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Members of the Pool are its owners and “shareholders” and receive regular surplus distributions. With the $5 million surplus declared for the 2010-2011 coverage year, members have received more than $101 million in surplus distributions since the Pool’s inception.

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Presently, 467 educational organizations place their trust in the Pool. Always look at the total picture when considering the true worth of your Property/Casualty coverage. Many value-added features of the MASB-SEG Property/Casualty Pool ensure members obtain the most benefit from their contribution dollars.

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Physicians Health Plan of Mid-Michigan and its subsidiaries are affiliates of Sparrow Health System.
I have often said everything we do on a daily basis is about student achievement. Every decision we make, every meeting we convene should—in one way or another—lead back to the achievement issue. We cannot escape it.

These days, we also remember that every cut we make affects children and their ability to achieve. For one child, music might be the key to unlocking high achievement. For another, art is a path to success. So whatever we do, we have to keep these precious children in mind.

As we struggle with difficult decisions, one thing we know: We must have the right people teaching and leading our schools. Having the right people “on the bus”—high quality instructors and principals—and ensuring they have the resources and support they need is a superintendent’s responsibility. We have to use every piece of data we have available to ensure this is true for our students.

Reform? Let’s Transform!

By William Mayes, MASA Executive Director

We and our partners are in this together—working together to present parents and communities clear indicators that today’s educators are Leading Forward. That the right people are leading our buildings and that great teachers are teaching every day and leading our students to greatness. This is no easy task when you throw in massive cuts to people and programs we believe in.

As we go through a time of extraordinary transition, I urge you to find new ways to use key data points to make the important decisions. Know without doubt what each building and classroom is doing and how well they are doing it. Tell your story of what needs improvement, and use accurate data to show where you’re getting results. We will continue to seek the best processes and instruments to help you in the process.

MASA will continue to compile evaluation tools on our website. We would also like to learn from you, our members. If your district is making progress toward data-informed performance evaluations or compensation plans, consider sharing it. Visit gomasa.org/performance-evaluation-resource-center for updates.

Evaluation requires clear communication—communication that leads to growth and positive change. We can do this. We will Lead Forward.
Greetings fellow administrators! As we endeavor to meet the constantly changing standards of an education industry that demands continual improvement, we are left to ask ourselves, “How do we achieve this goal?”

The answer lies on the front lines of the battle we fight every day in our schools to educate our students: our teachers, staff and community.

This begs the question, “What makes a great teacher?” Is teaching an art or a science? Are great teachers born or are they made? These questions can be argued from either side with a different outcome each time. The question I pose to you is what are we as administrators doing to ensure that our teachers reach their full potential for greatness?

It is the responsibility of the education system to educate and train teachers as well as prepare its students for the 21st century. We need to endorse a system of support that will lift and grow our teachers’ talent. We have to commit to preparing teachers who are great because of the system, not great in spite of it.

Professional development, curriculum collaborations, and personal evaluations—these are the tools that we must use that help our teachers become the best they can be.

By providing opportunities for professional development to our teachers and staff, we are opening new doors for them to explore new approaches and implement innovative and research-based techniques. Each student learns in his or her own way, and by arming our teachers with a variety of best practices and proven strategies, we increase the opportunity for improved student achievement.

Creating collaborative teaching communities that give teachers the chance to learn from their colleagues and share their ideas will allow us to foster the authenticity, creativity and leadership that it takes to be a great teacher in today’s challenging school systems. Encouraging shared planning periods, subject matter coalitions and discussion forums are only a few of the many ideas that we can support where teachers can share not only their strategies and lesson plans but their passion and excitement for education and for their students.

Recently, new legislation requires school districts to include student achievement growth in teacher evaluations. Teachers set standards for their students just as we as administrators must set standards for our teachers and principals. Teachers and administrators alike communicate the same messages through this evaluations process: I set high standards for you; I believe you can meet these standards; I am here for you as you strive to meet them. Our collective mantra must be Attitude + Accountability = Achievement.

Finally, as we approach the end of another school year, let us keep in mind that our focus must be to provide a quality education for our students. We could not achieve that goal without quality teachers and administrators in our buildings. It may take a village to raise a child, but without great teachers we would not know how to build the village.

Attitude + Accountability = Achievement

By Dr. T.C. Wallace Jr., Superintendent of the Lansing School District
President of MASA
MASA Feature

Your Success, Our Passion

MASA’s Mentoring and Coaching Programs
Support Leaders at All Stages of Career

By Gerald Jennings, Courageous Journey Associate Director

MASA is here to serve and our focus is on serving you. No matter what phase of your career you are in, MASA is focused on helping you succeed.

Our newest member services are mentoring and coaching. People often think of mentoring and coaching as one and the same. Yet, MASA’s Active Mentoring Program (AMP) and Active Coaching Trust (ACT) serve two different functions in the general area of individualized executive leadership support.

**Active Mentoring Program— for leaders in their first years**

MASA’s AMP mentoring offers a newer superintendent (someone in their first through third year) guaranteed frequent and regular interactions with experienced, trained and responsive retired superintendents with whom to talk, ask questions and learn the ropes. The AMP service extends 12 months from when you start. During that year, your AMP mentor will come alongside you as you:

- Sort out issues from developing relationships and communicating, to knowing how to gather and use data at a district level.
- Develop strategies and techniques for building public engagement in local and political topics.
- Explore ways to continually improve the district’s management of services.
- Increase learning outcomes for every student by supporting dynamic and positive learning environments.
- Manage and develop a thriving focus of the whole organization.
- Expand the many and varied forms of leadership required of superintendents today.

Mentoring services will be wide ranging and will cover all aspects of the job. The AMP services will also be relationship based; you and your mentor will develop a bond that will support and develop your mutual effectiveness.

**Active Coaching Trust—for leaders at every stage of their careers**

MASA’s ACT executive coaching service is available to any MASA member, at any stage in his or her career. Coaches offer opportunities for exploring and developing deep understandings, functional improvements, and production dispositions. The ACT coaches are experienced leaders, likely retired superintendents, who are trained to coach superintendents in developing skills, knowledge and dispositions related to specific or general goal areas determined by the superintendent.

