

LEADER

Winter 2020 Official Magazine of the Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators

Beyond the Classroom Educating the Whole Child

THERE'S A REASON MICHIGAN SCHOOLS CHOOSE



Property/Casualty
Workers' Compensation
Employee Benefit Services
SET SEG Foundation

www.setseg.org  @setseg

12

18

16

IN THIS ISSUE

- 6 School Exec Connect Selected as Search Firm for MASA Executive Director Search
- 12 Exploring the Impact of Implicit Bias on Teaching and Learning
- 14 How the Monroe County ISD is Addressing Mental Health for Staff and Students
- 16 Why Should Early Learning Matter Most?
- 18 Michigan Merit Curriculum How We Got Here
- 21 Serving All Members
- 26 Region News

LEADER
Official Magazine of the Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators

Executive Director
Chris Wigent

Editor
Haley Jones

Contributing Editor
Peter Spadafore

Creative Director
Phil Marrah

MASA
1001 Centennial Way, Suite 300
Lansing, MI 48917-9279
Ph. 517.327.5910

Contribute to the LEADER
Do you have news or information to share with members? The LEADER invites you to contribute. Please contact Haley Jones at 517.327.9244

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chris Wigent



Educating the “Whole Child” is a concept that has grown exponentially over the past several years and is now at the top of the list for many superintendents, teachers, support staff, parents, and communities. While all of us might have a slightly different definition of what it means to educate the whole child, some consistent areas have to be included when discussing this topic. Recently, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention partnered with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) to develop the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Framework (WSCC). The WSCC model includes 10 areas of focus and practices that, when in place, are likely to improve both academic success and student health.

The areas of focus include:

- Health Education
- Physical Education and Physical Activity
- Nutrition Environment and Services
- Health Services
- Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services
- Social and Emotional Climate
- Physical Environment
- Employee Wellness
- Family Engagement
- Community Involvement

As I was typing out each one of these areas of focus, I could not help but feel overwhelmed – truly overwhelmed. School districts in Michigan continue to have limited financial resources, which also creates limited capacity. At the same time, the “whole child” problems and challenges seem to be growing at a very rapid rate. While I certainly don’t have all of the answers, I would encourage you to attend the upcoming MASA Midwinter Conference in Detroit from January 22-24, 2020, where the focus will be “Beyond the Classroom: Educating the Whole Child.” As we continue to prepare for the conference, we are working extremely hard to ensure that information is included that encompasses all 10 of these areas of focus. Whether it is learning from outside experts or your peers, we hope that your conference experience will help you feel more equipped to continue to lead this important work in your district effectively.

I want to thank you in advance for your consideration in attending this year’s conference. I am very aware of how difficult it can be to be out of the district for up to three days, and how the emails and calls can stack up. In addition, there is the necessary financial investment. However, there are so many positive reasons to attend a state-wide conference, including learning new concepts, networking with your colleagues, and taking a physical (and hopefully mental) break from your district, and so much more. I hope to see you all in Detroit, and I genuinely look forward to continuing to work with you through the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.

Sincerely,

Chris Wigent
Chris Wigent

Addressing the whole school’s needs

Our whole-school approach to online learning offers a comprehensive educational experience that solves many of the challenges today’s students, teachers, and administrators face.

MICHIGANVIRTUAL.ORG/OLPR

SCHOOL EXEC CONNECT SELECTED AS SEARCH FIRM FOR MASA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH

The Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators Executive Board is happy to announce that they have engaged the services of School Exec Connect to assist the membership in recruiting the next Executive Director of the association.

Founded in 2004, School Exec Connect is a diverse firm comprised of more than 60 people who were leaders in quality school districts throughout the country. They have an unusually high degree of success, which they attribute to the quality of their associates, the excellence of their protocols, and their ability to find the best educational leaders who match the needs of their clients.

They define their success by the longevity of the leaders they place, their repeat services to client districts and associations, and the positive and long-lasting relationships they establish with the clients with whom they work. They will understand the association's strengths and needs through conversations, focus groups, and surveys with the members of the Board, staff and the entire constituency. Their recruitment and interview process aligned to this understanding will result in well-vetted, highly qualified candidates from which to make our selection of a new Executive Director.

Working this search on behalf of School Exec Connect will be two experienced senior members, Dr. Kevin O'Mara, who is president

of the firm, and Mr. Larry Lobert, a partner in the firm.

Dr. O'Mara has been with the firm for seven years and has performed numerous searches throughout the Midwest. He is the retired Superintendent of Argo Community High School District and is currently Associate Professor in Educational Leadership at Concordia University Chicago, teaching doctoral students and helping them pursue their principal and superintendent licensure credentials. He knows the key to great education leadership is to collaborate and let the people around him know that their dedication, knowledge, and input are the key to enriching young lives. He is a father to three wonderful children, and husband to his wife of 30 years, Sharon. He is one of eight children and a son of two teachers. He owes his successes to the loving, supportive family he has, as well as to the truly talented people he has worked with during his career as an educator. He has served in public education for 30 years as a teacher, dean of students, principal, and superintendent. Dr. O'Mara has had many accomplishments: United States State Department Fulbright Foundation candidate stationed to Argentina; Illinois High School Organization, President; Illinois Association of School Administrators Board of Directors; St. Ignatius College Prep President's Medal Awardee; and Rosary College Graduate of the Last Decade (GOLD) Awardee. He has a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Dominican University, a master's degree in Public School

Administration, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership, both from Concordia University Chicago.

Lobert is a former senior associate with ASPEX Solutions in Skokie, Ill., providing web-based technology hiring solutions for schools and governmental institutions; former Vice President of Polaris Education Systems where he assisted in the development of the TeacherFit and JobFit inventories to help school districts identify top candidates within their applicant pools. He was formerly director of human resources for New Trier High School District 203 (IL), past assistant superintendent for human resources and labor relations for Grosse Pointe Public Schools (MI), and past Executive Director of Human Resources for Farmington Public Schools.

They are excited to begin this process and encourage members to take part in this important endeavor. They will be meeting with members throughout this process and hope to speak to as many as possible to help define the important attributes and experiences necessary for the new Executive Director to be successful. Their contact information is listed below, and they encourage members to reach out at any time with questions or suggestions. **They will be attending the 2020 Midwinter Conference in Detroit**, and MASA Leadership will be sharing the specific date and time with membership shortly. During this conference, they will be meeting membership to gauge members' thoughts on this important effort.

