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Features

8   Back to The Base: New data, technologies boost community involvement, improve resource decisions
12  Welcome to the News Business!
15  Evaluate Employee Performance in STAGES
17  Midwinter Conference Registration Form
18  Interest-Based Strategies—When the Bargaining Gets Tough
21  Leadership and Innovation: An Interview with David Campbell
22  Get the $AVE ON in Your District!

Departments

6   Say Hey, Let’s Talk
7   T.C. Talk
23  Index to Advertisers
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Reform? Let’s Transform!

By William Mayes, MASA Executive Director

MASA members and friends are already at the front edges of innovation. Witnessing true transformational leadership in action is one of the joys of my job, and I feel privileged to share it with our members.

Later this month in Kalamazoo I will introduce you to Brian Davis, the 2011 Michigan Superintendent of the Year. I visited Holland Public Schools in November 2010 to announce Brian’s award, and was blown away by the vision, passion, and hard work that inspired our selection committee to tap him from an impressive group of applicants (See page 11 for snapshot).

Across the state, another MASA member—this one a graduate of our Courageous Journey™ certification endorsement program—is earning national recognition for his transformational leadership. William Skilling of Oxford Community Schools was featured, along with author Tony Wagner, by Phi Delta Kappa International in the November/December 2010 issue of Edge. In an article I urge every MASA member to read, the pair discuss the innovative leadership needed to close the global achievement gap while still balancing the budget. “I think one of the greatest attributes that a good leader needs, besides character, is knowing what to do,” Skilling concludes at the end. “It’s not necessarily knowing how to do something…If you know what to do, you can always find people who know how to do it and do it well.”

At MASA, we’re working hard to shape the direction of this decade’s progress in public education—the “what to do” that Bill Skilling talks about. We’re guided in our efforts by the Lead Forward work accomplished by all of you through your Council representatives. I urge you to become familiar with that work, beyond the three priority areas for this year: performance evaluation, technology integration, and leadership development. We invite your continued feedback and input to the work.

As Michigan’s new legislators move into their Lansing offices, you can be sure we’ll be visiting with facts and a focus on the kinds of meaningful reforms—in all sectors—that we know can transform education for the 21st century.

Don’t Miss…

“Creating a Culture of Innovation While Balancing the Budget: A Conversation Between Tony Wagner and William Skilling”

Edge, (Phi Delta Kappa International) Nov/Dec; online at www.pdkintl.org.

“The Same Thing Over and Over,” by Frederick M. Hess,


Meet 2011 Michigan Superintendent of the Year Brian Davis and dozens of other innovative leaders at the MASA Awards and Recognition luncheon on January 27 during our Midwinter Conference. Register at gomasa.org.
Greetings fellow administrators! As we approach the halfway point of this school year, it is important to take note of all of the accomplishments. It is also important to acknowledge the upcoming challenges we face in 2011.

As leaders of our educational communities, it is our responsibility to meet these obstacles, new and old, with creative and innovative solutions that combine the strength of our core subject curriculum with the imagination of the new and emerging technology. Our students and families depend on our leadership to pave the way for the next generation. I invite you to join me in accepting that challenge by pledging to make technological integration in our schools a priority.

Technology integration should be a fundamental part of every school's plan, every year. By integrating technology into our classrooms we are not only providing interactive tools for our students with which to engage core subject matter, but we are giving them opportunities to become more familiar with current knowledge and the modern culture that will better prepare them for the world they will enter after they graduate.

Our students are not the only ones to benefit from technology integration. By allowing our teachers to further their understanding of new technology and providing access to new programs and training, we are developing a workforce that possesses the know-how to create new and more personalized styles of teaching and learning that will reach the next generation of students.

New technology also allows for a more accurate assessment of our programs and curriculum so that we can better determine what is and, more importantly, what is not working. New teaching and learning styles can be tested, supported and shared throughout all of our learning communities so that the benefits of one can be shared with all.

Now, even though we live and work in different communities with unique challenges and needs, as administrators we also share similar challenges with educational administrators across the country. One of the major issues continuing to challenge all of us is state-wide funding for education, thereby raising the question, “How do I finance technological integration along with all of the other financial necessities throughout my district?”

