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They say perception is reality, and certainly this is true for those who question the power and viability of public education today.

I can’t recall a time when cynicism was higher and public investment was lower in preparing young people to succeed. I’m saddened, yet energized to stop playing defense in the fight for Michigan’s next generation. That’s why MASA will continue to battle for adequate, reliable funding for schools and respect for the people who lead them.

We do this, in part, by changing people’s hearts and minds about the successes underway in public schools. But transforming our reputation will not be enough; it’s time we transform our work.

Today’s realities force us to look differently at how we “do school.” Fortunately, I meet many visionary leaders already tackling this challenge. And none are more impressive than the members and graduates of our Courageous Journey (CJ) certification endorsement program.

Our members’ stories in this issue encourage me to remain optimistic about the future of education. They point to leadership practices that will transform teaching and learning. They tell the stories of superintendents who are no longer playing defense against circumstances; rather they are identifying best practices, embracing accountability, and changing perceptions about public schools.

What might a visionary leader do better—or differently—to raise student achievement? For starters:

- Act on brain research that tells us early intervention is important
- Embrace the Graduation Challenge by the state superintendent. (Success stories in districts like Brandywine testify to the power of timely, targeted support.)
- Commit to getting all students college ready. (Don’t get hung up on others’ math. We know we can improve.)
- Embrace accountability. Sure, businessmen and others have less accountability than we do, but that argument won’t help anyone improve. But do accountability in a way that counts (see sidebar for tools that can help).

Historians say that poor rivets caused the downfall of the Titanic. When quality is poor, the ship will sink.

For a decade, schools have been forced to loosen and remove the rivets that hold schools together. Their façades may still look great, but their infrastructure is about to collapse. Too many Michigan districts are just one iceberg away from destruction.

MASA will not shrink back from sounding the alarm. You can help.

- Tell your story. Talk about specific cuts over time.
- Don’t complain; use data.
- Show the peril your young teachers and students face.
- Incorporate vision. Talk about opportunities lost.

Most of all, identify best practices and put them to work. Follow the example of the no-excuses, whatever-it-takes leaders described in this issue of the MASA Leader. Then share your story with us. We’ll be listening.

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**Educator Evaluation Toolkit Rolling Out Statewide**

The Education Alliance of Michigan, which includes MASA, MAISA and 15 other state associations, has published an extensive, comprehensive educator evaluation system to address districts’ needs for a more robust evaluation process. Online trainings will soon be available to assist districts in implementing this collaborative process of evaluation reform. In addition, key contacts in each Michigan ISD or RESA have been identified and trained to assist local districts and stay on top of legislative and policy changes. MASA also will collect models and contracts from districts who have completed—or made progress—toward a redesigned evaluation process that meets new state standards. These will be posted to a members-only access area of our online Performance Evaluation Resource Center. Visit [www.gomasa.org](http://www.gomasa.org) to review and download the Education Alliance Educator Evaluation Toolkit.

Since second grade I wanted to be an elementary teacher. In the summer I would force my nephews and any of their friends to attend “my school” on the side porch of our cottage in Walloon Lake Village. Every day, come rain or shine, we would pour over the workbooks from my previous school year so that I could turn those boys into human beings. Of course, there were snacks and drinks at the end of the lessons. Even then I knew rewards could be helpful too.

Starting college in 1971, special education was a “hot field” with the start of mandatory special education for students with disabilities. Reading through the college bulletin I discovered that I could get an elementary teaching certificate and a special education endorsement at the same time. I would like to say it was for a noble reason but in actuality I chose Teaching the Emotionally Disturbed (as it was called then) to avoid taking Chemistry or Physics. In the long run it was one of the best decisions I have made.

So…those decisions led to what I am doing today. My first classroom was in the Alpine Center, an institution for the mentally impaired in Gaylord. Autism was the disability. Not much information was available so the kids taught me how to work with them. Scary! Over the years I held different titles, but in all the positions I supported students and teachers and I reached forward for new ways and better methods.

Since being selected as Superintendent for COP-ESD in 2004, the world seems to have spun even faster. Think about the newest initiatives we are benefiting from—initiatives that have evolved from years of refinement and collaboration and are making a difference in our children’s achievement levels. Think of the technology we now have and how it aids us in our everyday work—and changes how we provide educational opportunities to children. Think of all we still have to learn and do.

My knowing what I wanted to do was not enough as a Superintendent. I found a wealth of information, mentors, and other support systems through MASA. So much, in fact, that it is hard to keep up with all the information at times! My local and regional superintendents got me involved in our MASA Region 2 meetings and Council. It was another best decision for me.

Once I went to Lansing for Council meetings I also got involved with MASB’s Superintendent Liaison meetings and then other committees. What a great learning experience and community.

Time moves quickly so I urge you to reach out to your MASA association and colleagues and GET INVOLVED!

Join us this year for Transformational Leadership: Building a Culture of Growth! I’m looking forward to making new acquaintances, reuniting with my friends, and just being with my fellow superintendents.

See you in Traverse City!

Mary Vratanina, MASA President and Superintendent of Cheboygan/Otsego/Presque Isle (COP) ESD
Make no mistake, society is changing. The question: “Is education keeping up or falling behind?”

We face unprecedented educational times in Michigan and meeting these challenges is not for the faint of heart. Today’s students are digitally connected and, for the most part, educators aren’t. What’s worse (queue elephant) is we know they live and learn digitally, yet we refuse to acknowledge it and continue to foster a teacher-centered learning environment.

I want to make something very clear: I LOVE GREAT TEACHERS. This is simply a call to action. It is a challenge to be better tomorrow than we are today. Let’s address the elephant in the room, and build a transparent plan to grow as a community of learners.

Digital citizenship is here to stay. Our students live an interactive, plugged-in life until they walk through our doors and we turn them off. I’ve used an analogy of an airline flight to illustrate how we educate today. In both cases we take our assigned seat. We are asked to turn off all electronic devices and pay attention while someone, teacher or flight attendant, talks at us. They tell us things that we either know or could learn elsewhere (e.g. the pamphlet in the seat back in front of us) or from someone around us—an outside expert or a classmate.