CONTACT INFORMATION

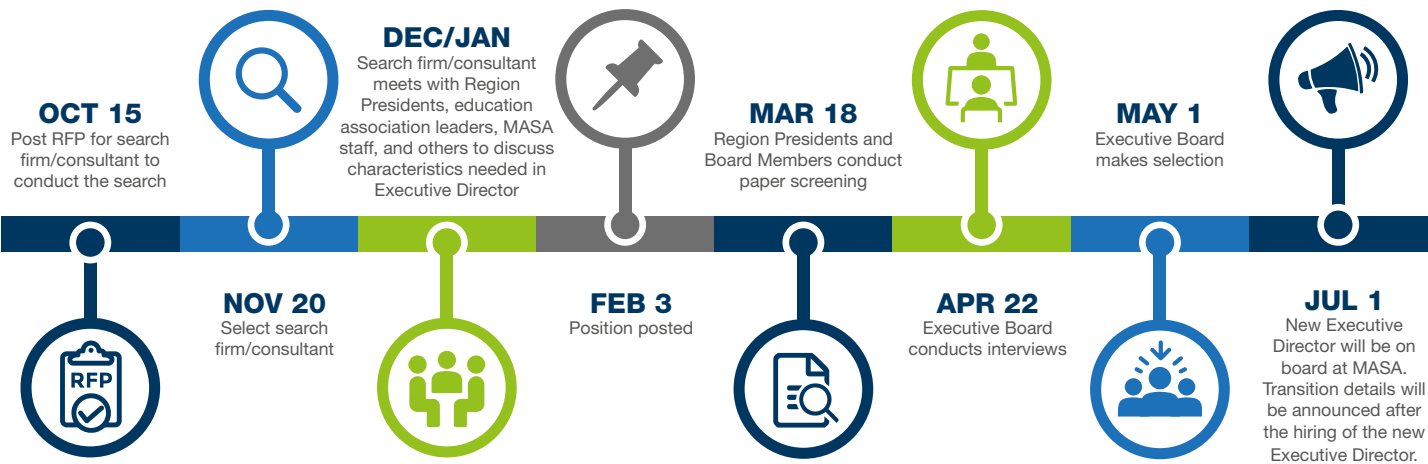


Larry Lobert – (313) 303-3727
larry.lobert@schoolexecconnect.com



Dr. Kevin O'Mara – (708) 516-0793
kevin.omara@schoolexecconnect.com

SEARCH TIMELINE



BOARD PRESIDENT

Dr. Steven Matthews



I began my teaching career in Hale Center, Texas. I was the 6th grade English Language Arts department.

It was a small school.

The Hale Center Independent School District was a small, rural school district in the panhandle of Texas. Our district served primarily two groups of students – those who lived full-time in town, and those from migrant farm worker families. Within my class I would have students whose parents owned the cotton farm sitting next to students whose parents worked the cotton farms.

The farm owner families were, by and large, multi-generational families in the county. Their parents and grandparents and great-grandparents had come to this part of Texas and built a life around the farm that they now owned. Their goal focused on maintaining and improving the farm.

Some of the families that worked the farms were full-time residents of Hale Center. Many of these families had lived their whole lives in town, moving from farm to farm, working hard all year long. These families never earned much money but they had put down roots. Hale Center was their home.

The migrant students would stay for several months in the fall as their families harvested the cotton. These families would then move to south Texas where their families would help with the citrus crops. In the spring, the families would return to Hale Center to help plant the new cotton crop.

My assumption as I started my teaching career was that my job was to teach writing and reading. I thought I didn't need to worry about the students' backgrounds or history or present day experience. My job, I thought naively, was just to teach.

I was wrong.

I quickly learned that the students who came to Hale Center Middle School every day needed me to focus on them. My students needed me to understand them. My students needed me to see, and hear, and listen to them.

I quickly learned that my students had hopes and dreams and fears. My students had things that created stress. My students had ideas about who they wanted to be. Some students were anxious. Some students, even though it would appear they had all that they needed, were nervous about the present and the future.

After I learned about my students, I discovered I could teach them.

In Hale Center, the language about the "whole child" was not yet in the popular culture. But what I learned was that I indeed needed to understand and focus on all the parts of my students, the whole child, before I could effectively teach them and create a class culture that supported them. I needed to help students find food, find safe living conditions, find advocates and allies that would help them. I needed to help them understand that there were people in Hale Center Middle School who would support them and encourage them and make them feel secure.

As we explore how to support our students I am glad that we are embracing the idea that our job is much bigger than just teaching. Our job is about supporting all the parts of our students lives so that they can continue to grow and become who they were meant to be.

Dr. Steven Matthews
Superintendent
Novi Community School District

MASA BOARD AND COUNCIL 2019-20



PRESIDENT
DR. STEVE MATTHEWS
Novi Community Schools



PRESIDENT - ELECT
DR. BRIAN METCALF
Grand Ledge Public Schools



PAST - PRESIDENT
DAVID TEBO
Hamilton Community Schools



DIRECTOR
ANDREW BRODIE
Flat Rock Community Schools



DIRECTOR
DR. BRIAN DAVIS
Holland Public Schools



DIRECTOR
DR. GLENN MALEYKO
Dearborn Public Schools



DIRECTOR
ANGIE MCARTHUR
Engadine Consolidated Schools

MASA COUNCIL

Craig Allen -----Breitung Township School District
Brian Reattoir -----Brimley Area Schools
Lou Steigerwald -----Norway-Vulcan Area Schools
Dr. John VanWagoner ----Alpena Public Schools
Mike Ritter -----Charlevoix Public Schools
Matt Stevenson -----East Jordan Public Schools
Jason Kennedy -----Ludington Area School District
Dr. Doug VanderJagt ----Hudsonville Public Schools
Gary Wood -----Hopkins Public Schools
Craig Carmony-----Meridian Public Schools
Mike Sharrow-----Midland Public Schools
Matt Schmidt-----Bangor Township School District
Dr. Steve Tunncliff -----Genesee ISD
Matt Wandrie -----Lapeer Community Schools
George Rierson-----Unionville Sebewaing Area Schools
Matt Shastal -----Laingsburg Community Schools
Ronald Drzewicki-----Mason Public Schools
Dori Leyko -----East Lansing Public Schools

Chris Rice -----Lawton Community Schools
Dr. Teresa Belote -----St. Joseph County ISD
Dr. Rusty Stitt -----Schoolcraft Community Schools
Dr. Julie Helber -----Chelsea School District
Chellie Broesamle -----Jonesville Community Schools
Dr. Pamela Campbell ----Columbia School District
Dr. Russell Pickell-----Riverview Community Schools
Ronald Roberts-----Chippewa Valley Schools
Dr. Robert Shaner -----Rochester Community Schools
Tom Livezey -----Oakridge Public Schools
Dr. William DeFrance ----Eaton Rapids Public Schools
Dr. Steven Matthews -----Novi Community Schools
Dr. Brian Metcalf -----Grand Ledge Public Schools
David Tebo -----Hamilton Community Schools
Andrew Brodie -----Flat Rock Community Schools
Dr. Brian Davis -----Holland Public Schools
Dr. Glenn Maleyko -----Dearborn Public Schools
Angie McArthur -----Engadine Consolidated Schools



