been a leadership consultant and coach to organizations of all shapes and sizes around the world. As a member of The Magic Circle, the oldest and most prestigious society of magicians in the world, Andrew uses magic to enable leaders to simplify and accelerate organizational transformation. He will deliver Thursday’s keynote address at MASA’s Fall Conference.
TRIG Project Equips Teachers with Course Content, Resources

By Tim Hall

The Technology Readiness Infrastructure Grant (TRIG) continues to work to accomplish their vision to “Empower every student in Michigan to excel at next generation assessments, to leverage technology for learning, and to achieve lifetime success in a global economy.” One area of special attention over the past year is to build capacity to assist educators in planning and implementing the best practices and technology required to support the next generation of assessment, teaching, and learning. This goal has taken on even more significant meaning as the first year of online testing has been completed and Michigan schools are starting to analyze the successes and challenges of an electronic assessment.

One challenge that many schools face is to make preparations for online assessments seamless and an integral part of everyday curriculum and instruction. Exposure to electronic content as part of a regular lesson plan gives students an opportunity to practice the same basic skills they need to be successful test-takers. The most difficult part for teachers is to search out high-quality, aligned content that exposes students to the appropriate electronic content at the correct level. This is a time-consuming process that often leaves classroom teachers confused and frustrated because of the number of resources to research and misinformation to eliminate. Prepackaged content brings its own issues of misalignment and costs that can’t be sustained by the teacher or the district.

TRIG leaders realized early on that it would be very beneficial to create content for Michigan students that would be available electronically and without cost. This content would expose students to electronic content throughout the school year, and would also be enhanced with resources that engage students in a format that will better suit their learning styles. An additional bonus is that students would become more competent in navigating and practicing the skills they would need for the end-of-the-year summative test. The only question that remained was where to start in this endeavor and how to create high-quality products.

Teachers Develop Content, Compile Support Resources

The answer was relatively easy. Social Studies seemed to be the subject area that had the oldest, most misaligned textbooks and could initially benefit the most from this type of development project. Plus, there was a wealth of content freely available in all subject areas that could be used to create high-quality, aligned digital textbooks. To keep the project manageable, it was decided that four books would be created in the first year. The grades and subjects chosen were:

• Fourth Grade United States Studies;
• Fifth Grade United States History Beginnings through Revolution;

This content would expose students to electronic content throughout the school year, and would also be enhanced with resources that engage students in a format that will better suit their learning styles.
• Sixth Grade World Geography; and
• High School Economics.

The next task was to assemble a group of experts to create the content for the textbooks. It was quickly decided that the best resources to do the work were Michigan’s teachers. Almost immediately, teachers with a wealth of knowledge and experience (in the specific grades and content areas needed) stepped forward to lend their grade-level and content expertise to the project. Over the course of the past school year, these groups have met on a regular basis to do the hard work of creating student textbooks in their assigned area.

Not only have they created the text, but also they scoured available digital resources to find those most appropriate to support the material. Digging through the wealth of resources to find what will most improve students’ educational experience has been an incredible challenge for these groups. They have met the challenge with a single purpose in mind: to create a free, aligned, and up-to-date resource that will be available for all Michigan students. To complete this work and have it ready by the fall of
2015 seemed an almost impossible task, but all four groups have accomplished it.

Possibly the best news is that since these are electronic resources, the effort and cost to keep them updated and aligned in the future will be minimal. As additional resources become available, or if standards change, it will be much easier to make the adjustments needed to the content.

Even better, the TRIG digital textbook project will assume the cost.

**Phase II: To Focus on Early Grade and World History**

What does the future hold for the MI Open Textbook Project? Teams came together in late August to begin work on the second stage. Thirty-seven new and returning educators began work on the next texts, which include:

- Third Grade Michigan Studies;
- Seventh Grade Ancient World History;
- Eighth Grade United States History; Revolution through Reconstruction;
- High School United States History: Reconstruction through Today; and
- High School Civics.
Like their predecessors, these texts will be available for download on any Chrome, Windows, or Apple-based device. These textbooks will be available in late summer of 2016. A final year of the Social Studies project will complete the set, focusing on kindergarten, first and second grades, and High School World History.