Either way we are turned off and forced to comply with a set of rules we would never agree to or work under in any other area. We eagerly wait to “reach a safe altitude” so we can turn ourselves back on. But, even airlines are keeping up with the information age and now provide wireless service to passengers who’ve complied with initial rules.

Schools can’t expect to exempt themselves from the digital innovations that are allowing companies to re-imagine themselves and compete locally, nationally and globally. We have played around the edges of educational change, trying hard to tweak the 20th century industrial model executed through an agrarian calendar.

Can we as educational leaders do better? Given the scale and scope of the transformation occurring around us—and its power and potential for student learning—we MUST do better. A learning revolution has taken place and we have missed the first act. We failed to acknowledge the elephant in the room.

If current trends continue, we can envision that teaching and learning will be more digital and mobile than it is now. It will be more self-directed, individualized, and personalized. It will be open and more accessible, allowing teachers and learners to interact 24/7.

We need school leaders who can envision the implications of these changes to teaching and learning. We need administrators who are willing to design new learning environments that reflect how new technologies can allow us to work. We need leaders who are brave enough to create a new paradigm instead of simply tweaking the status quo.

So now that I have framed this issue, do I have a solution? I do. One that on the surface is almost too easy.

I believe we need to take today’s buzzwords—words like transparency and accountability—and implement them for the right reasons. Used correctly, and not to condemn educators, they can change how we work and embrace the elephant in the room while we do the right things for our students, our colleagues and ourselves.

I believe we need to take today’s buzzwords—words like transparency and accountability—and implement them for the right reasons. Used correctly, and not to condemn educators, they can change how we work and embrace the elephant in the room while we do the right things for our students, our colleagues and ourselves.
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‘Elephant,’ Continued from page 8

I believe we need to take the today’s buzzwords—words like transparency and accountability—and implement them for the right reasons. Used correctly, and not to condemn educators, they can change how we work and embrace the elephant in the room while we do the right things for our students, our colleagues and ourselves.

Let’s start with transparency. I believe that we all have to open our doors and share what we are doing on a daily basis from the superintendent to building administrators to teachers in their classrooms. We need to identify our strengths and share the wealth of knowledge that resides in each of us so we all benefit from our collective intelligence.

I think we can all admit that too many of us continue to “do school” the way we always have. With increased levels of transparency we can build growth plans for everyone, focusing on specific measures to change how we teach and learn, embracing today’s technologies and allowing students to use the tools they are most comfortable with.

This type of transparency leads to the right kind of accountability—accountability to honor an improvement plan, built not in fear, but for life-long learning. This not only fosters individual and institutional growth, but also allows teachers to learn alongside their students. In this new model we can experiment and take risks because the focus is on growth, and we can’t grow unless we are willing to fail once in a while along the way.

As educational leaders we have a responsibility to be relevant and cognizant of the needs of children and education today and to prepare our teachers and students as best we can for tomorrow. Otherwise, what are we here for? Who’s going to prepare these teachers and students if we don’t? Do we have the courage to change? Or will we be left behind?

David Tebo is superintendent of Hamilton Public Schools and a member of the Courageous Journey, Cohort 5. Contact him at (269) 751-5148 or dtebo@hamiltonschools.us.
I was fortunate to be in the initial class for *Courageous Journey™*. I joined to meet some superintendents and to add more meaning when I attended our conferences twice a year.

Our classmates had some angst and a lot of fun as we worked our way through the program.

The capstone project was to deal with systemic change in our school district; I chose improving relationships and academic performance at our high schools in Eaton Rapids. The timing was perfect as we were changing our schedule to trimesters from semesters. We gathered information on grade point averages (GPAs), failure rates in core content areas, freshmen failures, attendance, and suspensions from our last year of classes with a semester schedule. But, it is important for you to know that my curiosity started our examination of our practices.

At first, we used a team of the principal, two assistant principals, our data guru (a retired math teacher), and me. Once we were comfortable with the quality of information, we started sharing results with both high school staffs, then expanded our data gathering.

In the alternative school, we changed curriculum and started paying attention to time on task. This time was a combination of school time in the building and work at home in online classes. Our staff began to focus on MME classes and improving abysmal graduation rates.

Our results, which I presented at the culmination of “the Journey” were impressive as to positive changes in behavior and to improved grades and pass rates. But, a funny thing happened as I finished the journey—or so I thought.

The environment for our high school students changed. Our staff had moved to where we made analysis of how we were doing a normal course of doing business. Now, we start the year reviewing the distribution of grades in each class. We look intentionally at our teaching and how students are learning. Using a model from another district, we hired an at-risk coordinator to deal with students whose grades are slipping during the term.

Based upon the academic performance of our freshmen, more than 25 percent of our teachers form a freshman academy on their own volition. This dedicated group of teachers focuses on improving success of our newest students. They have examined grading practices and the value of homework in positioning freshmen to have a solid high school career.

While other districts do this, we have set up our “homeroom” setting so teachers have the same group of kids for all four years. Teachers have established more of a counselor role with 25 students—checking grades, career aspirations, and reviewing schedules. Teachers can help guide students when they are facing challenges in and out of school.

What has been fun and fun to watch? We are looking at what is going on frequently and not waiting to see how the term ends. Teachers are looking at data without prompting. The exercise that I started through a *Courageous Journey* project now deeply influences our school improvement goals and the way we approach student success.

We never really want to complete the conversion from teaching to learning. There is always a new group of students and there is always a new discovery from the literature and research that allows us to reexamine where we have been. That is extremely fun to watch as we no longer talk about how students “don’t get,” but rather how they are going to get it!

*Courageous Journey* caused me to start that examination. As I had hoped, the journey continues.