A good place to begin is by identifying dollars that can be freed up by utilizing alternate funding sources. For instance in Lansing, we proposed—and passed—a building and site sinking fund that would designate money to be used solely for the repair and renovation of our buildings. By establishing such a fund we can alleviate the burden of capital project and repairs from the general fund and any cost savings that are generated can put dollars back into the classroom where they belong.

Applying for public and privately funded grants is also a viable option when looking for alternative funding opportunities. Several grants exist that are designed purely to help schools integrate technology into their buildings and into their curriculums.

Facing the challenges before us, as members of MASA and as the leaders of our communities, we can move forward confidently knowing that we have the tools and strategies provided by emerging technology that allow us to empower our schools, staff and students to reach their full potential.

By Dr. T.C. Wallace Jr., Superintendent of the Lansing School District
President of MASA
n tough times, actively seeking community feedback is a powerful way to a budget that delivers the most value for the least cost. Residents are much more likely to support schools when they have a credible voice in assessing performance and decision-making.

However, superintendents and boards can be reluctant to take that step because they worry about getting a bad report card and not having the resources to do anything about it.

“If you collect the data, you have to do something with the data,” said Andy Shaw, superintendent of Pittsford Area Schools. “There is a big fear piece that causes hesitation,” he noted.

Many think of surveys and focus groups as a way to measure “satisfaction.” Few think about the rich ways community feedback can identify which district services are most important and which drive behaviors such as keeping children in the district and recommending it to others.

Cost is a frequent concern, but it should not keep school leaders from reviewing some innovative approaches in community engagement. Pittsford is just one example. “For us, the cost excuse is not a valid one because it is not that expensive, especially when you look at the benefits and some of the new approaches,” Shaw said.

Community feedback is powerful when making tough budget decisions, crafting strategic plans and developing community outreach.

**Engagement Options**

There are two basic approaches for gathering community feedback: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative research is often survey research. When conducted correctly, a quantitative study gives you statistics to measure performance, community perceptions and support for various efforts.

Surveys seem simple on the surface, but they can be expensive in time and dollars to develop and analyze. Writing questions that provide actionable information is an art. Collecting a scientific sample and generalizing it to the larger population is a science. Doing both on your own is a major investment, and outsourcing to a private sector provider is expensive.

Dr. Richard Syrek of the Saginaw ISD agrees that expense is an especially significant barrier. “And sometimes people are afraid of what the public will say about spending dollars on a survey,” he says. The Saginaw ISD has been considering a millage to offset special education costs. Early on, the superintendents wanted to understand statistically what voters in their school districts thought about it. They also wanted to understand broader perspectives of the districts and how best to communicate with them. They began working with a nonprofit research coalition to keep costs down, but still gather quality information on the issue. “Any time you can get additional information from the public on key issues — it is worth doing,” said Syrek. “The information you receive, you can’t beat it. You need it to be able to move toward the next step or choose to hold off. Without this kind of information, you are running blind.”

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**2010 Cobalt Citizen Engagement Index Results**

Each year, Cobalt Community Research and the CFI Group conduct a national study to assess citizen satisfaction with a range of community services and experiences. In 2010, more than 2,700 citizens responded, providing a series of standardized baseline benchmarks against which schools and local governments can measure themselves. Below are the findings for public schools:
In 2009, MASA began working with Cobalt Community Research to develop a high-quality, low cost survey program for Michigan superintendents. Cobalt is a Michigan-based nonprofit research coalition designed to help data-minded school leaders identify the drivers of family engagement and community satisfaction.

The survey program, called School Engagement and Priority Assessment, helps administrators benchmark perception with similarly sized schools across the state based on a current-year baseline index. It was developed with the active involvement of MASA along with superintendents, board members, teachers and parents across the state. The program uses the science behind the well-respected University of Michigan American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), so the quality of the data is very solid. Pittsford Area Schools participated in the program’s beta testing in 2009 along with Maple Valley Schools and Yale Public Schools.

Not only is the cost significantly lower than what is available outside the coalition, but the data help districts prioritize spending, make strategic cuts, and plan and strengthen communication. It also identifies why parents chose to keep their children in the district. And it can be customized to meet specific district needs.