2018-19
YEAR IN REVIEW

1,794 MASA event registrations processed

24 professional development opportunities offered

433 superintendents participated in MASA PD opportunities

169 educators participated in the Horizon Leadership Academies

- 37 member surveys** were completed through MASATalk on various topics
- 158 members personally contributed** to the ORS Lawsuit, totaling \$15,800.
- 55+** superintendents received new or existing **contract reviews**
- Legal support** was provided to several superintendents upon request

111 women leaders attended the **Women in Leadership Conference**

52 superintendents attended the **New Superintendent's Leadership Academy**

97% of 2017-18 Fall and Midwinter Conference attendees stated the events **met or exceeded their expectations**

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

- ORS Lawsuit**
MASA filed a lawsuit against the Michigan Office of Retirement Services in the Michigan Court of Claims in January 2019. The case is currently at the Court of Claims level and will be heard by the Judge in the next few months.
- Lawsuit on Public Dollars to Non-Public Schools**
Our consortium filed a lawsuit against the State regarding spending public dollars on non-public schools. The Michigan State Supreme Court recently made a decision that they will hear the lawsuit and this hearing is expected to take place in 2020.
- Launch Michigan**
MASA participated in the collective stakeholder group, Launch Michigan, which is working to address important education policy areas, including school funding, educator support, literacy, and accountability.
- Educator Shortage Strategic Plan Goal Workgroups**
MASA created three workgroups focused on each of the three goals of the ESW Plan. 60+ superintendents and central office administrators volunteered to participate in these workgroups to attempt to mitigate the critical problem of teacher attraction and retention in the state.

TOOLS / DEVELOPMENTS

MASA now offers two microcredentials: Communications and District Leadership Team. The third microcredential is HR and will be released this Fall.



MASA released the updated version of the **Superintendent's Calendar**



MASA Educator Shortage Workgroup created and released the Strategic Plan which is being implemented in 2019-20

UNDER THE DOME

1 speech from Governor Gretchen Whitmer at the MASA Midwinter Conference

10.9 average snow days forgiven by MDE

40 Legislative Updates during the 2018-19 school year

45 members participated in the Under the Dome Advocacy event in Lansing

100+ One-on-one meetings with the legislature and MASA Government Relations

LEAD YOUR DISTRICT'S EVOLUTION

EVERYTHING CHANGES.
NOT EVERYTHING EVOLVES.

By Judson Laipply

I've got a mission in life to spread a theory far and wide. It's called "The Struggle Bus" theory. It relates to those moments in life when your brain doesn't quite function properly. When you get your wires crossed and hilarity ensues. When you walk into a room, get half-way in, and forget why you entered the room to begin with. Or the time a friend gave me some "AirBorne," the popular immunity-boosting supplement created by a teacher that comes in gummy, effervescent, or chewable tablet, and they said "they're the chewables!" only to learn after I put them in my mouth and started chewing that they were in fact, the effervescent. I wasn't riding "The Struggle Bus" that day, I was chasing it down the road.

Or when you have two phrases stuck in your head, and as you speak instead of using one or the other you mix them together. One time I meant to say either "that'll be good" or "that will do" and instead said "that'll be do!" Which at first doesn't sound too bad, but over time I realized I sounded like a deranged Fred Flintstone. "Yabba dada do! That'll be do!" (If I ever see you in person ask me to tell you the example a teacher shared after a recent in-service I spoke at).

We all ride "The Struggle Bus" from time to time. It's a fun reminder to bring levity to life and laugh with ourselves and with each other. It's ok to ride now and then – just try to avoid having a permanent seat!

When we think about dealing with change and striving to evolve, we worry about it being a struggle. The word struggle carries with it such negative reactions. Most people do all they can to avoid anything they believe will cause a struggle. You rarely find people looking for opportunities to struggle, yet struggle can be valuable. Struggle leads to growth and growth leads to evolution, which at the end of the day is what life is all about – evolving. Striving to become a better version of ourselves, our schools, our communities, and our world.

Evolution is about progress, not perfection. It's about realizing that we need to continually grow, and one of the best ways to do that is to embrace the struggle, to surrender to the fact that life will provide opportunities to struggle and it's those struggles that strengthen. Evolution doesn't happen in the calm of life – it happens in the chaos.

Chaos is defined as an "inherently unpredictable natural complex system." If that's not a perfect description of life, what is? Life is a constant flow of change and unpredictability and our world is no exception. Education is ripe with change. You don't have to look very far to see how change is permeating throughout the world of education. Technology changes, mental health issues, teacher shortages, political shifts, and so many other things are constantly evolving what education means. Chaos indeed.

As leaders, we could use our time to complain about these things or we could use our time to be the leaders our districts need. We don't need people to "manage change" we need people to "lead evolution," leaders who embrace the struggle that exists and strategically look to the future and start working toward that vision. Be that leader. Stop wasting time dwelling on things out of your control and stay focused on helping your district evolve. Will it be easy? Of course not! If fact, it will most likely be a struggle. That's a good thing. Remember? Struggles are what lead to strengths.

.....
"Evolution doesn't happen in the calm of life – it happens in the chaos"

What is your proudest accomplishment in life outside of family? Maybe you ran a marathon, earned a PhD, or wrote a book. Regardless of what your proudest accomplishment is I guarantee it wasn't easy. In fact, I bet it was a struggle. We're not proud of the things that are easy in life. We're proud of the things that are hard.

One of my personal proudest accomplishments involved getting hit in the face with a flying fish.

I was racing in a half Ironman down in Miami, Fla. A half ironman is a 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike ride, and a 13-mile run. I trained for a long time and it must be mentioned – I am not a good swimmer. The morning of the race word spread around that they were thinking of cancelling the swim portion of the race due to an overabundance of jellyfish. This, of course, only added to my already heightened nerves. Alas, they did not cancel the swim and when my group was up – I jumped in...literally. As I swam, at the back of my pack, I was struggling not just with the swim itself but also trying to dodge jellyfish! Most tri-athletes swim with their face down in the water turning side to side to breathe occasionally rising up enough to look forward and do what's called "sighting" to make sure you're staying on course. As I was making my way around the course, I would drift off course and come close to the volunteers on jet skis who kept racers on the course. About two-thirds of the way through, I rose out of the water beside a couple of volunteers to try and

get back on the path when a fish jumped out of the water and smacked me between the eyes. Startled by the random fish in the face, I took in some seawater and started coughing. The volunteers, doing their best to hide their laughter, asked if I needed help. Accepting their help would officially mark my race as Did Not Finish (DNF), which I would not let happen. So I trod water for a moment, steadied my breathing, realigned my goggles as the fish had knocked them askew, and began to swim again. I finished the swim in last place for my age group, but made up lots of time on the bike and run to finish right at my goal time. I was prouder of finishing that swim than finishing the race itself because it was such a struggle.