William (Bill) DeFrance is superintendent of Eaton Rapids Public Schools and a graduate of *Courageous Journey* Cohort 1. Contact him at (517) 663-8155 or wdefrance@erpsk12.org.
History has provided numerous examples of “great leaders” who have generated a vision among the masses. Some of these leaders achieve their vision by motivating others to action through their positional power, commanding oratory ability, perceived capabilities or just through brute force.

Others of us could light ourselves on fire, enter a dimly lit room and still struggle to gain the attention of those in the room. Thankfully, for those of us who present ourselves in a more unassuming manner, motivating others to act on a truly shared vision can result from the leadership we exhibit and process we use.

**Leadership over charisma**

I can’t tell you what a relief it was to read about Level 5 leadership in Jim Collins’ book *Good to Great*. He describes leaders who have taken organizations from “good” to “great” through a combination of personal humility and professional will. It was a relief because although I may not possess the charisma to motivate others to action, I am confident that I can provide the quiet, calm determination of a Level 5 leader.

Creating and realizing a vision requires true leadership. The process calls for collaboration with boundaries. This type of leadership requires a leader strong enough to listen to others, wise enough to sift through differing views, and focused enough to ensure the process remains fixed on the vision. In short, this leadership shows we will listen and are willing to make the hard decisions for the good of the organization. We will make decisions based on best practice and that take into account all voices—not just the loudest, angriest or most disagreeable.

**Process over power**

If it is not our charisma that allows us to create and pursue a vision, then we must create a process that has the capability of identifying a shared vision and methods for achieving it.

One of the most deadly sins of a leader is to try to please everyone. The process I am suggesting does not start with the question “how can I please everyone?” rather “how can I ensure that everyone has been heard?” The goal is to help everyone feel they’ve been heard. This doesn’t obligate us to do what any one person advocates but it should obligate us to understand what they believe and why.

It is important to communicate clearly to assist all those participating in the process to understand their role. They should know exactly where they have control and where decisions have already been made. They should know how final decisions will be made and how information gathered will assist in influencing decisions. As a leader, I must help to remove “politics” and favoritism. I must be committed to do the right thing for the right reasons.

There are numerous situations where district leaders are called upon to facilitate a process of identifying a vision and a method of accomplishing it. I have found it necessary when hiring, considering new programs, and in most change initiatives. Important roles for both leaders and constituents to consider include:

**Leaders**

- Determine non-negotiables.
- Ensure everyone has a voice.
- Guide discussions to ensure best practice is applied to the entire process.
- Keep the process moving, focused and positive.

**Constituents**

- Identify the vision and principles on which to base decisions.
- Review research of best practice.
- Participate in lively, respectful discussions.
- Commit to support the process and what is best for students and the district.

District leaders must facilitate a process that engages constituents but that is focused and unapologetic in meeting student and district needs.

Sometimes I wish I was that leader who utters an idea and those around me jump on board and run with it. Many leaders are in a similar position; we have gifts and talents, we even may have some good ideas. But, what makes our ideas better and expands our thoughts to something usable is collaboration with others. When we balance collaboration,
clarity, boundaries and an unwavering commitment to do what is right, good things happen. Others better understand the issues. Respect for us as leaders is increased as we stand for what is right.

I may never be the life of the party or the center of attention. Thankfully that does not exclude me from providing what is needed to assist my district in identifying its vision and moving forward toward the accomplishment of its vision. What my school district needs from me is leadership; leadership that listens, works with others and in the end, does the right thing.

Michael J. Osborne, Ph.D., is superintendent of Morenci Area Schools and Hudson Area Schools. He is a member of Courageous Journey Cohort 5. Contact him at 517-438-7501 x203 (Morenci Office), 517-448-8912 x236 (Hudson Office) or mosborne@hudson.k12.mi.us.
We all know about Michigan’s leading role in the national recession. Since 2007, Oxford Community Schools has elected not to participate. Instead, we decided to leverage the recession to propel our school district toward becoming a model global school that prepares students to compete globally. Once we decided not to worry about that which was out of our control, our focus changed and true transformational thinking began.

In February of 2008, we conducted a four-day strategic planning session that included 85 community members and employees. We reached consensus that Oxford would set out on an ambitious journey to become the model global school district, not only in Michigan and in the United States, but also the world. Why? Because we felt the greatest challenge a school district faces is preparing its students to compete in a global world that is changing 24/7, not a lack of resources. We understand that finances are a temporary inconvenience. We also know that if we were to teach to the standard MEAP and MME tests, we would be dumbing down learning. In order to create and invent, we need to teach students how to problem solve across multiple disciplines, in unpredictable situations, and in areas in which they are unfamiliar. The truly employable workers in this global world are those who can create and invent.

Whenever you have a powerful vision, there are ALWAYS two things that will be true. One, you will never have enough money to make your vision a reality. Two, you will not have the capacity to deliver on your vision. So get over it. Money is not our biggest challenge.

During my first year as superintendent in Oxford, it was important to have a communication plan in place that kept staff and board members up to speed on the happenings in our district. Building their trust was vital to promoting a shared vision, gaining their confidence, and reinforcing that our plan was working.

The positive outcomes from creating a powerful vision, building trust, and having an effective communication plan have exceeded even our own expectations. We have experienced increased enrollment annually as well as grown our fund balance to an all-time high. These things happened because we were willing to take the risk of “ReImagining” and “Reinvesting” in the education that would prepare our students for the global world. We also removed economic barriers for students to participate fully in the opportunities we offer.

The keys to our success in having all of these initiatives come to fruition is starting with a powerful vision, leveraging existing resources more effectively, and being laser-like and intentional with existing resources, talents and capacity. Our success would not have been possible without first
developing trust and following an effective communication plan to keep everyone moving in the same direction.

How is it that Oxford knew what to do to keep out of the current recession? We paid close attention to the leading indicators of change and then made curriculum, program and instructional adjustments that best position students to become successful entrepreneurs and competitors in the global market. At the heart of our transformational process is the belief that everything matters, and that you need to understand the times to know what to do.

You can read examples of the reinvestments made by Oxford Community Schools at www.gomasa.org (choose Communications/Leader Magazine from the drop-down menu for bonus content).