The digital textbook project is an exciting opportunity for TRIG and the students of Michigan. Now that the first textbooks are available, teachers across the state are using these free resources in their everyday instruction. These textbooks have been designed to fulfill the instructional needs of Michigan districts, while also helping to prepare students for online testing. For more information on the MI Open Book project, visit: textbooks.wmisd.org.

Tim Hall is the TRIG Project Director. He can be contacted at 517.327.5919 or thall@gomasa.org.

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Every superintendent wants to make sure that he or she is engaging key stakeholders in the direction and outcome of the district. At the same time, it’s critically important that over time trust is built in the district’s leadership.

Sometimes, however, the engagement comes about not as a proactive process, but because of a decision or issue that overtakes the superintendent and the school board. Suddenly, at the next board meeting, you find a line to the microphone during public comment, filled with individuals who may have part of the story—but not all of it—or a story that has changed and now is being misrepresented. You find yourself both defending a position, and trying to educate the public to the background or circumstances surrounding the issue or controversy.

Before the line forms at the microphone, it’s important that the district proactively involves and equips parents and community members in a discussion about the value and priorities of the school district. Top-down planning has proven a weak substitute for an engagement process that is developed by the community through education, input, and consensus building. Building a core group of stakeholders who have been invited behind the curtain to take an intimate look at the organization allows a district to develop credible and knowledgeable community members as external resources. Their expertise around the district and its operations becomes a valuable resource to the organization. At the same time, it allows the community to see district leadership in action and develop trusting relationships that may curtail the line at the microphone.

A superintendent’s Community Advisory Committee is a process I’ve found valuable in creating a community voice that allows for knowledgeable input into the shaping of the future of a school district. At the same time, it invites community members to have greater in-depth knowledge of the operation of the district and its challenges, and of how district leaders responds to problems and concerns.

Our Superintendent Community Advisory Committee is made up of 30–40 key stakeholders who are recognized by the community as opinion leaders. They are critical to the future of our district. Their involvement in the district’s planning and decision-making processes provides a valuable perspective on the district’s needs and priorities.

By Dave Prunceau

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leaders. These individuals are nominated by board members, principals, and interested community organizations. Advisory members commit to a series of bimonthly meetings for a four- to five-month period, depending on the number of topics or issues the district identifies. Each meeting is devoted to a specific educational or district topic.

The first meeting is usually devoted to the big picture of the school district, from the 30,000-foot-level. The agenda includes items such as current student enrollment, number of staff, organizational charts and student overall academic achievement, along with current operating revenues and expenses, and facilities.

Following the initial meeting, each subsequent meeting is a work session devoted to a critical topic in which community input is desired for future district planning. These topics are generated by the administration and board. Each of these meetings is made up of two parts. The first part of the agenda is devoted to educating committee members and giving them the needed background on the issue or topic for which the committee will be asked to provide input. The second half of the meeting is devoted to providing the committee with opportunities to respond to the topic or issue and come to consensus. These sessions are not designed as an open forum or debate. Instead, these work sessions are designed to focus on results and have the committee come to consensus on a recommended direction, input, or overall feedback.

An example of one such session may be soliciting input and direction on budget priorities. The first part of the meeting is devoted to providing in-depth knowledge around how the district budget is developed, including revenue sources, expenditure obligations, future budget challenges, etc. In this example, it’s important to highlight what is under district control and what is out of the district’s decision-making power. The average community member usually does not understand the school district budget process and district limitations, and makes assumptions that are not true.

After the educational portion of the agenda, the committee is then divided into small groups and asked to come to consensus around a series of related questions. In this example, committee members would provide direction and feedback on future district budget priorities.

The benefit of this process is twofold. The first, obviously, is the opportunity to engage the community in meaningful two-way communication between residents and the organization. Second and just as important, it develops community understanding and buy-in on how the district operates and responds to opportunities and challenges it faces. These committee members can then become a foundation for district support and provide knowledgeable answers to other community members.

Once all of the topics or issues are covered, the Superintendent Advisory Committee is invited to a board meeting to present a summary report of its work. This report becomes invaluable to the board for future planning, as a resource as issues and challenges arise.

Even after the committee work is finished, it is important that these members continue to be engaged with the district. We created a Superintendent Community Advisory newsletter. Sent quarterly to members, it provides updates on district issues and future direction. We have also asked the committee to meet periodically and provide a sounding board for the administration when an issue arises.