ACT coaching relationships might last for three, six or more months when a superintendent has personal/professional growth goals on which they need to work. For example, coaching might be appropriate for superintendents who are:

- Committed to dramatically improving their ability to provide timely, interesting and effective communication from the office to the community, staff and board;

"You cannot be truly successful without peace of mind, that only comes from knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming. You and only you will know whether you have done that. …You can fool others… you can not fool yourself.”

—John Wooden

Your Success, Our Passion

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—John Wooden
• Wanting to learn more about and lead an effort to enhance learning enjoyment and outcomes for students through technology, or;
• Convinced that the district needs to fully explore all possibilities related to improving educational and health services birth through 4 year olds in your district.
• Implementing dramatic changes into a district related to funding, evaluation, instructional practice, or facilities consolidation.

These are just several of myriad possible focuses a coaching relation might take. The important concept behind MASA’s coaching is that the energy of the coaching relationship might focus on a general area you want to address.

Decide today how MASA can help you in your efforts to serve. Then decide where you are going to invest your time and effort to help you be successful.

John Wooden once told one of his teams, “You cannot be truly successful without peace of mind, that only comes from knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming. You and only you will know whether you have done that.”

He went on to say, “You can fool others…you cannot fool yourself.”

Support Available Throughout Your Career

Any MASA superintendent or firstline assistant
If you would like to work with an AMP Mentor or ACT Coach for 2011-12, complete the application on page 18 of this issue of the MASA Leader. Save time and money while expanding your executive leadership capacity this year by pre-purchasing “bundles” of professional development services such as conferences, coaching, or workshops. Watch for news in your June membership renewal packet!

Newer Superintendents
MASA members who are in their first through third years are invited to participate in special events throughout the school year. Watch your email and check the events calendar at www.gomasa.org frequently.

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The District’s Role in Improving Student Achievement
Research Shows Investment in Central Administration Pays-Off in Higher Levels of Student Achievement

By Nancy Protheroe, Educational Research Service

Periodically—and especially in times of tight budgets for schools—public attention focuses on the district office. The question typically asked is, “ Couldn’t the funds allocated for central administration jobs be better spent elsewhere?” However, research conducted over the last decade makes an increasingly strong case for the support an effective central administration provides for instruction and student achievement. In addition, the research describes what effective district-level support looks like.

What did the successful districts do?
It is often difficult to summarize the findings of several studies that, while focusing on a similar research question, use a variety of approaches to looking at and talking about that question. This was not true for this body of literature. Instead, the similarities found across studies were strikingly similar. Together they provide a valuable picture of how the districts studied raised the level of student achievement.

There was an increased emphasis on teaching and learning. One researcher describes this as “moving instruction to center stage.”

The districts studied had a clearly defined roadmap for improvement efforts, and the most successful improvement efforts were systemic, comprehensive, and coherent. Thus, while the districts took on multiple efforts, these were intended to be mutually reinforcing whenever possible.

Resources were reorganized to support improvement efforts. Although adequate funding was an issue in many of the districts, all of them shifted resources to support the improvement efforts.

Data-driven decision making was both a goal and a way of life in many of the districts studied. This typically required the development of more efficient ways to access and display data, an effort that was supported by the central office.

The districts profiled intentionally used professional development to support improvement efforts. In addition, both districts and their schools increased in time and opportunities for teacher collaboration and discussion as a form of professional development.

The districts intervened in schools making little progress. This intervention might involve more control and supervision, but could also result in the allocation of more than the typical level of resources being channeled to the school.

Timely assistance for students with academic difficulties was provided.
While the districts and their schools had always attempted to address the needs of struggling students, the help provided could often have been characterized as too little, too late. This changed, with the intent being to provide on-target support long before a student fell so far behind that he might never catch up.

Finally, there was a shift in the role of central office staff from control and supervision to one of providing increased support and consultation for school-based efforts. This new role looked different in different districts but often included an element such as developing a process to identify best practices already in use in a district’s schools and classrooms—then providing the resources, training, etc., needed to replicate the practice in other sites.

**Another side of the story**

So far, the focus has been on the positive lessons learned about district support for increasing student achievement, but the districts profiled all experienced the “flip side” of change efforts. These included such things as:

- Frustration of school staff when asked to abandon or substantially deemphasize programs they considered beneficial for their students;
- Lack of integration/cohesion among programs; and
- Unwillingness of some staff to fully support the changes, with attitudes ranging from indifference to hostility.

Lack of capacity was also identified as a troubling problem in some of the studies. While the districts worked to provide development opportunities for both central office and school staff, this was typically done after the initiatives had already begun. Thus, there often was a period characterized by false starts and excess effort needed to make progress toward short-term goals.

Especially for districts that had previously used a system of site-based management, a more structured, top-down approach to establishing what was to be taught, and when, often generated frustration and resistance among school staff members. Schools also expressed concern that the increased standardization made it more difficult for them to address the unique needs of their students.

Finally, while school and district staff members interviewed by researchers talked often about the satisfaction they experienced when student achievement improved, they also did not minimize the hard work involved. To help them keep going, the most effective district leaders made recognition of staff efforts an integral part of improvement efforts.

**Summing up**

To return to our initial question—“Couldn’t the funds allocated for central administration jobs be better spent elsewhere?”—the answer lies in a careful study of what the district office in each district is currently doing to support instruction. In the districts profiled in the research highlighted above, the investment in central administration paid off in higher levels of student achievement.

Nancy Protheroe is Director of Special Research Projects for Educational Research Service. Contact her at nprotheroe@ers.org.

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**More Resources**

For an annotated list of resources on the role of central office administration in improving student achievement, visit [www.edreadysearch.org](http://www.edreadysearch.org).

Under the short list of topic titles, click on “All Ready Searches,” then click on “District Role in Improving Student Achievement.”
This June, the fourth cohort of MASA’s Courageous Journey™ certification endorsement program will graduate after completing a three-year leadership development project in their districts. Several graduates have summarized their work toward improving the quality of leadership in their districts. They describe the student achievement gains they’ve made as a result of their work—and the leadership lessons each participant learned along the way.

Chris Stephens, superintendent of Hopkins Public Schools

Developed the “One Page Strategic Plan” which has helped focus the school community on its goal to become a “destination district” where students “Learn Locally and Compete Globally.”