“It was really helpful to have the ability to compare to schools of similar size,” said Shaw. “It reinforced what we thought were our strengths, and gave us the opportunity to engage and learn from similar schools. We also discovered that we needed clearer communication lines between schools and parents. We even improved our improvement team. This fall, we added a communications chair.”

Qualitative research can be anything from simple conversations on specific topics with parents, detailed interviews, focus groups and town-hall meetings. It provides a powerful way to explore community perception, gather out-of-the-box ideas, understand the emotional reaction to various issues, and find out how an issue has impacted the people living in your community.

Dr. Nancy Hipskind is the superintendent of Charlotte Public Schools, located southwest of Lansing. In May, voters defeated a millage extension to fund replacement of a failing 47-year-old heating system, replacement of outdated single-pane windows and improvement of student safety. Because the extension would not have raised tax rates, and because the projects made common sense, the loss by 88 votes was a surprise.

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“Clearly, we needed to better understand the issues out there and test the waters on how to present the bond,” Hipskind said. “We also wanted feedback on how the district was doing in the eyes of parents.”

The district conducted a short phone survey then asked Cobalt to conduct focus groups to explore perceptions of the district, perceptions of the bond and to strengthen district outreach. “The feedback helped us restructure the campaign on the bond. It also helped us make a greater effort to improve our communications and promote things that we’ve been doing well, but that we forgot to bring to the community’s attention.” In November, Charlotte went to the voters again, and this time their response was positive; the bond passed overwhelmingly.

There are several considerations when conducting qualitative research. The first is that such research is extremely persuasive. That’s a danger because a passionate story or well-articulated point made in a focus group or town-hall meeting can sway a room full of participants, so others echo the point. The problem is that as factual as such a point may be, it does not statistically represent the sentiment of the community overall.

The second consideration is size. The ideal focus group or workgroup has 6-12 participants. This provides each with enough time to share their thoughts over a 60-90 minute discussion. If there are too many participants, then many will remain quiet and share little insight. If there are too few, the group is easily led by one or two strong personalities. When recruiting for such groups, it is best to have 15 confirmed participants. With 15 confirmations, 6-12 show up. If engaging a larger group meeting, using a PowerPoint-based audience voting system can be helpful in drawing out less vocal participants.

The third consideration is the moderator. The moderator’s job is to ask open-ended questions, stir discussion, probe for greater insight, draw out quiet participants and temper vocal ones. The moderator should not be an employee of the district. Often they are viewed as an expert and participants will start to question them. Participants may also change their answers based on the employee’s presence. A moderator who is not an employee can use their ignorance of the district as a tool to keep the discussion centered on participants’ views.

Finally, it is best to have district leaders observe from a different room. If they are in the room, there is a terrible temptation to provide the “right” information when a parent is completely off base. Because the purpose of qualitative research is to discover perceptions, such involvement undermines the research. Similarly, district leaders in the room can cause participants to respond much differently than if the leader was watching elsewhere.

**Conclusion**

Knowing how citizens feel about their local school district gives school leaders a basis for making informed decisions. Local schools that engage families and the community overall have a more sophisticated understanding of community needs, priorities and expectations. Understanding these drivers of satisfaction helps to create goodwill, understanding, political cover and a map to help navigate difficult decisions – or discover unexpected opportunities.

“Just dive in and do something small,” said Shaw. “Give it a try.”

William Saintamour is executive director of the Cobalt Community Research nonprofit research coalition and research director of the Municipal Employees Retirement System of Michigan. You may learn more about Cobalt’s programs at www.CobaltCommunityResearch.org or by calling 877.888.0209.
“Leadership for the 21st Century will require unique talents and skill sets beyond the once traditional paradigm for schools,” Brian wrote in his application. “At the fundamental core, teaching and learning will transition from consumption of knowledge to production of knowledge… engaging students in addressing real-world problems, issues important to humanity, and questions that matter. Schools will transition from buildings to ‘nerve centers’ connecting teachers, students and the community to a growing depth of knowledge… In Holland Public Schools it is not about ‘business as usual,’ and we are working with our community to establish our schools as the leader in West Michigan for providing a diversified school system that leverages technology to prepare all learners to be globally competitive; equipped with 21st Century learning skills and academic mastery. The resources have been secured, the partnerships are forming, and the work is ready to begin.” Inspiring words from a leader to watch.