Everything changes, but not everything evolves. Your district is going to change no matter what you do. You can try and "manage" that change or you can lead your districts evolution. Is it going to be easy? Hopefully not. It will be a struggle, but that's what makes it worth doing. Take time throughout the year to think about the future and what you want your district to look like and then begin to work on making that vision come to fruition.

Just look out for flying fish.



ABOUT

Judson Laipply M.Ed. is a keynote speaker, author, and the world's first YouTube Celebrity. He's been seen on the Today Show, Ellen, GMA, Oprah and more. His finale, "The Evolution of Dance" was the first video to ever hit 100 million views and has over 1 billion impressions. He resides in Avon Lake, Ohio where he tries to stay off "The Struggle Bus." Currently booking back-to-school events for the start of the 2020/21 school year. Visit www.judsonlaipply.com or email judsonlaipplyoffice@gmail.com for booking information.

FEATURED ARTICLE

Exploring the Impact of Implicit Bias on Teaching and Learning

By Dr. Randy Davis

To begin this narrative, I would like to quote a visionary leader who was in service to young people here in Michigan and beyond, “Uncle” Floyd Starr. He said, “There is no such thing as a bad child.” As I reflected on this statement some 40 years ago when first joining his agency in 1979, I realized Mr. Starr was referring to the fundamental value of human life. Every person coming into this world has unconditional value – equal value, as a human being. And whenever I met a new child being placed in one of Starr’s residential programs during my 20 plus years of service to Starr Commonwealth, it wasn’t so much about what the child had done to be placed by the courts, as it was about what life had done to this child that resulted in his/her placement. And to be truly effective with any child in such a circumstance, positive regard and relationship between me and each child I worked with was the necessary foundation for any growth and development to occur.

Fast forward to my last 17 years (and counting) as a superintendent of two public school districts – the lesson I learned early on through Starr still applies today. There is no such thing as a bad child. It is more about what life has done to her/him as they struggle to learn and grow. As educators, we know that to be an effective teacher we must first establish a connection and relationship with those we teach. Fostering students to engage in their learning requires positive regard and a relationship between the teacher and the student. Rita Pierson, in her infamous TED Talk on “Every kid needs a champion,” was spot on when she said, “no child learns from a teacher they do not like.” I love this statement because it is direct, humbling, and fundamental to teach-

ing and learning. And whether you work in a non-traditional educational setting like Starr Commonwealth, or a traditional classroom setting, the same premise holds true whenever working with children. It is about positive relationships; plain and simple.

So what is it that stands in our way as counselors, social workers, and yes – educators – that keeps us from treating all children with positive regard and relationship? Well, it begins with implicit bias. This is when our unconscious prejudices come into play while engaging with others.

For this article, we will define implicit bias as impulses residing under the surface of conscious thought, shaped through our past experiences and learned connections between ourselves and the external world. Implicit bias is a reflex; a reaction to a specific circumstance that influences the way we perceive or behave. Much of our implicit bias is difficult to recognize and more importantly, to understand. To do so requires intentional thought and effort on our part. When two human beings interact, they are also queuing up unconscious thoughts and/or feelings that in many ways define, enhance, or limit our interactions with each other. Implicit bias acts as a filter that limits us from fully experiencing or understanding the moment, under the guise of self-protection. In most cases, it prevents us from being fully engaged in the joy and spontaneity of what the other person has to offer.

The teaching and learning process in education relies heavily on the personal engagement between the teacher and the student. To be truly effective in helping others learn, we should be available to interact unconditionally in a teaching way. We need to recognize

that we are being influenced by unconscious thoughts when implicit bias surfaces while interacting with a student. Whether we can identify the nature of such bias is not as important as it is to recognize its influence. Consciously then, we are obliged to intentionally put aside such bias and make ourselves fully available to the student standing before us. How is it possible to set aside our implicit bias as we engage with our students so we may better facilitate learning? This happens through personal reflection and self-awareness.

Before an educator teaches others, they should first know thy self. What beliefs and perceptions, deep down in your heart of hearts, surface when you interact with others? How have your past experiences formed and shaped these associations? When you begin

to bring the unconscious into your conscious thought, you can intellectually and rationally dispel beliefs and perceptions that interfere with your ability to connect with every student you teach. The responsibility is ours as professional educators to foster positive engagement around teaching and learning with those we serve – not the student’s responsibility. The more positively we engage with our students, the more ownership our students take in their efforts to learn. Effectively connecting with our kids makes all the difference in the classroom.

Every human being living on the face of this Earth, regardless of social class or skin color, of gender or heritage, possesses implicit bias. Implicit bias belongs to no one individual or group. It belongs to us all. Implicit bias is something we all have in the recesses of our

minds. It is the reality of being human. Too often, if left unchecked, implicit bias becomes explicit bias. Explicit bias is a conscious belief or attitude that we hold in the judgment of others and/or the circumstances we encounter. Such bias is the basis for prejudices that determine who we judge as worthy, and who we judge as unworthy, leading to racist beliefs and attitudes of superiority and power.

When we interact with children as educators, we cannot afford to allow our bias to limit and negatively impact our ability to connect with all students – and all means ALL. Every single child we teach deserves the best we have to offer them.

Remember the words of Floyd Starr: There is no such thing as a bad child. When you encounter a troubled child in your classroom or school, and before succumbing to preconceived notions you might have, take a pause and ask yourself, “What has life done to this child today?” I will guarantee a better outcome for you and your students.



Dr. Randy Davis
Superintendent
Marshall Public Schools

.....
“Every human being living on the face of this earth, regardless of social class or skin color, of gender or heritage, possesses implicit bias.”



How the Monroe County ISD is Addressing Mental Health for Staff and Students

By Jean Foster and
Andrea Murphy

Mental health has become a topic of daily conversation in today's world. This is especially true in the field of education. A growing number of our students are affected by mental health issues, either directly or in their daily environment, which is heavily impacting academic success.

This fall, under the direction of the Monroe County Intermediate School District (MCISD) Superintendent Stephen McNew, Ed. D., and with unanimous support from the MCISD Board of Education, the MCISD formed a Mental Health Services Team. After numerous conversations with local area schools, community partners, and state entities, the MCISD hired three full-time employees funded by a combination of 31N grant funds and MCISD general fund dollars. This was the first step in creating a team dedicated to mental health that will service all local area schools in Monroe County.

The Team, led by Jean Foster, is housed at the MCISD main campus and works directly with schools in crises and assists in creating proactive approaches that address mental health.

Additionally, the Team has created protocols for schools to reference when confronted with a mental health issue and offers extensive professional development and training in the area of mental health to all Monroe County educators.

To help spread the word about this support, the Team works closely with the MCISD Communications Department. The MCISD Communications Department packages the Team's resource materials, promotes its professional development and training, and helps The Team communicate with staff, schools, and the community about mental health.