William Skilling is superintendent of Oxford Community Schools and a graduate of Courageous Journey Cohort 1.

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Remember the disaster in Haiti. At that time how many of us wished we could do something? Well, Elizabeth McVean of Memphis, Tenn. did too. Only she did something about it—she raised $11,000 to help relieve hunger and misery in that island country. And Elizabeth was only 8 years old at the time, in the second grade!

The bottom line is that you don’t have to be a Churchill, a Washington, a Lincoln, a Gandhi, a Reagan or a Martin Luther King, Jr. to help to make the world a better place for us and for our children.

In school, children learn about these great leaders and others who have changed the world. But children don’t learn directly how they can do great things in their corner of the world. Instead, most of us grow up believing that the world can only be transformed for the better by a small handful of leaders.

This belief can serve as a barrier for any of us who have ever dreamt about becoming leaders. The result: an ocean sets us apart from even dreaming that we can do great things.

Yet, you can change the world and make it a better place by donning the mantle of transformational leadership.

**Transformational leadership starts with vision**

Leadership starts with someone who feels passionately about something that does not work the way it is supposed to work or something that is just plain wrong, so much so that you are willing to do almost anything to right the wrong or fix the problem.

If you have that passion, you are ready to take the next steps.

Ironically, we have known for more than 100 years how to get started, but hardly anyone applies this knowledge to leadership. Napoleon Hill, through interviews with hundreds of the most successful businessmen in the country, discovered that nearly all had visualized their successes long before they achieved them.

Some years ago working with great pro golfers like Gary Player, I found that most pro athletes use visualization to play a perfect game in their minds’ eyes the night before each tournament round.

More recently I discovered that the same neuroscience principles that drive passion and vision are the source of all entrepreneurial and athletic successes and are foundational for developing leaders.

**Apply winning principals to the work of school leaders**

If you already have the passion, the next step is to create a detailed picture of the future you want to bring about. What is different about this picture from how it looks like today? How do you see the picture changing in the future so that the situation is greatly improved?

Paint a picture of the future that you see five years from now. See it in your mind’s eye. Let it come into clear focus.
Now write your vision down. Bring it to life. Describe it using all of your senses.

Now that you can see and record the vision, you need to gather a team of people—coworkers or colleagues, perhaps—who share your passion and your vision. Hill taught us to activate this group, which he called your “Mastermind.” You might think of your Mastermind as an informal board of directors.

Bring them together. Share your passion and tell them about your vision and why it is important. Paint the picture for them. See if they feel the same way that you do. If they don’t buy into your passion for change, then you need to find another group of people.

Once you have found your Mastermind, ask them what needs to be done to make your vision happen. Brainstorm. Make a list. Use a blackboard, whiteboard, or flip chart. Write down every idea. At this stage the primary goal is to generate ideas.

Continue the process until everyone has contributed multiple ideas and there are no additional ideas forthcoming.

Now, switch your focus to what needs to be done first to build the foundation for the future. Do any steps need to be accomplished before others can begin? In other words, are there any ideas or steps that are foundational, without which nothing else can happen? If so, break out these foundational ideas and rank them in order of their importance.

Now move on to the rest of the ideas. Again rank them according to their importance. Once you finish prioritizing the ideas on the list, you will be so close to bringing your vision to life that you will be able to taste the future.

Go ahead and jump in! Match your people to the tasks on your list. What do you have to lose?

Don’t miss the opportunity to realize your vision. Instead, imagine the feeling of fulfillment that comes when you know your vision is on its way to becoming a reality.

Dr. Charles T. Kenny, Ph.D., is president of The Right Brain People®, and will be the keynote presenter at the MASA Fall Conference September 21-23, 2011. Register today at www.gomasa.org. Contact him at 901-682-8569 or at www.rightbrainpeople.com.
I believe we all can agree that we are well into the 21st Century; yet many of our practices continue to take on the form and function of former years. We know all learners are not alike, and a one-size-fits-all industrialized model simply will not produce the results that are needed to be successful in our changing global landscape.

Student-centric learning with modularization and customization must be used to equip the developing minds of the digital natives who are now entering our classrooms. Flexible learning spaces that adapt within minutes for students to engage in project-based teams to encourage collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and production will be necessary. New cultures of learning that embrace the integration of technology for students and adults will be essential. Our schools need to become nerve centers that connect our learners to the broader learning community that surrounds us.

Why then, do we continue to plan for and build learning centers that are based upon the models of the past vs. models for the future? A number of variables can contribute to this, but I mostly believe it is related to fear—fear of change, fear of the unknown, fear of learning in new ways, fear of not having enough resources and fear of gaining community support of those educated in different times.

We can not and must not let fear deter us from a vision for a system that will provide the critical skills required of our graduates to be successful in an increasingly international marketplace. Why then, do we continue to plan for and build learning centers that are based upon the models of the past vs. models for the future? A number of variables can contribute to this, but I mostly believe it is related to fear—fear of change, fear of the unknown, fear of learning in new ways, fear of not having enough resources and fear of gaining community support of those educated in different times.

We can not and must not let fear deter us from a vision for a system that will provide the critical skills required of our graduates to be successful in an increasingly international marketplace.

Build 21 shapes the future

Designing, renovating and constructing efficient, flexible, relevant and effective 21st Century Learning environments is exhausting work—but very exciting as well—as we shape the future of learning for every child enrolled in our district’s programs.

The work began over four years ago with an assessment of our school facilities. Not only did we take a look at the physical needs of our buildings but we also questioned what learning environments of the future must look like. A comprehensive review of our student performance data, student demographics and instructional programs clearly shaped the need to engage learners differently in the classroom.

A compelling vision began taking shape that could be taken to the community for their support of ALL children being successful. This vision was shared with anyone who would listen and the community responded in a resounding YES! With the resources secured, a new accountability structure from the community was in place to keep our vision high.