1. Tell how you have raised the bar on leadership in your district?
We have focused on helping the entire team understand the big picture of a learning organization that is focused on improved student achievement. Our leadership team and board have been on a learning journey to gain a clear and focused picture of what we need to do to improve learning in our district and to get our students to reach the expectations of our community.

2. Where did you start?
The Board of Education called for a plan of action to improve the district. After researching different types of strategic planning processes, we focused our efforts on learning about the “One Page Strategic Planning Model” based on the work of the Rockefeller Habits and author Vern Harnish. We hired a consultant, who worked with me to adapt it to fit the public sector environment and public schools. We created a steering team that gathered a 70-member community group that helped begin the process of creating our vision and plan.

3. What has been the focus of your efforts?
The committee set the Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG) that we were to become “A Destination District”—the place where students and parents in our community want to attend and where people moving into the area want to live and go to school. They also established a Brand Promise for the district that captures the nature of our community: “Learn Locally, Compete Globally.” These two ideas have really caught on and have become the focal point of what we do.

4. What strategies have you used?
Following the clear procedures in the “One Page Strategic Planning Process,” the board set 3-5 year goals and the buildings set the annual goals and actions to achieve those goals. Then departments or grade level teams or individuals set goals and actions to meet the building goals and actions. At every leadership team meeting, we check progress, allocate resources, and adjust our plans if needed. Quarterly, we report out to the board and the community on progress toward annual goals. Annually we review all the data and progress with a district strategic planning team, which allows us to tie this process to the School Improvement state process and the federal Title I and II planning process.

5. How are they working?
The process has become embedded into our work and reports to the board. Early success on some key programs has helped keep the process moving. It looks like we will be able to achieve 11 of 12 building goals this year (three goals in four buildings—a really good success rate for goal setting and achievement.

6. What’s better for students now that you’ve undertaken this work?
This process has helped us focus more on student data, achievement of standards, and instruction. The common language of instruction and regular observation by our leadership team has led to better performance by our teachers and...
thus improved student achievement. The focus on learning locally and competing globally has pushed us to be innovative. Students are getting instruction delivered in an electronic format that is focused on how they will be required to use information in the future more than ever before.

7. How have your ideas about quality leadership evolved during the past three years and what caused you to change your thinking?

We are learning more and more to focus on innovating and finding new ways to provide students with learning experiences. Leaders need to be able to help people see the future and develop the trust in the staff, parents and students to be willing to try new innovative things. We have a wonderful community, which wants the best for their children, the community and the world. We work every day to share the passion for learning and the expectations that we can be a “Destination District,” where we “Learn Locally, and Compete Globally.”

David Peterson, superintendent of Farwell Area Schools

Adopted a district-wide focus on excellence that has changed practice and gained results for students. Initiatives included stricter standards for granting teacher tenure, which is described below. In addition, Peterson initiated, among others, a “say yes” culture, that actively pursues solutions rather than excuses, and accelerated learning, which challenges the district to advance all students, including high achievers, as fast as it can.

1. Tell how you have raised the bar on leadership in your district?

The leadership team, along with the school board, has raised expectations for granting tenure to probationary teachers. Starting four years ago, probationary teachers need to be excellent or graded an “A” to be granted tenure in Farwell. Tenure by default is no longer our culture, grading out a “B” may be good enough for others but not for the children of Farwell.

2. Where did you start?

We started with the hiring process. When we made an offer of employment to a new teacher, we went over our district expectations. Then every year we reviewed these expectations with all non-tenured staff. This is all part of the IDP.

3. What has been the focus of your efforts?

We have focused on excellent teaching, continued on page 14
Courageous Journey, continued from page 13

a collaborative team, and a positive-to-a-fault (smiles are free), student-focused—not adult-focused—culture.

4. What strategies have you used? We have used the IDP process, and improved the mentoring process. This is part of our district-wide efforts to become a district of excellence.

5. How are they working? Fantastic. The vast majority of our non-tenured teachers receive grades of A and A+. The one or two who may receive a B have time to improve. We anticipate that one teacher might end up with a B grade and will not have their contract renewed.

6. What's better for students now that you've undertaken this work? The district focus of excellence in everything we do has permeated our culture; everything we do is improving.

7. How have your ideas about quality leadership evolved during the past three years and what caused you to change your thinking? Although I thought I had high expectations, I feel the “laser focus” on excellence in everything we do has increased our expectations to a level I never anticipated. This non-negotiable expectation is what every discussion and decision is framed around.

Fred Clarke, superintendent of Albion Public Schools

AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination) which gives low socio-economic and at-risk students the tools they need to be successful after high school. “It opens doors that have been historically shut. In a short period of time, it has given students and families hope!” Clark says.

1. Tell how you have raised the bar on leadership in your district? The first year of implementation made believers out of many people throughout the staff and community. The AVID Site Team took ownership of the program and it is blossoming. It has enhanced our collaborative efforts to increase student achievement. As the District Director of AVID, my role has been to facilitate this team approach.

2. Where did you start? I had experience with AVID in another state. No one in Michigan had even heard of the program so I was on an island of sorts. I went before my board and showed them what AVID could do. Then I stated: “Board members, I won’t ask you to do this often, but in this case I am going to ask you to trust me on this one.” They did. And it is paying off.

3. What has been the focus of your efforts? The primary focus has been on implementation via relationships and communication. I utilized my experience with the program to avoid several pitfalls and mistakes made in the past that impede implementation. Keeping constituents informed and spreading the good news about the program’s impact were keys.

4. What strategies have you used? Community presentations and board meetings have been a great way to keep the community informed. I have also used parent and student testimonials about the program.

5. How are they working? What’s better for students now that you’ve undertaken this work? These strategies have worked well. The only issue faced so far is the lack of time to continuously present information to all the community groups. Many students now believe in themselves. Many parents now believe that their children have enormous potential when the appropriate support structure is in place. Myths have been shattered about low socioeconomic and previously labeled “non-college bound” students.

6. How have your ideas about quality leadership evolved during the past three years and what caused you to change your thinking? This experience paved the way for my understanding of the importance I must continuously place on communication. The success of our implementation is rooted in effective communication strategies!
Jackie Johnston, superintendent of Huron Valley Schools

GRAD 100 Program, a district-wide initiative to graduate 100% of our students with the skills necessary to succeed in the global workplace.