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Welcome to the Lexia Classroom.
Welcome to the News Business!

By Terry Abbot

The news business? I know you must be thinking, “We educate children. Why would we be in the news business?” School districts in Michigan and across America are staring down the barrel of a terrible economy and an awful budget crisis. But believe it or not, district leaders have an unprecedented opportunity to go into the news business for themselves and communicate with the public like never before about the successes and challenges of public school systems.

The dire economic situation affecting the news media business is also giving rise to innovative efforts by school districts to generate news media coverage and public “buzz” about their important work. The Detroit Free Press and the Detroit News, like most other newspapers around the country, are suffering from dramatic declines in readership as television and online news sources provide Americans more of their news and information. Reports in October 2010 showed, for example, the Free Press’s daily circulation was down 9 percent from a year ago, and the Detroit News’ circulation was down 12.4 percent. More than 200 newspapers across America, such as the Rocky Mountain News and the Tucson Citizen, have closed in the past two decades.

Designate a district storyteller
As newspapers lose circulation and revenue, their resources for covering the news decline. They generally have fewer reporters in the field, resulting in fewer stories produced about the good work of school districts.

That’s where school leaders need to step in and fill the void. District administrators, board members and supporters know more than anyone about the wonderful things happening in public schools every day. Newspapers, radio stations, television stations and other budget-crunching media need help in finding and reporting those stories. The time is now for school districts to have designated employees trained in how to find and tell great stories through both traditional media and other more non-traditional methods.

All over America, I am seeing school districts learn how to create spectacularly interesting stories about the work of administrators, board members and school officials. As administrative staff get trained on how to find and tell these stories effectively, they’re seeing the amount of news coverage about the district grow sharply, and public support of the schools grow in tandem.

I was press secretary of the Houston Independent School District, America’s seventh largest, under three superintendents. We waged an aggressive campaign to find and tell our own stories to the public, and over six years we generated more than 10,000 positive news stories about our district on television alone. Over that time, we also won public approval of three separate school construction bond issues totaling $2.5 billion.

New tools, new opportunities
Now, school districts can use social networking and their own phone messaging systems, in addition to traditional media, to drive information to the public and create news.

Thankfully, school districts have begun to lose their misplaced fear of giving district leaders access to social networking systems like Facebook and Twitter. More school leaders are establishing a presence on Facebook to connect with and push
Welcome to the News Business!

information to parents and community leaders. And the bolder superintendents around the country are starting to use Twitter to make important news and information announcements, grabbing lots of positive attention on the way.

A great untapped technological resource for school districts is their own automated phone notification systems. Most districts I work with have such an automated system for phoning parents about emergencies or attendance issues. Now we are working with school districts to make much more use of their phone messaging systems – to ramp up communication to parents about important district and school initiatives and also to turn those very important phone messages into news stories by releasing them in story form, along with the audio of the phone calls, to news media.

More districts are getting serious about public opinion research now as a key part of community engagement and communication. School districts are starting to survey employees and community members throughout the year and using the results of those surveys to help inform school district decisions. These new, high-tech surveys also have the effect of improving community engagement and public knowledge of the work of the district.

With these tools, districts are making news by really listening to the public and engaging the community at a deeper level than ever before.

Sure, the economy is awful and budgets are bleak. But the opportunities for strong communication with the media and the public have never been better. Welcome to the news business in 2011 — where you’re the editor and publisher.

Join Terry Abbott at MASA’s 2011 Midwinter Conference. He will be the featured presenter at Wednesday’s pre-conference and opening sessions. Learn more and register at www.gomasa.org.

Terry Abbott is the Chairman of Drive West Communications in Houston, Texas. Terry is a former chief of staff at the U.S. Department of Education, former deputy commissioner of the Social Security Administration, a past press secretary to the governor of Alabama, and former press secretary for the Houston Independent School District.
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Evaluate Employee Performance in STAGES
Michigan Partners Tap Technology Solution to Annual Performance Evaluation Challenge

By Dawn Zimmer

New school reform measures (SB 98 Section 1249/1250) have certainly gotten everyone's attention. School leaders will need innovative and efficient systems for maintaining and tracking the evaluation process in order to address this new challenge. A team of educators and technology specialists have developed a comprehensive on-line tool called STAGES (Supportive Tool for Assessing Growth in Educational Systems) which addresses the new requirements.