Identifying potential architects and construction management teams was a very important task, as well as finding leadership that would support the vision that we had laid out and was supported by our community.
Working with our instructional staff and students we began to define the details of learning environments for the future. Global corporations like Apple, Steelcase, Haworth and Herman Miller all helped to shape our thinking about what learning environments could look like while national networks like Knowledge Works, New Tech Foundation, and the Successful Practices Network helped to challenge our thinking about instruction. The research of Tony Wagner, Richard DuFour, Alan November, Douglas Reeves and others all contributed to us rethinking how our students learn.

Vision is critical to success
This combination of thinking from a variety of stakeholders has contributed to our vision of the future. Most importantly, as I was an active participant in this process, it shaped my vision for the future as well.

Vision is a critical component for success in the 21st Century landscape. As leaders, we must all have this vision in place as there are, and will continue to be, external distracters at every part of the process to challenge, question and attempt to take us away from our goal. There must be someone in the organization who holds the vision and holds the power to say we won’t back up, we aren’t going to get scared, we will not let anything distract us and we will make a different for our students.

To follow the Build 21 Progress in Holland Public Schools, visit www.hollandpublicschools.org

Brian W. Davis is superintendent of Holland Public Schools and is the 2011 Michigan Superintendent of the Year. Davis will be presenting an MASA Fall Conference workshop entitled, “The 21st Century Classroom—Designing an Infrastructure to Empower 21st Century Learning.”
I sat speaking to a room full of politicians at a congressional hearing in Washington, D.C. on May 27, 1999. One month earlier, my daughter, Rachel Scott, was the first of 13 innocent victims to be brutally murdered in the worst high school shooting in America’s history.

I finished my speech that day with a statement that has become a reality through the lives of millions of students and educators across America and around the world: “My daughter’s death will not be in vain, the young people of this nation will not allow that to happen.”

At the time I did not have any idea that the speech I was giving would become one of the most published speeches in Internet history. Nor did I know how that statement would unfold. But I did have a goal and a vision to see that a climate and culture change would take place in America’s schools.

Looking back, 12 years later, I have a sense of fulfillment in knowing that over 15,000,000 people have been impacted directly by Rachel’s story. Today, Rachel’s Challenge, a school program designed around her life and diaries, continues to prevent suicides and decrease bullying in schools around the world, reaching over 3 million students and teachers every year.

Over the last 18 months, more than 250 students have emailed our office telling us that they were planning to commit suicide until they heard Rachel’s story. Here is just one from Michigan:

“I come from Africa. People always make fun of my accent and words that I don’t pronounce right. They even make fun of my name! When you came to my school, people started treating me nice. You saved my life from committing suicide. Thank you Rachel!”

The ability to envision, coupled with emotional belief, makes all things possible. Walt Disney, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thomas Edison are proof of that statement.

Our educational system was founded by visionaries with a passion to fully prepare students to face all of life’s challenges. The philosophy of education for over 150 years in America was summed up in three words: The HEART, the HEAD, and the HANDS.

We were number one in academic achievement during those years because the focus was on the person, not performance. Noah Webster’s third-grade spelling book featured words like, “bronchotomy,” “contumelious,” and “oleaginous.” Compare that to words like, “grass,” “well,” and “fox” found in spellers today.

Unfortunately, the philosophy changed from the Three Hs to the Three Rs and instead of the focus being on the person, it shifted to the process. During this era, we still maintained a decent level of academic achievement.

Now, the Three Rs have become the A.S.S: Academics and S.A.T Scores, and the focus has gone from person to process to performance! As a result, we are facing a multitude of problems in the educational system from slipping academic achievement to major budget cuts.

However, all is not lost! Crisis always brings with it opportunity. Educators with a passion and vision for change will see their goals accomplished!

My daughter, Rachel, wrote an essay a month before she died. In it she said, “I have this theory, that if one person will go out of their way to show compassion, it will start a chain reaction of the same. People will never know how far a little kindness can go.”

We are seeing academics rise, bullying decrease, relationships strengthened, and kindness expressed through a simple message from beyond the grave. Rachel’s Challenge has nine different programs for K-12 that not only bring a climate change, but also penetrate the entire school for permanent culture change.

The pendulum is swinging back toward an emphasis on the person. Social and emotional training is finding its way back into the classrooms through Rachel’s Challenge and many other wonderful programs.

The young people of this nation have not allowed my daughter’s death to be in vain!

Darrell Scott is founder and president of Rachel’s Challenge. Join Darrell for his Fall Conference keynote address on Friday, September 23. You’ll hear the powerful story of his work with schools to create an atmosphere of acceptance and awareness, avoid clouded learning environments, and eradicate bullying, teasing and gossiping.
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# Attendee Information

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- My spouse/partner plans to attend  
- If yes, spouse/partner name

## Member Registration

- [ ] New Supts Preconference $225  
  (full price if not attending Main Conference, includes 2009-2010 Superintendent’s Briefing Book, a $96.00 value)
- [ ] Main Conference Registration $275
- [ ] New Supts Preconference $165  
  (discounted price in conjunction with Fall Conference)
- [ ] Courageous Journey, Cohort 4
- [ ] Courageous Journey, Cohort 5
- [ ] Courageous Journey, Cohort 6

**Grand Total**

## Business / Retiree Registration

- [ ] Business Affiliate (non-sponsor) $275
- [ ] Business Sponsor (primary contact) $0
- [ ] Sponsor additional attendee $100
- [ ] Retiree / Vendor $80  
  (if you are representing a company and want it to appear on your name badge)
- [ ] Retiree $0

**Grand Total**

Exhibitors must use the Exhibit Registration Form found at www.gomasa.org

## Spouse/partner Activity:

Family and friends of participant are encouraged to take part in activity scheduled for your enjoyment during the conference (Thursday)

## Fun Run:

- [ ] 5K  
  Predicted Time: ______________________
- [ ] 1 mile  
  T-shirt size: ______________________

**NOTE:** Meals/registration are not refundable after Sep 14, 2011.  
A $25 billing fee will be charged if not paid in full by Sep 23, 2011.  
A $25 fee will be charged for cancellations

**TO COMPLETE YOUR REGISTRATION:** Print and fax completed form to (517) 327-0779

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**Payment**

- Check payable to:  
  MASA  
  1001 Centennial Way  
  Suite 300  
  Lansing, MI 48917
- Credit Card  
  [ ] Visa  
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Innovation has emerged as one of the most popular buzz words in PK-20 education today, rivaling accountability in terms of capturing the attention of policymakers (Lefkowits & Martinez, 2010).