This program touches every grade level and involves every staff person in order to meet the needs of every student. Employees have become the leaders in embracing our mission statement of “Inspiring and Building Futures...One Student at a Time.”

1. Tell how you have raised the bar on leadership in your district?
   Individual leadership has grown by assuming individual responsibility for student achievement. We also aligned our Strategic Plan with GRAD 100 so we are focused and collaborative in all that we do for students.

2. Where did you start? What has been the focus of your efforts?
   We launched the GRAD 100 program with a goal for each of our students to be successful by ensuring each student meets grade level standards and, if he/she is not, providing the appropriate interventions for success. These interventions encompass academic, behavioral and attitudinal support systems.

3. What strategies have you used?
   The GRAD 100 program strengthened the use of student assessments to gather the data necessary to determine if students were meeting academic standards and, if not, to target the areas needing improvement. Data was also used to highlight student success and to provide more rigor to students needing additional challenges. Another important component was the use of technology to allow students opportunities for remediation, credit recovery, enhancements and enrichment. The GRAD 100 initiative was also woven into staff professional development, which provided greater focus for cohort groups and collaboration between grade levels.

4. How are they working?
   As a result of our GRAD 100 efforts, District graduation rates have risen by nearly a half percent (4-year cohort) to 4% (5-year cohort) over a two-year period. The District’s 4-year cohort drop out rate declined by over 3% for the same period. Alternative high school graduation rate has risen over 20%, and their drop out rate decreased by over 25%. We are narrowing the achievement gap for our subpopulations in writing and science and are making gains for some subpopulations in reading, math and social studies. In addition, the 11th grade alternative high school students showed their highest scores in three years on the 2009 standardized state tests.

5. What’s better for students now that you’ve undertaken this work?
   The Grad 100 initiative is a PreK-12 program that carefully analyzes and supports students’ progress toward a diploma and successful participation in adult society. Each level concentrates on the critical prerequisites for the next level. The critical aspect for GRAD 100 is to realize that while the majority of students do well in the general system, those that struggle need individualized supports targeted to their particular needs and circumstances.

6. How have your ideas about quality leadership evolved during the past three years and what caused you to change your thinking?
   Everyone has an understanding of the critical role they play in student achievement and that collaborative teamwork is essential to our success as a district. It is necessary to build in time to collaborate and require higher expectations from staff to reach the benchmarks we’ve set for student achievement. The use of data and monitoring proficiencies at each level to stay on track has been critical in this process.

Jeff Mount, superintendent of Mason County Central Schools

Implemented a teacher evaluation system focused on improving instruction and therefore improving student performance.

1. Tell how you have raised the bar on leadership in your district?
   I knew from serving as a principal and as a new superintendent in this district that staff accountability in the area of student achievement needed to be a focus area in order for improvement to take place.

2. Where did you start?
   I started with the teacher evaluation tool, which is a part of our EA contract and therefore needed to be a part of bargaining/negotiations.

3. What has been the focus of your efforts?
   From the very beginning—improving student performance.

4. What strategies have you used?
   In negotiations we agreed for a committee made up of teachers, administrators, a board member and a facilitator (Liz Margulus) to develop a new comprehensive evaluation process and tool. We also developed new processes and tools for support staff and administrative staff. We also underwent a district level strategic planning process with input from the community, staff and board, resulting in a new district vision, mission and goals that focus on student achievement and connects the evaluation process to the strategic plan.

5. How are they working? What’s better for students now that you’ve undertaken this work?
   Excellent! We are all rowing together now by developing individual goals focused on meeting our goal, mission, and vision. Now all district-level,

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building-level and individual decisions focus on student achievement.

6. How have your ideas about quality leadership evolved during the past three years and what caused you to change your thinking? While I knew that the evaluation process and tool were unable to help teachers grow—and therefore improve student achievement—I also realized that as superintendent, I was responsible for focusing the district’s efforts toward such a purpose. That’s why we connected the evaluation tool and the district strategic plan. They cannot be done in isolation of each other. By having every staff member identify individual goals to help improve student achievement and demonstrate evidence of their individual and student growth, we will certainly meet our district vision that our graduates will have the required skills to successfully COMPETE in a global environment.

Michael Murray, superintendent of Suttons Bay Public Schools

Shifted the culture of the district from a “sort-and-select” model to one that engages every staff member in making the district match the needs of each student. Instead of blaming students, staff at every level now work to find the missing keys to unlock the doors of learning for the individual.

1. Tell how you have raised the bar on leadership in your district? Changing district culture is one of the most complex and challenging tasks a leader can take on, yet it is absolutely foundational for lasting change. Traditional adult centered districts tend to be sort-and-select, with winners and losers when it comes to achievement. Those who don’t fit the mold of expectations are shipped out in one way or another, either through pull-out classes, or as discipline cases or drop outs.

2. Where did you start? What has been the focus of your efforts? The State of Michigan provided an ideal starting point and focus area when it issued the district a citation for disproportional representation of minorities in special education. The root causes for such a documented situation are often subtle, unrecognized, and unexamined. It served however, as a theme that we had to make the school fit the child instead of trying to make the child fit the school. It led to a study of all of the ways school is a match and/or a mismatch for the individual learner.
Two programs helped us build skills and awareness about the matching process. The first was the Instructional Consultation and Assessment Team training. The second was the “Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners” program. Both programs helped staff take a systematic approach to examining the causes of failure, which is the first step in knowing how to remediate the causes. We added an extensive preschool program, multi-age grouping in the elementary school, Individual Learning Plans for students, a gifted and talented program, the introduction of college level courses on campus and on-line, credit protection programs, credit recovery programs, virtual school learning, blended instruction and a revamping of the way we use seminar time. Whether a student learns became more important than when or where or how the student learned the material.

The roles of both special education and general education learners changed dramatically. Our students are much more engaged in their learning. Extra curricular participation is at an all time high. Attendance has greatly improved and discipline issues have greatly reduced. The whole atmosphere in the district is more businesslike in the classrooms. Students who admitted they probably would have dropped out now see graduation as in their grasp. Production from special education students in particular has leaped upward. The percent of Native American students in special education has dropped from over 40% to 26%. The percent of students overall in special education had dropped from over 20% to 14.4%, the state average.