STAGES was developed by Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) after being awarded a five-year Title II Teacher Quality Grant by the U.S. Department of Education in 1999. SVSU wrote the grant to improve the process of teacher evaluations to enhance teacher performance.

STAGES is web-based and therefore easily accessible via the internet. It provides links between record keeping, information reporting, and strategy development. Using STAGES an administrator can access easy-to-read charts, review the status of department or district evaluations, request an employee self-evaluation, or conduct an on-site observation.

Saginaw Valley State University worked with Bay-Arenac ISD to develop STAGES. Bay-Arenac ISD has used STAGES software, combined with research-informed rubrics, for all staff evaluations for the past six years. If rubrics didn’t already exist for certain job categories, new rubrics were developed.

“How I appreciate about STAGES is that all administrators and department heads now have an electronic tool for evaluations which is specific to their employee groups,” said Dan Jonker, Superintendent of Allendale Public Schools. “STAGES stores all documentation of the process, and provides a way for both evaluator and evaluatee to review and dialogue regarding the evaluation.”

Regardless of a district’s staff evaluation process, STAGES can automate it for improved efficiency and contract compliance.

“I do think one of the biggest assets is the customization,” said Sandra Standel, Assistant Superintendent of L’Anse Creuse Public Schools. “Districts have enough to bargain without trying to adopt someone else’s tool. We were able to maintain everything about our current system, but with the automation of STAGES we are able to email automatic reminders and run reports regarding the status of our district’s evaluations. Tracking evaluations is now manageable!”

Automation can also build in safeguards. For example, administrators can ensure observations are the correct number of days apart. They can quickly and easily monitor all steps of the evaluation process and catch a potential problem before it’s too late. Based on timelines that each district establishes, automatic emails are generated if milestones are missed.

Classroom observations are documented directly into STAGES during the visit.

Continued on page 16
STAGES, Continued from page 15

There are options within each area of measurement to check boxes, select pull-downs and write comments to provide feedback for the evaluation process. While conducting personal meetings with the educator, administrators can recognize and reinforce outstanding behavior, provide direction for professional development opportunities, timely constructive feedback and coaching.

Meeting tomorrow’s needs while providing value

One clear advantage to using a flexible software solution like STAGES is the ability to modify the program to meet each district’s needs. Categories can be added or eliminated, the number of pull downs and boxes per section can be changed and the actual titles and descriptions can easily be modified. An area for self-evaluation is included along with an option to allow additional input from more than one evaluator.

Zimco is also working with Oscoda Area Schools to automate their InFORMED Data Results Rubric. The InFORMED Rubric significantly links local, state and national student achievement data to educator evaluations. Used together, STAGES and the InFORMED Data Results Rubric will fully meet the requirements of MCL 1249. We believe they will become recognized as “educational best practices.”

In addition, MASA is partnering with Zimco to develop a comprehensive process for administrator evaluations and overall district-wide governance. Despite continuous development, STAGES proves to be a cost-effective system to implement. Districts pay one-time licensing and implementation fees and a low cost annual per user fee.

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**MEMBER REGISTRATION**

**The Permanent Campaign: Media and community relations with Terry Abbott.** Includes luncheon with speaker Ron Koehler, Kent ISD. 8:30 a.m.  
**Transition Takes Time: A booster session for newer superintendents.** Includes networking lunch. 9:00 a.m.

**Conference Registration (1/26-1/28)**

- I will attend the MASA Fellowship Breakfast (1/27) + $25
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**Interest-Based Strategies — When the Bargaining Gets Tough**

By Marie Edlund

What is IBS? Interest Based Strategies or IBS is a process in which parties collaborate to find the best solution to their issue(s). IBS solutions are generally more gratifying for all involved, as the true needs and concerns of the parties will be met to some degree. It is a collaborative process and therefore the parties actually end up understanding and helping each other. This prevents on-going ill will after the negotiation concludes.

**Telling the STORY:** This is the first step in IBS, the what, the issue or problem to be solved — the story of the parties’ involvement with the issue; the history of what got the parties to this point.