The creation of this Team is directly in line with countywide health goals and initiatives, as well as state initiatives that address the whole child. Recent strategies from the Monroe Community Health Improvement Plan (2019) aim to increase mental health awareness for youth and adults, improve access to resources, and decrease the stigma of mental health in our community.

Further, teachers have repeatedly voiced that they do not feel they have the knowledge or skillset to address the mental health issues they now face in schools. Not only is this detrimental to our students, but it is causes concern for our teachers' health as well. They are feeling burnt out, secondary stress, and perhaps mental health issues of their own due to taking on these issues.

To address these concerns, the MCISD Mental Health Services Team offers professional development to our school staff in areas such as trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Youth Mental Health First Aid, Psychological First Aid, and more. Additionally, the Team has developed step-by-step flow-charts for first-line administrators to refer to in a crisis. Plus, the Mental Health Team hosts a series of round tables that connect local agencies to our school staff so we can break down the barriers between school and community services. Lastly, it is equally important to focus on positive mental health practices that can be given to our school staff regularly to encourage self-care and promote positive life skills in the classroom.

By doing all of this, we can reduce the stigma of mental health and instead, encourage all people to practice healthy mental health strategies daily.


The mission of MCISD is to prepare today's students for tomorrow's world. This mission is not directed solely at academics. The Monroe County ISD is dedicated to reaching the whole child, which includes the academic and social-emotional growth of students.

Today, we see a strong need for mental health support in our county schools. We're building a system that takes a more proactive approach to mental health: using a whole-child approach to break down barriers related to awareness and the coordination of mental health services.


Moreover, we're working to prepare our staff and further listen to their needs. Our goal is to build capacity which centers on improving mental health services in the areas of professional development, increasing awareness and prevention services, planning for a crisis, and building relationships with our community agencies. We aim to better align our policies, processes, and practices between education, public health, and school health, and in doing so, improve learning and overall health for students.

Thanks to the innovative actions of the MCISD's leaders, we're not just talking about mental health; we have a team and a plan to address it.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT



Jean Foster,
Mental Health Crisis Coordinator,
Monroe County ISD



Andrea Murphy,
Communications Coordinator,
Monroe County ISD

Find a copy of the MCISD Mental Health Services Team flow-chart at gomasa.org



CONFERENCE CONNECTIONS

WHY SHOULD EARLY LEARNING MATTER MOST?

By Edward Manusak

As district leaders from the state of Michigan gather for the MASA 2020 Midwinter Conference in Detroit, Michigan January 22-24, 2020, there will be so many New Year's resolutions and promises made by each of us. One professional promise you could make is to go beyond your comfort level and engage in early learning. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines early childhood education as birth through age eight (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). As pointed out in (Rogestein, 2019) in a survey several years ago by the National Association of the Elementary School Principals, only 20% of elementary school principals shared that they were confident in their knowledge of children birth through age eight. If this was the statistic for elementary principals, it is safe to assume that this would be a significantly lower number if superintendents were polled. Therefore, as leaders we must begin to see the value in educating the whole child and this means redefining what this looks like in our districts. It means beginning to see what happens before they enter our public schools and school settings (as potentially Head Start or Great Start pre-school students) is simply not enough.

Redefining what schools can look like is paramount to the success of educating the whole child. Schools are beginning to forge partnerships with early childhood centers, community organizations, and higher education institutions that allow them to be viewed as hubs and not just schools (Jacobson, 2019). Noted Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman has shared, "investment in young children is most likely to be effective if it is made earlier. Birth-to-three services are actually the best opportunity to make a substantial difference (Rogenstein, 2019, p.11). Currently, Dundee Community Schools is attempting to build a strong coalition with the other nine public school districts within Monroe County, located in extreme southeastern Michigan. That is why the Monroe County Superintendents Association is hard at work developing, implementing, and challenging the status quo with its Superintendent's Early Childhood Plan. The association used the Early Learning District Self-Assessment Tool (ELDSAT), a self-reflective assessment resource that is currently being published by the NAEYC and co-branded by the AASA. The resource allows district leaders to affirm programs they are doing and leads to discovering what they need to do to make a larger impact. The ELDSAT scores allow for district leaders who may not have a background in early childhood education to get the "CliffsNotes" version and begin to implement the research-based and best practices known to be effective in educating the whole child within their communities. The Monroe County Superintendents Association is attempting to secure non-public money to hire specialized Family Engagement Coordinators. These individuals would identify children from birth through age three in our various districts and educate their parents using Pre-School U, Detroit Public Television's award-winning program. They would also make home visits using the Ages and Stages Curriculum and coordinate and lead playgroups for families to become connected with their local districts. We know that this is an ambitious program, but one worth pursuing.

As noted, families and their budgets have been stretched beyond what they can afford and that early care and education is in crisis

.....
"We must not allow a child's zip code to define their educational opportunities."

(Chaundry, Morrissey, Weiland, & Yoshikawa, 2017). The authors of "From Cradle to Kindergarten A New Plan to Combat Inequality" go on further to state that there is a socioeconomic gap between choosing quality childcare and paying for it by a three to one margin. Meaning that if a family from a low socioeconomic status has to use 21% of a families' income on high-quality child care, those that come from higher socioeconomic status situations pay 7% (Chaundry, et al. 2017 and Burgess, 2018). We recently saw with the federal budget how important this research and these causes are by the way the United States Federal Government increased funding for early childhood by \$1 billion (increases in Head Start and other early childhood education programs). Great things are already happening in Michigan as well.

A colleague of ours, Mr. Brian Reattoir, Superintendent of Brimley Schools in the Upper Peninsula, is a part of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District and was selected to participate in a special program sponsored by the Federal Office of Head Start, called the Head Start and Public Schools Collaboration Demonstration Project. This project aims to rethink the relationships that school districts have with Head Start Programs. Thirteen districts from across the country were selected to participate in this project. They have been working hard during the 2019-2020 school year to make improvements in transitions for families and students as they leave the comfort and nurturing programs of Head Start and enter our schools. It certainly is easier than one thinks, but this is hard and deliberate work in an attempt to make us rethink how relationships should be established by schools when receiving students and their families in the effort to educate the whole child. Jacobson pointed out, we must work as a community to do the following: "ensure that all children have the opportunities and supports to enable their educational success, eliminate the predictability

of success or failure that currently correlates with any social, economic, or cultural factors, including race, identify and end inequitable practices, and create inclusive environments for both adults and children" (Jacobson, 2019, p. 13). In November, Dundee Community Schools and Ann Arbor Public Schools hosted national site visits by the AASA Early Learning Cohort, highlighting great practices in Early Learning. Dr. Jeanice Swift, superintendent of Ann Arbor Public Schools, and Ms. Dawn Linden, assistant superintendent from Ann Arbor Public Schools, were exceptional advocates and leaders during these visits, displaying how they are making differences for their youngest learners. Dundee Community Schools shared a new poster that had the "Five Keys to Early Childhood Student Success." We worked collaboratively with the NAEYC to have this poster commissioned. If you are interested in learning more about these exciting programs, please be sure to connect with these districts and individuals named.