The biggest thing is being proactive. As we could see the climate changing, it was important to get out in front and make changes to our system to adapt to the change going on with funding, enrollment, requirements, and accountability.

We started with data. It showed us the organization was changing, the funding was changing, and the accountability was changing. I really started in 2003 with the Instructional Consultation and Assessment Team training. It was important to get out in front and make changes to our system to adapt to the change going on with funding, enrollment, requirements, and accountability.

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The biggest focus was formulating a well thought out transition plan.

We have realized how important planning and strategy, involving other people, information/data, and being thorough are to leadership and making huge systemic changes to the organization. It is also very important to communicate well and be proactive getting out in front of changes needed.

The MASA Courageous Journey™ is Michigan’s only certification endorsement/enhancement program for superintendents. You can learn more about the program at www.courageousjourney.org. MASA offers endorsement options for both aspiring and practicing superintendents. Starting in 2011 (pending MDE approval), MASA, in partnership with Michigan ASCD, will also begin assisting school leaders who need alternative certification.
Two new growth opportunities for superintendents who want to achieve more in 2011-12

Active Coaching Trust
For experienced superintendents at any point in their careers
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For newer superintendents in their first through third years.
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Both programs provide one-to-one, executive coaching style relationships with trained professionals. Most mentors and coaches are retired superintendents – experienced leaders in Michigan, ready and able to help you succeed. See page 8 of this issue for an article from the ACT/AMP Associate Director for details about expectations, or visit gomasa.org/act-amp.

MASA Fall Conference
September 21-23, 2011

Save the dates!
Grand Traverse Resort
Acme, MI

New Superintendents Preconference
September 20-21

Exhibit Show
September 21-22

For registration and agendas, visit gomasa.org/fall-conference
The digital divide is real and, in schools, cuts a gulf between tech-savvy teachers and teachers who are less so. Narrowing this gulf, along with finding a way to deliver professional development so that all could attend, was the impetus behind the creation of the innovative 21Things professional development program.

The 21 Things for 21st Century Educators, the first program course, was created by the late Frank Miracola and Jennifer Parker-Moore of Macomb ISD/REMC 18, along with Carolyn McCarthy at Shiawassee RESD/Clinton County RESA/REMC 14 West and Melissa White at Ingham ISD/REMC 13. Designed to help teachers bridge the digital divide by offering “Just in Time” training for K-12 educators, 21 Things for the 21st Century Educator (http://21things4teachers.net) is based on the National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS-T). These standards represent the basic technology skills every educator should possess.

Participants attend virtual classes using Adobe Connect, complete hands-on activities, view videos/tutorials, and create a digital portfolio/work log to learn the tools. Sessions are recorded for those who are not able to attend the live broadcast. Participants are able to gain professional development, SB-CEUs, or graduate credit. The course also satisfies the Personnel Skilled in Technology Assessment requirement for state reporting. Check the schedule at http://www.21things4teachers.net/partner-agencies.html to see when it is being offered through your REMC or ISD.

Over 1,000 Michigan teachers have participated in the 21 Things for 21st Century Educators since its inception in the fall of 2009. Its impact on professional practice can be seen in these quotes from recent participants.

“This class is addicting!”
“I have a lot of colleagues visiting my blog regularly to get links and descriptions of these new types of technology so they can use them in their classroom.”
“The information is priceless.”
“What a GREAT way to ‘go to school.’”

The digital divide is real and, in schools, cuts a gulf between tech-savvy teachers and teachers who are less so.

‘21 Things’ for administrators now available

At the request of administrators, the 21 Things program has expanded to include 21 Things for 21st Century Administrators (http://www.21things4administrators.net) The administrator site, in the pilot phase during the spring of 2011, provides five modules that meet the NETS Administrator (NETS-A) standards. This course is designed to teach the use of technology tools to increase administrators’ efficiency in their daily tasks. Additional courses will be offered through REMC or ISD agencies beginning in the fall of 2011.

Don’t forget students!

As 30 REMC/ISD agencies signed on to deliver the first two projects, plans began to address the need for a student component. The student site was created through the collaboration of the REMC Association Instructional Technology Specialists (RITS). The project is funded by the state REMC Association, with additional support by the participating agencies. Selected Michigan classrooms in grades 6-12 are piloting this program through June 2011.

21Things4students (http://21things4students.net) will provide teachers and students project-based activities and resources for teaching and learning with educational technology using performance-based activities and technology tools. The student site is designed to meet the requirements for 8th grade technology proficiency and is based on the Michigan Educational Technology Standards (METS) and the NETS Students (NETS-S) standards. The 21Things4students will launch formally across the state for all schools to access in the fall of 2011. Contact your local REMC Director for more information on these projects and how to get involved in the future.
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Oscoda Area Schools Improve Teaching and Leading Through InFORMED Data Results Rubric

Last summer, a team at the Oscoda Area Schools developed an educator evaluation process and protocols linking student achievement data to individual teacher annual performance evaluation. Led by Oscoda superintendent, Christine Beardsley, the team developed the InFORMED Data Results Rubric. On September 1, 2010 the InFORMED Rubric was implemented with the Oscoda Education Association and all district administrators.

Rubric built on student focus, trust, fairness

“We have already completed both annual observations and meetings with all teachers in our district,” Beardsley said. “We can share that the biggest change, thus far, is that the content of the conversations are much more student focused. Our evaluation conversations changed virtually overnight from ‘What did we teach?’ to ‘What did they learn and how do we know they learned it?’ This has already proven to be a very powerful process.”

According to Beardsley, when the district team began to meet and dialogue about what should be included, clear themes began to emerge.

“First, we wanted to approach this with the ‘right heart.’ Our entire team pledged to maintain focus on helping students,” Beardsley said. “We knew that if we could create a system that provided teachers and administrators with honest and timely student data, solid processes, and clear measurements then we were confident we would positively impact the success of our students.”

“Second, we knew the importance of building trust with our teachers as the new protocols were implemented.”