**Identifying INTERESTS:** The next step in IBS is identifying each side’s interests. A key approach to determining interests is asking “Why?” The parties need to figure out why people feel the way they do, why they are asking for what they are asking. These questions are asked for the purpose of understanding interests (needs, hopes, fears or desires) better, not to challenge them or try to figure out how to beat them.

**Creating OPTIONS:** The parties then work together cooperatively to figure out the best ways to meet the identified interests. By “brainstorming” — listing all the options anyone can think of without criticizing or dismissing anything initially, parties can come up with creative new ideas for meeting interests and needs.

**Developing STRAW DESIGNS:** During this step, the parties analyze options against interests and create straw designs (draft solutions). The goal is to help each side meet as many of their interests (most of which are actually mutual or shared) as possible.

**Reaching CONSENSUS:** This is when the parties commit to a final straw design which becomes the Consensus Agreement or Tentative Agreement (TA).

**Defining the ACTION PLAN:** To ensure implementation of the consensus agreement, the parties together define who will do what and by when in a detailed Action Plan, e.g. final review of contract language, communication with constituencies, ratification process.

A number of negotiators, for both districts and unions, have expressed that IBS only works when there is plenty of money. However, those who have experienced the power of objective reasoning, rather than coercion, have come to the realization that IBS can be most effective when there are money problems. In addition, IBS facilitates constructive, positive on-going relationships.
How is a district approved to use IBS for bargaining?

The MECA IBS model begins with a request from the superintendent and local association president for an assessment. Two facilitators (one from management and one from union backgrounds) are assigned to conduct the assessment interviews and submit a recommendation to MECA. If the district is approved, two days are scheduled for training during which both the district and association teams are trained together in the IBS process. IBS sessions, which are facilitated by the assigned facilitators, are then scheduled.

Those interested in discussing the process may contact management facilitators, Marie Edlund (616-866-0860) or Char Wenham (269-925-6767). George Heitsch welcomes calls at 248-537-6002 to discuss IBS from a superintendent’s perspective.
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Last January, MASA introduced the 2010 Michigan Superintendent of the Year, David Campbell of Olivet Community Schools. On January 27, Campbell will address MASA members and welcome incoming 2011 Superintendent of the Year, Brian Davis, during the MASA Awards and Recognition Luncheon. We had a chance to talk with Campbell recently about education, leadership, and his experience as Michigan Superintendent of the Year.

MASA: How long have you been a superintendent?
David Campbell: This is my 11th year as a superintendent, and as an MASA member. I’ve been an educator for 23 years.

MASA: What is the best thing about being in educational leadership today?
DC: Leading educators is truly a worthy cause. It is our responsibility to provide each of our students with the best opportunity to fulfill their potential by providing them with skilled teachers/leaders who know how to pull the best out of them. It is especially challenging to do this in our current economic climate, but it is worth our efforts.

MASA: What innovations in education leadership do you think hold the most promise for our future?
DC: I think technology holds great promise for us in education. Technology allows us to quickly and accurately assess student progress. Formative assessments can help us target our instruction and the various technologies such as “clickers” can give us much more information about student progress than we had just a few years ago.

MASA: What do you feel are the major challenges facing superintendents today?
DC: We are at the fulcrum of pressure from school boards, employees, parents, and students to do more with fewer resources. The laws and structures that we operate under were designed during a far more prosperous era than Michigan currently enjoys. We have more responsibility than ever to ensure that each of our students master high levels of skill at a time when we have less authority and fewer resources to make it happen for them.

MASA: What relationships have influenced or helped your career?
DC: I value the deep relationships I have been able to develop with many of our teachers and administrators over the years while serving as a principal and superintendent. I have much respect for what they do every day for our students and admire their commitment to challenging students in a caring manner during a time when many forces are trying to cause them to lower their standards and care less.

MASA: What are your current next steps for developing employee evaluation systems of teaching/leading and for teaching/leading?
DC: Our next step is to sit down with a committee of educators through the negotiations process to sort through the law and make something of genuine worth to the students and staff of our school district.

MASA: What advice would you give superintendents who are new to this position?
DC: Know your values, as they will be tested. Principle-centered leadership will produce far better results in the long run for the district than political-centered decisions. By being kind and honest in all interactions, often the politics takes care of itself.