Michigan has numerous initiatives focused on creating or transforming schools and systems into 21st century learning environments, such as:

- MI-Excel—statewide system of support for schools struggling to meet academic achievement goals
- MEMCA—Michigan Early Middle College Association
- New Tech Network—school development model that focuses on culture creation for technology infused, project-based, relevant and engaging instructional model (see related article on page 30)
- EdWorks implementation sites
- Ford Partnership for Advanced Studies model sites

There has also been a large growth in the number of International Baccalaureate programs in the state, mainly at the secondary level (Okma, 2011).

While this list is not meant to be exhaustive of the systemic innovation in our state, it signals the level of interest and local need to think differently about our school systems, especially at the secondary level.

Networks in other states have been critical in developing and scaling 21st century learning environments. Networks, including public/private partnerships, are forming in Michigan. Some of the discussions center on a plan for transforming Michigan’s system of secondary education.

The Board of Directors of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators is working with the Intermediate Michigan Department of Education and other partners to design and support networks that:

- **Collaborate with LEAs** to implement comprehensive assessments, diagnostics, technical assistance, and professional development.
- **Nurture, refine, and implement world class teaching and learning** at the campus level by:
  - Coaching for organizational and instructional effectiveness
  - Fostering leadership development for principals and teacher leaders
  - Providing professional development for teachers steeped in the latest standards, assessments, and teaching strategies proven effective with low-income, low-performing students
  - Developing communities of practice where teachers and leaders help their colleagues move forward faster.
- **Implement clear and consistent knowledge management practices at both the state and local level.** Networks of schools, working together, will develop consistent benchmarks, metrics, and data-capture templates for all schools, use consistent formative assessments, and build and disseminate a battery of lessons learned and best practices.

  - **Create and extend community supports inside and outside the school walls.** Organizations such as the Michigan College Access Network will engage the broader community to leverage and align resources along the educational continuum in support of student success and sustained school improvement.
  - **Support emerging innovations through partnerships** with Early College Networks, STEM focused organizations, and New Tech Network and EdWorks schools. MAISA is working with partners to establish and manage start up funding to promote emerging and developing innovations in turnaround settings.
  - **Work with Michigan philanthropies** to create a Michigan Innovation Fund to supplement and sustain the growth of emerging innovations and technologies to support a 21st century learning system in Michigan.
  - **Leverage best practices** and lessons learned to create a robust learning network:
    - **Learning Zones**—Geographic proximity is an important lever in transferring innovation to a broader

*Continued on page 24*
group of educators. The creation of Learning Zones around each innovative school—such as Early College, STEM or New Tech—would focus attention of nearby schools and school districts on the school of innovation. By design, these schools of innovation would be the laboratories for the other schools in the Learning Zones.

- **Learning Exchanges**—Each Learning Zone would share “Learning Exchanges” which are planned, purposeful interactions that demonstrate innovative practices and provide the opportunity for teachers and administrators to brainstorm solutions for their own classroom and operational challenges with colleagues at the hub school and from across the regional learning zone. The exchanges will build in-person and online professional learning communities that span the region.

William Miller, Ph.D., is Executive Director for the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators and Associate Director for the Michigan Association of School Administrators. Contact him at wmiller@gomasa.org or 517.327.9260.

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Blended Learning: The Wave of The Future

By Anupam Chugh (REMC 20), Toula Jacobson (REMC 16) and Anne Thorp, PhD (REMC 7)

Editor’s note: This is the first in a series of three articles by the REMC Association of Michigan exploring blended learning.

Blended learning, combining the best elements of online and face-to-face education, is likely to emerge as the predominant teaching model of the future.” – Education Week Nov. 10, 2010

According to “The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning” report, blended learning is defined as “any time a student learns at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace.”

Students participate in a social, collaborative learning environment with others; however, they also get content flexibility, which is generally delivered through an online medium. They are engaged in a flexible learning environment that meets learning needs through audio, visual, and textual multimedia elements. Instructional strategies are implemented to personalize and meet the specific learning needs of diverse groups of learners. Through blended learning, digital materials are readily accessible and can be viewed as needed, repeatedly, if necessary. The success of the blended learning environment is dependent upon an effective classroom teacher who is still in charge of planning and implementing learning opportunities.

Blended learning builds skills for the future

21st century skills that students can learn through engaging and collaborative experiences in a blended learning environment include:

- time management
- collaboration
- digital communication
- self-directed learning
- global awareness
- lifelong learning strategies
- critical thinking
- problem solving skills

Obtaining these skills may lead to greater self-assurance as students move through their education and into the world of work.

First steps

Typically, the progression of blended instruction starts out in the traditional classroom setting with the teacher supplementing classroom instruction online using a learning management system, wiki, website, or a combination of online tools. This basic level of blended instruction allows teachers to explore online elements that may lead to improved student engagement, learning, and recall while still maintaining their daily classroom routines.

Moving forward

This basic level of implementation often progresses to a model of blended learning that has been recently introduced as ‘flipped instruction’ through which course lectures are available online using videos, interactive sites, audio supports, and other multimedia. Through this mid-level implementation, assignments and project work are done in the classroom rather than at home where the teacher guides and assists students through the coursework.

Students work independently on course content while their highly qualified teacher assists them and enhances the online instruction, providing more opportunities for them to work with students that benefit from personalized instruction. This model encourages students to work at their own pace, allowing them the opportunity to master content, and move forward according to their own learning needs.