The Superintendent Advisory Committee provides a pro-active approach that gives the community a voice in the planning process and increases the probability of support for any initiative that may emerge from the process. It may even reduce the line at the microphone on some occasions!

Dave Pruneau is the former Superintendent of Rochester (Michigan) Community Schools and of the Elmhurst School District 205 in Elmhurst, Illinois. He is a graduate of Courageous Journey Tier 2, Cohort 2. Contact Dave at spruneau@comcast.net or 517.861.1532.

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It’s easy to imagine a well-equipped school—impassioned teachers, up-to-date facilities and technology, visionary administrators, innovative programs, and involved parents. But without a system in place to prevent, address, and remedy sex discrimination within schools, a district will find itself poorly equipped to serve its students at times when their needs may be greatest.

Title IX instructs schools on how to address sex discrimination, which includes sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and bullying, and sexual assault. I have been working on issues related to school sexual misconduct for nearly 10 years, and I have found that many school districts are not in compliance with Title IX’s requirements. While my career—and media attention—has been largely focused on sexual misconduct at the post-secondary level, recent federal guidance specifically reminded the academic community that all educational entities receiving federal funds must identify, empower, and support a Title IX Coordinator. When I am providing assistance to an institution on Title IX compliance, one of my first tasks is to establish the following coordinator best practices.

The name and contact information for a district’s Title IX Coordinator must be known and/or easily determined by all. Parents, students, faculty, and staff at all schools within a district should be able to identify the district’s Title IX Coordinator and know how to reach that individual. The best way to disseminate this information is to have that information included on the websites of each individual school and on the website of the administration. It can be as easy as including a link from the non-discrimination statement to Title IX Coordinator’s office. To see if your district is currently in compliance with this mandate, go to your district’s or school’s website and search for “Title IX.” I suspect you will find you have some work to do.

A district’s Title IX Coordinator must be well-trained in the specific requirements of Title IX. Schools must have adequate prevention programs, broad sexual misconduct policies, and prompt and impartial grievance procedures for investigating and adjudicating allegations of sexual misconduct. Your Title IX Coordinator must be knowledgeable in all of those requirements and know how to adapt those requirements to the specific culture of the community—as well as the individual schools—where they work. Moreover, due to the nature of the evolving federal law on this topic, this training must be ongoing.

The Title IX Coordinator’s independence and authority must be real. An independent Title IX Coordinator is one who reports directly to senior district leadership, preferably the superintendent. Title IX Coordinators’ authority must be broad: They must receive notice of all complaints of sex discrimination; they must have the power to make accommodations during any review undertaken by the district (called “interim measures,” this may mean a class change or work...
reassignment); they must have access to key information like enrollment figures, athletic information, and employment data; they must be able to conduct investigations with the cooperation of staff and students; and they require the authority to order the appropriate sanction when a sexual misconduct policy violation has occurred. I have seen the work of Title IX Coordinators undermined by school partners that do not accord them the necessary authority.

**District leadership must give their Title IX Coordinator full support.**

In order for Title IX Coordinators to do the job effectively, they need the full support of district leadership, which includes providing the training referenced above and making sure the coordinator’s office has sufficient staffing. I have seen Title IX Coordinators struggle with conducting investigations into allegations of sex discrimination due to insufficient investigative training or lack of funds to hire an outside investigator. As shoddy investigations are the aspect of Title IX most likely to cause distress among the community and most likely to cause subsequent litigation, it makes sense from every perspective to get investigations right the first go-around. A district is well advised to ensure its Title IX Coordinator has the adequate training and investigative staff to do so, or the funds to seek external assistance where necessary.

On the heels of the recent Title IX Coordinator guidance, K-12 institutions should assess their compliance with Title IX’s expectations for those responsible for coordinating compliance within their districts. While the requirements for Title IX Coordinators may seem daunting, I have found that having a trained, empowered and well-supported administrator coordinating a district’s system to address sex discrimination is always appreciated when the time comes and that system is tested.

Rebecca Leitman Veidlinger is an Attorney and consultant who provides Title IX compliance and investigation services. For more information, visit veidlinger.com or contact her at rveidlinger@gmail.com.

1 Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681–1688. In this article, “Title IX” refers to this statute as well as the collection of interpretive and guidance documents issued by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights.
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