Beardsley acknowledged this process has changed many things about what they always “knew” regarding how educators are evaluated and how educator efficacy is measured. Therefore, everyone agreed that the evaluation of every leader in the district would also be based on the same InFORMED Rubric created for teachers. Teacher data scores in the InFORMED Rubric

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Authors of the InFORMED Data Results Rubric are back row, left to right: Charlie Negro, Jane Negro, Steve Kennedy, Scott Moore. Front row, left to right: Eric Allshouse, Kim Courcy, Christine Beardsley.
are based on state, national, and local data (end-of-course exams, semester/trimester grades, Dibels, etc.) for the students in their own classroom.

The principal data scores are based on the average of all the teacher data scores in the building – period. Nothing is added or reduced from the teacher scores. District level administrators, including the superintendent and all department level directors, are based on the average of all teacher data scores in the district – period. Again, nothing is added or reduced from the teacher data scores.

“More than ever before, teachers and administrators are mutually dependent on each other,” Beardsley said. “We believe that by setting clear standards, by having a process to access accurate data in a timely fashion, by showing teachers how to use the data to inform their instructional planning, and by regularly measuring the outcomes, we have created an avenue to positively impact the academic success of our students.”

“IT was not easy to accomplish this huge feat,” Beardsley said. “But, we set about to do this with the right intention of helping students learn first and foremost. We also believed that we could create a more meaningful tool than those outside our industry could create for us. Finally, Oscoda teachers have demonstrated that their true desire is to help children succeed. The professionalism and dedication of the Oscoda teachers has been a primary reason that we have been able to successfully implement the InFORMED Data Results Rubric.”

The team presented their process and protocols to Dr. Frank Ciloski and Uniserv Director, June Pettyplace, both of the Michigan Education Association, in October 2010. They were encouraged by Dr. Ciloski’s comments about the InFORMED Rubric. Beyond that, Pettyplace has been involved in monthly roundtable meetings in an effort to continue open dialogue as the process continues to evolve.

Beardsley and her team have also been invited to present the InFORMED Data Rubric process and protocols at ISDs, at professional conferences and for local school districts. Early reviews of the InFORMED Data Results Rubric are very positive.

Administrators like Dr. Joanne Hopper, Director of Education Services at St. Clair County RESA, indicate that using the InFORMED

InFORMED rubric gets automated

Oscoda Area Schools has contracted with Zimco, Inc., to automate the InFORMED Data Results Rubric. The goal was to find an automated solution that will not merely meet new state requirements for evaluation, but truly impact instruction and learning.

“We selected STAGES as our professional practice rubric, and by using it with the InFORMED Data Results Rubric we will fully meet the requirements of MCL 1249 and 1250,” said Beardsley.

On any day, a teacher or administrator can log in to the InFORMED Rubric and check the “data” component of their evaluation score. The InFORMED Rubric can be set to upload as often as the district wants to include the local assessment pieces.
Rubric as a template can help districts accomplish the tasks of MCL Section 1249 and make it a meaningful process.

“The Oscoda rubric and accompanying documents can definitely serve as a model or template for other districts working to develop their own metrics for teacher and administrator evaluation,” said Dr. Hopper. “While the component parts may differ, the process and the examples of data points will be very helpful.”

Hopper indicated that showing the levels of changing metrics from elementary to middle to high school was the most helpful aspect of the rubric.

“This helps clarify the expectations and targets for each.”

For more information on the InFORMED Rubric or to arrange a presentation for your group, contact Christine Beardsley, Superintendent, Oscoda Area Schools at beardsleyc@oscodaschools.org, or (989) 739-2033. For more information on automating your evaluation tools or to arrange a presentation for the automated educator evaluation programs STAGES or the InFORMED Rubric check out the website at www.StagesSoftware.com or contact Zimco, Inc. at the following: dzimmer@stagesoftware.com, 989-652-3476 or toll-free 888-549-4626.

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Paul Lange, Information Technology Analyst
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Back in the day, we had to memorize our colleagues’ phone numbers; our cell phones did not dial them for us. If we did not call a friend for three months, it was difficult to remember their number.

Skill retention over the summer months is a similar challenge for all students, regardless of race, gender and IQ. Today’s environment, with the shift towards national proficiency standards, teacher evaluations tied to student outcomes, and school rankings impacting funding, means summer learning for every student must be integrated into the school-year pattern of learning, particularly in elementary school. Districts and superintendents have a unique challenge and opportunity to take a leadership role in summer skill retention for all students, while maintaining remediation for low achievers.

Research spanning 100 years shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer. Most students lose about two months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. Low-income students also lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers may make slight gains. Income differentiation is the only variable in how much skill is lost, with low-income learners losing at the highest end of every range. These losses accumulate to 18 months in mathematic ability and nearly 2 years in literacy skills by 5th grade.

Implementing a district-wide culture of year round learning—with summer skill review as an accepted part of the normal school year pattern—benefits districts, students, teachers and families. At the forefront of innovative leadership are school districts that are implementing full-school summer review programs.

The key components to a successful summer review program are to:

- **Standardize summer review packets**—teachers cannot be responsible individually for review packets; inconsistencies and inequities arise quickly.
- **Focus on secure skills**—attempting to accelerate skills at home frustrates both parent and student, resulting in failure to complete review.
- **Educate parents and staff**—many parents are unaware of the toll of summer learning loss on their student and school, and of their ability to help their child keep their school year skills over the summer.
- **Include every student**—removing the stigma attached to summer learning is critical; peer learning momentum continues into the summer when every student is involved.
- **Reward and celebrate summer efforts**—summer review packets must be collected in the fall at the school and celebrated by principals and staff to create a true integration of summer review into the school year.

Ann Arbor Public Schools has worked with parents over the last four years to develop and implement full school summer review at their elementary schools. “We have found that students who participate [in the Summer Learning Program] are eager to return and have kept up the study habits such as reading and writing,” said first grade teacher Sarah Keith at Haisley Elementary.
The backbone of the Ann Arbor program is grade specific workbooks that contain eight weeks of lessons sent home with each student. Each lesson contains a reading log, math practice, writing activity and a bonus activity. At Burns Park Elementary, principal and teachers have innovated beyond the workbooks and host weekly playground review sessions at their low-income housing unit to boost completion rates to over 90% in their fragile learner population.

Parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to ensure that their children have productive things to do. By providing parents with materials for summer skill review, you help grow their ability to be involved meaningfully in school activities, as well as relieve anxiety and burdens.

“Thank you for supporting our family with your excellent materials. My daughter completed her book and was so proud to turn it in to her new teacher.” said parent Sandy Carter to Todd Roberts, former superintendent of the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

The impact of implementing a full-school summer review program positively touches parents, students, teachers and administrators. As a district builds a school year pattern that includes summer skill review:

- Students return in the fall confident and prepared to learn.
- Parents are continuously involved in student learning.
- Teachers transition into school-year routines with ease.
- Teachers introduce new learning at a quicker rate.
- Districts fulfill state requirements for parent engagement and extended learning opportunities.

- Districts demonstrate leadership and innovation in achieving high levels of student achievement and proficiency.

Quality instruction and leadership demands that districts stop leaving hard earned learning on the table. Students simply cannot retain their school year skills over a summer break dictated by an agrarian calendar. Summer skill review must become an accepted part of the school year calendar, led and supported by innovative districts, for our state to move to the next level of academic achievement.

Donna is the Co-Chair of the Ann Arbor PTO Council supporting 33 PTOs and over 30,000 parents. Donna is also the founder of ThinkStretch LLC, www.thinkstretch.com, a social mission company aimed at closing the achievement gap through summer learning.
While communicating with teachers is obviously important, it can be overlooked as a priority in the busy day-to-day operations of a school district. At best, communications with teachers would be included as a strategic objective in a quality district communications plan. At worst, it would occur only during a crisis or when the district needed something from its faculty.

Indeed, this type of communication is essential to an effective organization, but it can be marginalized or lost during a hurried planning process. The pay-offs, such as teacher morale, institutional cohesiveness, and improved student learning, certainly are worth the allocation of planning time and other resources.

It is interesting to note that of the world’s 50 most innovative companies, none were cited for excellence in employee communications, according to the March issue of Fast Company magazine. K–12 education is certainly not alone in having room to improve internal communications.

Meanwhile, two related topics warrant mention: surveys and recognition.

Many districts routinely survey parents and community members, but a simple web survey on an internal web page can provide important feedback from faculty members. Meanwhile, recognition of teacher achievements goes hand-in-hand with good communications (for example, Portage Schools has a blog for alumni to pay tribute to teachers and staff, a “Sounds of the District” weekly podcast that features teachers and students in their workplace, and an alumni e-magazine that includes updates on current and former staff).

Today, communication is facilitated with the variety of electronic and social media that are available. This year Portage Schools replaced its monthly faculty and staff electronic PDF newsletter with a weekly memo contained within an e-mail, improving the connection with teachers in the process. A popular offering of this new memo is the “Five Questions with…” feature that includes a staff member’s picture with answers to questions about that person.

Communication from the superintendent is possible through two avenues, depending on the purpose of the message. The most powerful, of course, is direct contact, with face-to-face during a school visit being the best, or in addressing a group of teachers. E-mail correspondence is less personal, but could be more efficient depending on the situation. A word of caution with a mass e-mail, from The Hamster Revolution author Tim Burress: install a two-minute delay on your send feature.

The indirect approach is to communicate through principals, teacher leaders, or the education association’s president. There are times when this is the preferred and most appropriate method of communication. Superintendent blogs are emerging as an effective alternative, although with the response option to blog postings, many superintendents (and school PR people) remain cautious about inviting such exposure.

“When I visit a classroom and witness the miracle of teaching and learning, it reminds me of why I chose this profession,” says Portage School’s Superintendent Marsha Wells. “Telling teachers how phenomenal they are and the magnitude of their impact on students is the best communications there is.”

So, while social media and electronic communications have certainly expanded the options for all communications, including those with teachers, many of the old ways continue to serve their purpose. With apologies to Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Mark Zuckerberg, the best communications involve speaking directly with someone and following up with a hand-written note.

Tom Vance, community relations manager for Portage Public Schools, is president-elect of the Michigan School Public Relations Association. You can find more information and resources to guide your district communications at www.mspa.org.
When did the teaching of today’s students become such a foreign language? Teaching how students learn has been the newest art form in today’s classroom. Kids want to be engaged. They want to “check-in” during school hours, and they want to multitask. It’s time that we start teaching students in a manner in which they learn, and stop expecting them to learn in the manner in which we teach.

Walk past a classroom in any junior/senior high school right now and you will see disinterested students. No level of engagement, little interest, and average motivation. Yet it’s adults who are guilty—guilty of stripping students of their power and interest. As soon as they walk through the door, we expect them to power down, turn off their iPods, turn off their cell phones, and learn how we used to learn 20, 30, even 40 years ago. We didn’t like it back then; why would we expect them to like it? Or do we just expect them to “get it” regardless if they like how we teach?

When I began teaching, the classroom was expected to revolve around me. Kids hung on my every word, and the room was exception­ally quiet. There were no behavioral issues, because kids knew who was boss. And engagement…not a question. Everyone was engaged because their undivided attention was given to me.

Who am I kidding! This was 16 years ago, but the expectations of our kids haven’t changed because we haven’t changed. It’s time for a new kind of education. The classroom should revolve around our students, not around the adult.

The proliferation of handheld technology has our students’ attention, and we need to capitalize on this movement. Kids have smartphones, iPods, text packages, data packages, and now iPads. The Internet is at the fingertips of every student when they walk through the door, but we don’t want them to use their technology; we fear they might do something bad. We need to get past that mentality. We need to start embracing today’s technology and begin to incorporate those technologies into our instructional practices. Buy an iPod Touch lab for your building. Purchase an iPad lab for a classroom. Don’t let the words iTunes and Apps scare you anymore. Those things need to be embraced.

At Ithaca’s North Elementary we have a mobile iPod Touch lab of 30 iPods. Each iPod has about 30 to 40 apps on it, and the teachers and students use them everyday. They use them to surf the Internet, to send and receive email, and to check the weather. They use them as a dictionary, thesaurus, and a calculator. They have a digital camera and digital camcorder. They can tell a story with them, or use them as a student response system (the clickers). The kids are creating digital content and sharing it with their peers, parents, and teachers.