Educating the whole child goes beyond what we currently consider to be our educational systems. We must embrace new practices, new policies, and new ways to engage our families before the State of Michigan officially counts any children as pupils in our systems. We must not allow a child's zip code to define their educational opportunities. It is time to expand those horizons and make the best choices as educational leaders to redefine our districts as trusted partners with the families that we serve every day. Please join me in making this your New Year's Resolution and begin redefining your district's goals about how you engage families and their children. When asked what success looks like when you engage the whole child, you can confidently say you are making differences for the youngest children and their families in your care. It will allow you the chance to amplify the voices of those you serve and give them the best possible start possible in making early learning matter most.

Works Cited

- Burgess, P. (2018, September 9). The ABCs of childcare. The Record-Eagle. Retrieved from: https://www.record-eagle.com/news/local_news/the-abc-of-child-care/article_bb438e6a-0d5e-5085-b8f1-7ceadbc30815.html
- Chaundry, A., Morrissey, T., Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2017). Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. muse.jhu.edu/book/49677.
- Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2009). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs: Serving children birth through age eight (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Jacobson, D. (2019, April). All Children Learn and Thrive: Building First 10 Schools and Communities. (Policy Study). Waltham MA: Education Development Center, Inc. Retrieved from: https://bg3learninghub.files.wordpress.com/2019/04/all-children-learn-and-thrive_first-10.pdf
- Rogenstein E. (2019). Why the K-12 World Hasn't Embraced Early Learning. Foresight Law and Policy, Washington D.C. Retrieved from: https://www.flpadvisors.com/uploads/4/2/4/2/42429949/why_the_k12_world_hasnt_embraced_early_learning.pdf_final.pdf

About



Edward Manuszak, Ed.S
Superintendent Dundee Community Schools and AASA Early Learning Cohort Co-Chair

Learn more about this topic by attending Mr. Manuszak's presentation at the Midwinter Conference on Wednesday, January 22, 2020.

MICHIGAN MERIT CURRICULUM HOW WE GOT HERE

By Peter Spadafore and Athena Antonis

If you're reading this article, you probably know that the Michigan Legislature is debating a major revision to high school graduation requirements in our state. The outcome is yet to be determined, but we figured now is a good time to look back on the history of the 14-year-old law.

Michigan's last big foray into high school graduation requirements was in 2006 under Gov. Jennifer Granholm. On April 20, 2006, she signed into law the Michigan Merit Curriculum, which the Michigan Department of Education called, "one of the most comprehensive sets of high school graduation requirements in the nation," (Michigan Department of Education, 2010). Prior to this change, Michigan had only one requirement for graduation – one semester of civics. While this policy gave local districts broad discretion in setting graduation requirements, some legislators and educators felt the mandate didn't prepare all young Michiganders for success in college.

The 2006 changes were a product of a broad coalition of education organizations including MASA, business leaders, teachers' unions, the state board of education, the governor's office, and a bipartisan group of legislators. Representatives from these groups got to work researching best practices and requirements from Singapore, Indiana, Oregon, and Arkansas to create a package of bipartisan and bicameral bills, which schools have been working to implement ever since. This legislation required Michigan students to take four English courses, four math courses, three science courses, three social studies courses, one visual/performing arts course, one physical education course, an "online learning experience," two world languages courses, and

whatever else the local district decided was necessary to fulfill the requirements of a diploma.

At the time, there were many concerns that there weren't enough qualified teachers or that the changes would be too drastic for some districts to implement.

In 2010, 79% of schools surveyed had to make changes to course offerings to implement the Michigan Merit Curriculum (The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy, 2010). Additionally, 48% of schools surveyed reported that teachers had "some or extensive difficulty aligning their courses to state standards" and 55% of schools surveyed reported that students were "poorly prepared, upon entering high school, to meet the demands of the new curriculum" (The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy, 2010).

But the news at implementation wasn't all bad. Data from the previously cited report indicates that "86 percent of schools surveyed reported that more students were taking challenging courses as a result of the new state standard."

During the last several legislative sessions, bills were signed into law to slightly change the way the MMC works. The requirements were amended in 2008 by Senate Bill 834 to allow financial literacy; a math support course; pre-algebra; or another mathematics course approved by the board of the school district or charter school to count toward the math requirement. The bill also allowed a student to complete algebra II over two years with a credit awarded for each of those years (House Fiscal Agency, 2008).

In 2014, House Bills 4465 and 4466 were signed into law to change, among other things, what counts as a foreign language and when a student can gain credit for those courses (House Fiscal Agency, 2013). The bill also allowed students to take foreign language courses at any point in their K-12 career and granted students the ability to satisfy part of the foreign language requirement through CTE if they were to graduate between 2015 and 2021. The bills further altered the details of how to use CTE courses to satisfy the algebra II requirement, social studies, and physical education. HB 4390 was signed into law in 2015, allowing a student to use "personal economics" to satisfy the half-credit economics course (House Fiscal Agency, 2015). Finally, the bills made changes to science requirements and rules governing the personal curriculum.

In 2017, the Senate Education Committee formed a subcommittee to examine the MMC. After months of hearings and hours of testimony, the subcommittee concluded that no changes were necessary to the standards and we all moved on. One change was signed into law in 2018 – Senate Bill 175, which extends the time period in which students could satisfy part of the foreign language requirement with CTE courses through 2024 (Senate Fiscal Agency, 2018).

This history does not include any of the other bills that were debated but never got signed into law – of which there are far too many to list in this article. Meanwhile, educators have worked year-after-year to implement the changes as they come to ensure compliance with the latest version of MCL 380.1278a and 380.1278b.

Continued on page 20

The MMC originally was designed to ensure students would receive an education that would empower them to compete in a 21st Century economy, which at the time meant college-ready. At the time, many business groups, especially large corporations, backed the original law because they were beginning to see the talent shortfalls which still exist today. More recently, some of Michigan's trades and manufacturing leaders have begun to decry a different talent dearth, noting that the potential candidate pool for their industries has dwindled, inferring that a focus on college readiness is to blame and the MMC the culprit. This argument is a bit specious as it ignores the trends of increasing CTE enrollment and offerings. But most troubling is the continued focus from both camps on job preparation rather than viewing K-12 education as an educational foundation designed to provide students options after graduation.

Fortunately, there is a silver lining. This debate is driving a growing understanding that, while the need for post-secondary education has increased rather than lessened, it can take many forms – from trade-school to four-year college and beyond. And that our graduation requirements need to not only be rigorous, but responsive to students' individual needs and goals.

.....
“No solution will be perfect, but MASA and its members are committed to sound policy and educating every child to their full potential.”