Full-scale blended learning

Schools may then move into using the blended learning approach where students attend class 2-3 days a week while the other 2-3 days are spent online learning at their own pace through course elements designed by the teacher, to meet course goals.

Implementing blended instruction can help to ensure success for many types of students due to the anytime, anywhere, any pace delivery and access of content using multiple means of representation. Blended learning allows for differentiation of instruction in and out of the classroom allowing for customization of content and delivery specific to student learning needs, which in turn is a winning situation for teachers and students.


By Anupam Chugh (REMC 20), Toula Jacobson (REMC 16) and Anne Thorp, PhD (REMC 7)

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“The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning”

http://www.innosightinstitute.org/mediaroom/publications/education-publications/the-rise-of-k-12-blended-learning/

Next issue: Implementation of Blended Learning

The authors have extensive backgrounds in instructional technology and work extensively with their constituent districts as they move forward with online and blended learning in the classroom. Contact them to learn more: Anne Thorp, Ph.D., REMC 7, athorp@oaisd.org; Toula Jacobson, REMC 16, tjacobso@washi.k12.mi.us; Anupam Chugh, REMC 20, chugha@jrca.net
The term “21st century learning” is used frequently to represent the current approach to educational reform. The term generally describes education that is among many things learner-centered, inquiry-based, technology-rich, interdisciplinary, collaborative, and personalized. The world into which students will enter is a technology-driven global playing field and it is highly competitive.

What needs to change?
If schools are to keep pace with exponential change that characterizes today’s world, neither classrooms – nor the learning that takes place therein – can remain static. What transformations are critical? These include the national movement to Common Core State Standards, national and state policies aimed at infusing technology and global learning experiences, and disruptive innovation pushing us to online and blended learning environments.

The curriculum—In order to assure students are prepared for the world they encounter upon graduation, significant curriculum changes are necessary – as evidenced by the Common Core State Standards. The adoption of the Common Core is not about adding to what is currently being taught, but rather about approaching instruction differently. Students must be prepared to gather, understand, evaluate and synthesize information; conduct original research in order to answer questions or solve problems; and analyze and create text.

The learning environment—Accomplishing the Common Core and preparing students for success in the 21st century also requires a shift in the learning environment to one that fosters student experimentation, exploration and peer interaction. Offering students choice and autonomy in learning within an environment that meets individual students’ needs must be a priority.

Teachers in a collaborative learning culture must be willing to be learners as well as guides of the learning. Rather than a single classroom serving as the individual organizing unit, a learning community extends to involve 4-6 teachers and 100-150 students. Beyond the physical layout, students and teachers in a learning community work together to enhance and amplify each other’s learning.

It is possible for this type of learning to occur in existing buildings, but at some point 20th century design gets in the way. The architecture eventually impacts a learning community’s organization. Yet, existing buildings can be transformed with creative solutions that are shaped by a vision for the future of learning.

A blended option: Integrating bricks and mortar with online
In their book, Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns, Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2008) assert that online and blended learning are creating disruptive innovation that will impact Michigan and the nation.

Stacker chronicles 40 schools that have successfully blended bricks and mortar with online learning in The Rise of K-12 Blended Learning: Profiles of Emerging Models (2011). Beyond reform, “Online learning has the potential to be a disruptive force that will transform the factory-like, monolithic structure that has dominated America’s schools into
a new model that is **student-centric**, highly **personalized** for each learner, and more **productive**” (Stacker, 2011, p. 3).

At St. Clair County RESA, a multidisciplinary team created a blended learning continuum depicting the instructional transformation that occurs when schools move from traditional, face-to-face classroom instruction in a bricks-and-mortar environment to a blended learning classroom that is accessible 24/7/365 (see illustration).

In Stage 1 of the continuum, a teacher serves as the main disseminator of knowledge. Students primarily sit in straight rows, often passively absorbing the information conveyed. Three stages from this is the blended learning environment wherein the teacher serves as lead learner and mentor for students who are actively engaged in learning, both face-to-face and online. Students use Web 2.0 tools and technology to research, design, create and demonstrate their understanding.

**Navigating a world of change**

Schools won’t get “there” using the same instructional methodologies that permeated classrooms in the past. New models of learning, driven by disruptive innovation, result in shifts from face-to-face instruction as the primary delivery method, toward blended models where teachers and students engage in learning in the “nearly now” (Heppell, 2008). The role of the superintendent as a leader in this transformation is critical. The superintendent must be a framer of the vision for the district, as well as a leader in progress toward the vision. A skill set that equips the superintendent to be a savvy manager of change is also critical.

**Risk-Taking**—To take schools as far as they need to go, superintendents must be willing to lead at the edge of possibilities. Schools – and more importantly, the students they serve – can’t wait for others to test the ideas. Superintendents have to take bold steps to expect change in practice, and measurement of what works. To innovate and assure students are learning to their potential, superintendents must know what is available in terms of tools and the targets. Few are out front leading.

**Embracing Learning**—The challenge for superintendents: Leading schools that don’t just tinker around the edges with change, but rather create the kind of wholesale change necessary to propel 21st century learning. No one tool or platform will provide “the answer” or the “best” way to move forward.

Savvy superintendents see themselves as lead learners, extending their reach to include a network of experts beyond education. Seize the opportunity to engage with business leaders. Connect with school facility designers. Tap into PLNs (Professional Learning Networks) that exist online through LinkedIn, MACUL, CoSN (Consortium of School Networks), ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education). Work to involve all decision makers in the discussions about learning. Learn together about the future landscape and create the conditions to make it happen for students.

Joanne Hopper, Ed.D. is the Director of Education Services at St. Clair County RESA. She can be reached at hopper.joanne@sccresa.org.

James Seaman, AIA, REFP, LEED AP is a Senior Designer at Fielding Nair International. Contact him at james@fieldingnair.com.
Ana Pitchin wasn’t shy, but she definitely didn’t consider herself to be a great communicator last spring, when she started participating in LdOut³, a youth-leadership program coordinated by Hope College’s Center for Faithful Leadership. “I assumed I was just a normal group member,” she says. (After all, she was only 13.)