In our high school our special education students are using the iPads in their resource room for many different reasons. The kids take tests using them, word process, and use them as a computer lab. Staff members have put their tests and exams on the iPad so students with accommodations can have their assessments “read” to them. Again, the level of engagement is extremely high, and motivation is just as high. I recently visited the

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classroom where iPads were being used; it was so quiet in there, I thought everyone was sleeping. Nope, everyone was engaged, and the lack of chatter was music to my ears. My kids were powered up, tuned in, engaged, and enthused…all at the same time!

Administratively, we are using iPads for evaluations and walkthroughs, for scheduling (digital calendars), for communication (email), and for many other things. With the Apple App Store, we have apps for the weather (handy when we need to consider canceling events), note taking at meetings, reading the local news media, audio recording of meetings, making travel plans using Google maps, and professional reading of eBooks….just to name a few!

That’s the true power of today’s technology. If you haven’t seen the power of technology really work, give me a call or email and we will gladly open our doors to show you and your staff how we are getting it done in Ithaca.

Nathan M. Bootz, Ed.S., is Superintendent of Ithaca Public Schools. Contact him at NBootz@ithacaschools.net.
Many educators agree: teacher evaluations are broken. So how can we fix them? A 2010 guide by The New Teacher Project proposes six design standards that any rigorous and fair evaluation system should meet. It offers states and school districts a blueprint for better evaluations that can help every teacher thrive in the classroom—and give every student the best chance at success.

The heart of Teacher Evaluation 2.0 consists of six design standards for evaluation: an annual process; clear, rigorous expectations; multiple measures; multiple ratings; regular feedback; and significance—that is, consequences for the teachers being evaluated. The report argues that current teacher evaluation practices result in evaluations that are too infrequent, too unfocused, and too broad (offering only “pass/fail” or other binary options instead of more nuanced ratings).

Further, the report asserts that current evaluations are unhelpful to teachers seeking to improve classroom practice and performance and are not backed up by meaningful consequences for poor performance. It advocates for evaluations to have high stakes and be used in decisions about teacher firing, promotion, tenure, and reappointment.

The report has its critics—most notably, the teachers’ unions. They charge that the report fails to support its call for high-stakes decisions with adequate research findings.

You can download the 12-page report from the MASA Performance Evaluation Resource Center at www.gomasa.org (click on Government Relations, then Policy Center/Performance Evaluation Resource Center) or from The New Teacher Project at www.tntp.org.

Teacher quality—what do your students say?

We all know that a good report card, punctuality, and discipline are deciding factors for whether or not students make the grade, but what puts teachers at the head of the class? Kelly Middleton and Elizabeth Petitt, school administrators and authors of the new book, Simply the Best: 29 Things Students Say the Best Teachers Do, asked the experts—students. Some of the answers make perfect sense and others just might surprise you!

Simply the Best educates and inspires as it reveals:

- Why students, in essence, sign their teachers’ paychecks
- What makes a teacher ‘simply the best’
- The importance of a home visit initiative
- How relationships permeate every aspect of school including academic, behavior, finances and safety
- Why an intentional focus on relationships in schools means everyone succeeds
- The importance of the student voice in making policy decisions

Available at Amazon.com or request a copy at www.kellymiddleton.com.
M ichigan’s Integrated Improvement Initiatives (MI3) integrates and supports state-provided services for students, parents, educators, and administrators. The initiatives include Michigan’s Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi), Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP), Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners (RTSL), Michigan Alliance for Families, Michigan Special Education Mediation (MSEMP) among others.

The Center for Educational Networking (CEN) provides a communication framework for MI3 and the initiatives. CEN supports education stakeholder awareness efforts, including websites, print documents and event coordination. Together, MI3/CEN supports the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services to improve results for students. MI3/CEN links OSE-EIS mandated activities initiatives and OSE-EIS through increased cooperation and integration of efforts in the areas of marketing and communication, grant management, evaluation, implementation, coaching, personnel development, and parent involvement.

FOCUS on Results is a guidance and technical assistance electronic publication covering topics related to accountability, assessment, state and federal policy, transition and more. Each article is available in pdf and audio format at focus.cenmi.org. New articles are posted each month and you can subscribe to receive regular updates.

In addition, the OSE-EIS Special Education Facts are available at www.cenmi.org. These brief documents provide data about the OSE-EIS annual state performance plan indicators reported to the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). MI3/CEN provides high quality, accurate, creative, and timely services and supports. Visit www.cenmi.org and focus.cenmi.org to learn more.

Holly Sasso is Communication Director for Michigan’s Integrated Improvement Initiatives/Center for Educational Networking. Contact her at hsasso@cenmi.org or 517 908-3905.
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Adding Chocolate to Milk Doesn’t Take Away Its Nine Essential Nutrients

All milk contains a unique combination of nutrients important for growth and development - including three of the five “nutrients of concern” for which children have inadequate intakes. And, flavored milk accounts for less than 3.5% of added sugar intake in children ages 6-12 and less than 2% in teens.

5 Reasons Why Flavored Milk Matters

1. KIDS LOVE THE TASTE!
   Milk provides nutrients essential for good health and kids will drink more when it’s flavored.

2. NINE ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS!
   Flavored milk contains the same nine essential nutrients as white milk - calcium, potassium, phosphorous, protein, vitamins A, D and B12, riboflavin and niacin (niacin equivalents) - and is a healthful alternative to soft drinks.

3. HELPS KIDS ACHIEVE 3 SERVINGS!
   Drinking low-fat or fat-free white or flavored milk helps kids get the 3 daily servings* of milk recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

4. BETTER DIET QUALITY!
   Children who drink flavored milk meet more of their nutrient needs; do not consume more added sugar, fat or calories; and are not heavier than non-milk drinkers.

5. TOP CHOICE IN SCHOOLS!
   Low-fat chocolate milk is the most popular milk choice in schools and kids drink less milk (and get fewer nutrients) if it’s taken away.

REFERENCES:
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Americans need low-fat and fat-free milk and milk products to improve overall health.

www.nationaldairycouncil.org/childnutrition

* DAILY RECOMMENDATIONS - 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk or equivalent milk products for those 9 years of age and older and 2 cups of low-fat and fat-free milk or equivalent milk products for children 2-8 years old.

1-800-241-MILK (6455)
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