Lawmakers are once again looking at ways to change the merit curriculum. Since this article went to print, several bills may have moved out of the House to slightly change the requirements, and another may have moved out of the Senate to drastically alter the law. MASA has worked closely with lawmakers and our members during the past few months to gather input on the challenges and strengths of the MMC to truly evaluate the policy. It's not often that lawmakers get the chance to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of a law that's passed. Many lawmakers pass a bill, are term-limited out, and then never look back. In 2020, the time is right for our state to take

a comprehensive look at the Michigan Merit Curriculum and work to align graduation requirements with the implemented state standards. We have an opportunity to put forward a solution that incorporates the feedback of those doing the work (teachers, superintendents, principals, paraprofessionals, counselors), the voice of parents and students affected by the law and the lessons we've learned and the data we've gathered in the intervening 14 years.

No solution will be perfect, but MASA and its members are committed to sound policy and educating every child to their full potential.

Works Cited

House Fiscal Agency. (2008). Legislative Analysis. Retrieved from Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2007-2008/billanalysis/House/pdf/2007-HLA-0834-3.pdf>

House Fiscal Agency. (2013). Legislative Analysis. Retrieved from Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2013-2014/billanalysis/House/pdf/2013-HLA-4465-35409EB4.pdf>

House Fiscal Agency. (2015). Bill Analysis. Retrieved from Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2015-2016/billanalysis/Senate/pdf/2015-SFA-4390-F.pdf>

Michigan Department of Education. (2010). Oh, that explains it: Michigan Merit Curriculum high school graduation requirements. Retrieved from Chippewa Hills School District: <http://www.chsd.us/highschool/curriculum/Michigan%20Merit%20Curriculum%20FAQ%27s.pdf>

Senate Fiscal Agency. (2018). Bill Analysis. Retrieved from Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2017-2018/billanalysis/Senate/pdf/2017-SFA-0175-E.pdf>

The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy. (2010). Mandating Merit: Assessing the implementation of the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Ann Arbor: Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy.

Contact Us



Peter Spadafore
Associate Executive Director
Advocacy & Communications



Athena Antonis
Government Relations &
Policy Associate

For questions, comments, or government relations assistance, contact Peter Spadafore at pspadafore@gomasa.org.

SERVING ALL MEMBERS

By Chris Wigent



As a member-driven association, MASA seeks not only to represent superintendents across the state but also to support and grow the profession. This year we have expanded our programming to serve under-represented groups within the membership by offering and/or expanding three programs that provide participants with the opportunity to learn and network. We look forward to continuing to extend support to these networks, which have gotten off to a strong start.

African-American Leadership Fellows Academy

In the State of Michigan, approximately 5% of superintendents are African-American. There is a great deal of research that indicates students not only need to see educators that look like them in their school but that they also learn better from those who do. It was with this in mind that MASA and the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) endeavored into a partnership aimed at creating a program that supports African-American building and central office leaders that are considering becoming a superintendent. This October, the inaugural cohort of the African-American Leadership Fellows Academy (AAFLA) began with 19 participants.

Planning for the AAFLA program began with a series of meetings with MASA members who are also members of the Michigan African-American Superintendents Association. Leaders from this group provided insights about the difficulties African-American leaders encounter in terms of seeking superintendent positions, as well as the unique challenges faced while on the job. Collaboratively, we developed a program that would capitalize on the high-quality Horizon program that MASA currently offers for aspiring superintendents by adding evening and wrap-around activities to address the specific needs of African-Americans. Finding the right person to lead the work of this group was essential, and we were extremely pleased when Dr. Sue Carnell, a former superintendent and former president of MASA, agreed to lead and champion the program with Dr. Tina Kerr from MASA. We were also grateful when the Skillman Foundation granted the AAFLA program with funding.

Throughout the year, AALFA cohort members have begun to form strong relationships with each other and with leaders from around the state who have come to speak with the group. As an AALFA participant, Nina Davis, principal at L'anse Creuse Middle School East in Macomb County, shared, "I am ecstatic about the opportunity to not only learn but network and interact with other African-American leaders from across the state. The content taught in the program allows us to learn about our styles as leaders and specific issues we face as minority leaders in Michigan." At the conclusion of this pilot cohort, MASA and MASSP will evaluate the impact and success of the program to determine the next steps.

Women in Leadership Network

Since joining the MASA staff, Dr. Tina Kerr has provided opportunities to support and bring female superintendents together. Initial efforts were pre-conference sessions at the MASA conference that expanded into a two-day Women in Leadership Network event. The two-day conference has grown tremendously over the three years it has been offered, with only 16 attendees in year one to 116 attendees in year three. The leaders participating in these programs expressed a desire to expand the network aspect and to include teacher leaders and building-level administrators in future events. In November, we hosted a Women in Leadership Drive-In event in partnership with MASSP, which accomplished these goals. To grow this program in the future, MASA looks forward to recruiting additional association partners that will bring aspiring and practicing female leaders together.

Small District Superintendents

The title of "Super-Principal" is common for those who serve in the role of superintendent in small districts. This unique dual leadership role was the impetus for the "Other Duties as Assigned" conference, which brought together superintendents, many of whom also have the title of principal, from districts serving fewer than 1,000 students around the state. A follow-up survey of attendees provided the following direction moving forward: make this an annual event, provide Zoom webinar opportunities, create a listserv to allow this group to collaborate and communicate year-round and consider the formation of a rural superintendents group connected to MASA.

The creation and expansion of these programs have been a capacity challenge for MASA, but the rewarding positive feedback made all the effort worthwhile. As an association, we will continue to dedicate staff time to member benefits and the development of networks and resources that benefit the full membership as well as those who need targeted supports.

Learn more about these programs at gomasa.org/Leadership

INTEGRATING HEALTH & WELLNESS INTO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

ADDRESSING THE QUESTIONS OF WHY? AND HOW?



WHY IS STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS IMPORTANT TO MEETING THE GOALS OF INCREASING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT?

This article is Section II of the report, "A Guide for Incorporating Health & Wellness into School Improvement Plans" from the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors. This publication was supported by the Cooperative Agreement Number 5U380T000225-3 funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services. 2016

Each day, millions of students enter school buildings across the U.S. to learn. Schools focus intensely on achieving this goal, emphasizing the importance of high-quality instruction and ongoing evaluation in order to strengthen academic achievement for all students. In their strong focus on core academics, many schools overlook the important role that health and wellness play in student achievement.

Health matters to academic achievement. Research supports the important connection between health and learning, showing that health-related barriers limit students' ability and motivation to learn, and that improving access to health foods and physical activities in particular can positively influence the health of students and improve academic achievement. The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model, as described in the introduction, promotes a collaborative approach to learning and health, taking into account the needs of the whole child. Six of the WSCC components clearly address the health needs of students (physical education and physical activity; nutrition environment and services; health education; health services; counseling, psychological, and social services; and employee wellness) while four are cross-cutting and help to support healthy behavior in students (social and emotional school climate, physical environment, family engagement, and community involvement). Research supports the ability of WSCC's six health-related components to impact educational outcomes, and notes that the others are essential to support healthy behaviors among students.