MASA: What do you do to keep yourself motivated and energized to lead?
DC: I seek out learning opportunities through MASA and other organizations committed to lifelong learning. I read a variety of material to keep myself balanced and tuned into the larger world. My family and other close relationships provide me with the support, energy, and courage I need to keep on keeping on.

MASA: Any final words?
DC: It has been an honor to represent MASA as Superintendent of the Year. I have always valued the relationships I have with MASA staff and have found them to be good people committed to helping us successfully lead our school districts through these turbulent times.
Get the $SAVE ON in Your District!

Contributed by the REMC Association of Michigan

Your local REMC provides the Statewide School Aggregated Volume for Education ($AVE) Bid Project as a service for schools in Michigan, to offer large volume bid prices on a variety of educational resources. As a result of this REMC Statewide Project, local schools in Michigan saved more than $39.7 million in 2009. Each tax dollar saved through this cooperative effort represents another dollar that is available for the classroom.

REMC is driven by savings and strongly advocates the advantages of aggregating sales volume statewide, thereby increasing schools’ purchasing power. The REMC Statewide $AVE Bid Project helps your district conserve staff time on bidding and research, offers many added values, including extended warranties, and realizes significant dollar savings. On average, districts using REMC $AVE contracts for $80.4 million, and $39.7 million in savings was achieved.

REMC makes it easy to $SAVE

The REMC $AVE web site includes a number of value adds to simplify your purchasing process. The web site includes product images and specification sheets for most products, and buying guides are available for product categories such as interactive classroom technology and multimedia projectors to help you compare products and make the best possible purchasing decision. Our selection cart feature allows you to select products and print or e-mail all of the information required for a requisition.

In the unlikely event that you should have difficulty with a product or vendor, your local REMC center staff is always ready to answer your questions. Visit http://remcbids.org to locate your local contact person.

The REMC Statewide $AVE Bid Project values feedback from schools. We offer a number of ways that you can tell us what you think of our pricing, products, and vendors. For example, on every product page, there is an “I found it cheaper” link where you can tell us if you found a REMC item at a better price. Other communication tools are available at http://remcbids.org under “Online Forms.”

$SAVE the date: February 10

On February 10, 2011, the REMC Statewide $AVE Bid Project will hold its first ever REMC Show Off. All Michigan educators are invited to attend this event, which will offer an opportunity to see demonstrations of REMC-awarded products. Reseller and manufacturer representatives will be available to answer product questions. This is a great opportunity to evaluate and compare awarded products to help make purchasing decisions. This event replaces the REMC Face Off, which had been held in November each year. The REMC Show Off will be held from 9 am to 3 pm at the Lansing Center in downtown Lansing, and lunch will be provided. We hope to see you and your staff in Lansing on February 10!

Learn more about the $AVE Bid Project at Visit http://remcbids.org, or contact $AVE program staff at remcbids@inghamis.org.

Steps to $SAVE with REMC

Since its inception, an average of more than 30% has been saved on services and supplies through the REMC Statewide $AVE Bid Project. Visit http://remcbids.org, then follow these four easy steps to $AVE:
1. Create an account
2. Log in
3. Add items to a cart
4. View, archive, print or email your cart

REMCSAVE Project Mission:

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Kingscott ............................................................... www.kingscott.com.................................. 20
Lexia Learning/CSC Learning . . . . . . . . . . . . . www.lexialearning.com................................. 11
Miller Canfield ...................................................... www.millercanfield.com/PublicLaw................. 13
Pearson Digital Learning ........................................ www.successmaker.com........................... Opp. TOC
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PlanMember Services ........................................... www.myretirementcompass.com...................... 9
Plante Moran ......................................................... www.plantemoran.com.................................. 14
SET SEG School Insurance Specialists .................... www.setseg.org........................................ Opp. IFC
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Skyward ............................................................... www.skyward.com........................................ 19
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Zimco, Inc. .......................................................... www.stagessoftware.com................................ 19

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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.

*These health and nutrition organizations support 3-A-Day of Dairy, a science-based nutrition education program encouraging Americans to consume the recommended three daily servings of nutrient-rich low-fat or fat-free milk and milk products to improve overall health.

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**REFERENCES:**

1. **NPD Nuts In Intake Database; 2 years ending Feb. 2009.**

*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.

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