Pitchin and 14 others from the seventh grade at Harbor Lights Middle School in Holland, Michigan, underwent a five-week course that involved interactive sessions on trust, vulnerability, conflict, listening, and accountability. Soon they were volunteering at a senior home. Pitchin quickly discovered the importance of working as a team and valuing other people’s opinions. She also learned that conflict is natural in relationships, but bad conflict must be resolved. Now in the eighth grade, she finds communication with family and peers much easier and enjoys taking on leadership roles.

Pitchin quickly discovered the importance of working as a team and valuing other people’s opinions. She also learned that conflict is natural in relationships, but bad conflict must be resolved. Now in the eighth grade, she finds communication with family and peers much easier and enjoys taking on leadership roles. “Putting my trust in others, I can be a good leader,” she says. “Collaboration is important. If we can create leaders who can work together, in the end we’ll have a much better world.”

Short for “Lead Out,” LdOut³ gets Hope undergrads together with high school juniors and seventh-graders to create and implement a service project to meet a need within a church or community. seventh graders finish the planning and put the project into action. The idea is that participants will learn more about leadership—and see themselves as leaders—if they’re actually placed in leadership roles. “It’s a really fulfilling experience,” says Hope senior Reed Swift, a former LdOut³ project director who is currently thinking about going on to law school. “The neatest impact is when we start to talk about the service project, and the kids start to talk about the needs in the community. A lot of these kids just need someone to believe in them.” “The shared mission draws them together into a team,” says LdOut³’s founder, Virgil Gulker, who teaches social entrepreneurship at Hope. “Role modeling is going along. It’s ‘I want to be like them and I don’t want to disappoint them.’ The eleventh graders want to be college students; the seventh graders want to be eleventh graders.”

After the success of a pilot program in a school setting in fall 2009 and another pilot in a church setting in spring 2010, LdOut³ expanded this past fall. It is presently offered at four sites in Western Michigan—Grant High School and Middle School, Fellowship Reformed Church in Holland, Fellowship Reformed Church in Hudsonville, and St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church in Holland.

The group from Grant got an added activity on February 19 when five parents and 26 students took a bus to Hope, where they got a campus tour and participated in a discussion about the importance of higher education. Then they watched a girls’ basketball game against Albion College at DeVos Fieldhouse. At halftime, Hope president James Bultman called the youngsters onto the court to present them with certificates of honor.
“Many of these students had never been on a college campus,” Gulker says. “We hope that many of them will believe that they can go to college.”

The city of Grant was chosen for the program because it lies in Newaygo County, which has the lowest college graduation rate of all counties in Michigan, and there are rising tensions in the public schools between Latino children of migrant workers and the rest of the population. Plus, Gulker says, the program got financial support from the Fremont Area Community Foundation and tremendous coordination help from Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency superintendent Lori Tubbergen Clark.

All signs point to the fact that Gulker can expect more financial and in-kind support in the future. He just received a request to start a LdOut3 program at a church in Knoxville, Tennessee. More churches, more schools, more impact.

“We’re hoping to offer LdOut3 in other schools as well,” he said. “We’re also thinking of making LdOut3 available to other Christian colleges around the country.”

Virgil Gulker was formerly with MASA partner, KidsHope U.S.A. Rob MacKay is a freelance writer in Queens, New York. This article appeared in the spring 2011 RCA Today. Used with permission
Michigan’s New Tech High Schools Spark Innovation

By Holly Heaviland, Washtenaw ISD

Michigan’s New Technology High School Network demonstrates the impact of education transformation when communities, schools and higher education institutions partner together.

Wayne RESA and Washtenaw ISD personnel introduced New Tech to Michigan in 2009 as a potential method to improve academic achievement and economic development. The vision of students being highly skilled in academics, critical thinking, project management, communication and technology appealed so strongly to Michigan’s school and community leaders that the state’s first six New Techs were scheduled to open in the Fall of 2010:

- River Rouge New Tech High International Academy, River Rouge School District
- Westwood High School, Westwood Community Schools
- Ypsi New Tech @ Artis, Ypsilanti Public Schools
- Holland New Tech, Holland Public Schools
- Pinckney New Tech, Pinckney Community Schools
- Westwood High School (NICE), N.I.C.E. Community School District

Additional New Tech Highs are scheduled to open in 2011 in the following communities: Kent County, Niles, Pontiac, Willow Run, and Van Buren/Belleville.

New Tech is a truly inspired approach to education, engaging students across Michigan who are excited about learning. It has inspired educators who are transforming the way they teach to ensure every student graduates with 21st-century skills. It has inspired communities and businesses who are working together and finding resources to support this educational innovation.

Michigan’s New Technology High School Network

The Michigan New Technology High School Network assists with the development and cultivation of the New Tech model in Michigan. The network brings schools together to provide support, address common issues and work toward collective goals. Members participate in school study tours and receive assistance with funding and problem-solving. Network membership includes schools, community and business partners, higher education institutions and policy-makers involved with New Tech in Michigan.

Holly Heaviland is Director of Achievement Initiatives at Washtenaw Intermediate School District. Contact her at 734-994-8100 ext. 1250 or hheavila@wash.k12.mi.us.

Network Fundamentals

**Coordination**

**School Tours**
Members tour the flagship New Tech schools across the nation.

**Professional Development**
Educators participate in conferences, informational meetings and collaborate online.

**Collaborating**

**Uniting Schools**
Schools support one another through idea, information and resource sharing.

**Community Asset Building**
Members work together to cultivate community organizations and businesses eager to support New Tech development and sustainability.

**Communication**

**Policy Review**
Network leaders examine the statutory and regulatory issues related to New Tech and make recommendations for legislative improvements.

**Network meetings**
Members participate in quarterly meetings for updates and training.

**Statewide Awareness**
Network leaders work with state level organizations and policymakers to increase awareness of the New Tech model and its benefits for Michigan.

**Resource Connections**
Members receive regular updates with information on network advancements and useful information for school implementation.
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