Schools that incorporate student health and wellness as a priority often see positive benefits in various areas including improved attendance and classroom behavior, improved cognitive performance (i.e., concentration, attention), better educational outcomes including overall test scores and grades, graduation rates, and fewer behavioral problems. Because of this, many education leaders recognize the importance of approaching school improvement with a broadened lens.

School improvement plans (SIPs) provide a key opportunity to consider the needs of the whole child when developing plans for strengthening student academic achievement. When health and wellness are incorporated into a SIP, whether as a goal, strategy or as a part of supporting activities, they become part of the foundation of a district and/or school rather than an add-on or extra task. They are measured and tracked as part of a school's accountability system, and part of a systemic and cyclical process of review.

The purpose of this section is to provide answers to the practical questions of **how** schools can begin to incorporate health and wellness into SIPs. **The good news is it is not only possible, but is already being done in many schools across the country.** Schools and their leaders are seeing the benefits of integrating health and wellness into SIPs. In Tennessee, 72% of schools include health goals in their School Improvement Plans and their Tennessee Comprehensive System-wide Planning Process plans. In addition, data from the School Health Profiles (2014) indicates that secondary schools across states are including health-related objectives in school improvement plans. Specifically, the median percentage of schools that include physical activity in SIPs is 23.3%; 28.6% include mental health and social services; and



Read the full guide and learn more by visiting gomasa.org/wellness

57.5% include healthy and safe environments. There is great variability across states, however. For example, 79% of secondary schools in Arkansas have incorporated physical activity objectives into SIPs, compared to 13% in Nevada. For foods and beverages available outside of the school meals program, 8% of secondary schools in Washington have included related objectives in the SIP, compared to 62% in Arkansas.

Section III of this guide provides a number of examples and approaches from various schools around the country. What is evident from these examples is that there is no single “right” way to approach it. Like with anything else, each district and school improvement planning team needs to use health and wellness data, along with their insights and knowledge of the school culture, climate and community to drive decisions and strategies.

Read the full guide and learn more about these steps by visiting gomasa.org/wellness

How to Get Started?

Schools that are interested in integrating the needs of the whole child and incorporating student health and wellness into school improvement planning can begin by following the important steps outlined below.

1. Take a look at the school improvement team. Who is at the table? Who isn't but need to be, based on the WSCC Model?
2. Include health and wellness-related data in the improvement planning assessment process to ensure a more complete picture of students' needs.
3. When analyzing data, identifying trends and prioritizing challenges, keep root causes in mind.
4. Identify strategies for addressing challenges, taking into consideration health and wellness-related strategies that support goals to strengthen the learning environment and increase academic achievement.

CARING FOR THE WHOLE CHILD, ACADEMICALLY, SOCIALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY

By Dr. Robert Shaner

At its core, education is an enterprise of hope and inspiration. Immense pride comes from knowing that our children's success is, to a large degree, the result of learning from a team of highly skilled, caring professionals who build strong relationships and make that individual connection with students, parents, and the community. These trusted relationships play an important role in our children's well-being.

Rochester Community Schools' robust curriculum includes wellness programs to assist students with making informed decisions about their health; and our vast partnerships provide additional awareness, training, and resources that support student growth.

Nevertheless, our district, like so many others across the country, has not been immune to tragedy. Recent suicides, drug-related deaths of former students, and growing accounts of student anxiety and depression have impacted the entire community. As each story has unfolded, hearts have grown heavier.

In times of tragedy, those pillars of hope and inspiration can be unrecognizable.

In early 2019, we knew it was time to make a formal commitment — a promise to our community — to care for the whole child, academically, socially, and emotionally.

In February, we formed a task force to evaluate the types of programs currently in place, study organizational best practices, and create and execute a plan to promote positive social-emotional wellness and resilience. Cultivating a community of acceptance to remove the stigma of asking for and getting help would be critical to our success.

The initial task force consisted of three principals whose buildings had been particularly hard hit by recent tragedies. The team proceeded with great care and thoughtful consideration to ensure the work would be sustainable and systemic.

To better understand varying perspectives regarding the challenges facing our youth, the task force hosted a roundtable discussion with congressional, judicial, and law enforcement appointees, regional celebrities, medical professionals, academic experts, students, and families.



Then, after attending educational meetings and researching programs that support social-emotional learning (SEL), the task force recommended extending an invitation to subject-matter expert and author, Shenandoah Chefalo, to keynote a staff professional development session. Shenandoah connected the task force to the Center for Trauma Resilient Communities to lead the type of systemic change needed within the district.

The task force established short- and long-term goals.

Short-term goals included: recognizing this work requires intentional, ongoing steps; focusing on social and emotional safety throughout the district; reflecting on our lens for trauma; training administrators and developing a common language for SEL work; developing plans to increase teacher capacity through professional learning; creating a communication plan.

Long-term goals included: removing the stigma and making open mental health discussion a norm; engraining universal precautions; ensuring everyone in the district will be capable of providing social-emotional support; and creating culturally proficient, highly educated, globally aware, and socially and emotionally balanced citizens.

Training continued in November with all teachers and administrators. Administrators then spent two days in December to dive deeper and discuss our role in changing the trajectory for students in need of support.


As educators, we immediately wanted to take action to help our students. But during the exercises, we learned that we have to care for ourselves before we can help others. Someone can only give what they are overflowing. Only then will we be in a position to assist our students.

Perhaps the most important point of emphasis from the conversation is that all stakeholders need to understand that this work is unlike curricular or instructional change. It is a mindset shift, a systemic district focus, not a series of events. It will require an ongoing process, not a time-bound solution.

When implemented well, social-emotional work will not require additional tasks. It will become a way of life.

Early on in our journey, we realized that our social-emotional wellness efforts directly aligned with our journey towards cultural proficiency, modeled after Michael Fullan's Coherence Framework, in which we have developed a culture that ensures consistency in the delivery of programming and instructional practices. That coherence includes diversity, equity, and inclusion. Both initiatives are based on the fundamental belief that all members of our community will be safe, valued, and respected. Additionally, both fields of study are inspired by the complexity theory in that the process is fluid. The parts are continuously transforming, and we have to anticipate that the results may not be what we initially set out to accomplish.

One thing is certain. As we move forward, partnerships will continue to be key to our success. Our increased collaboration with students, families, staff, and the community will help guide us through our journey so we can expand our resources to care for the whole child.

 Robert Shaner, Ph.D.
Superintendent, Rochester Community Schools
2020 Michigan Superintendent of the Year

Download the MASA Events App

Download the official mobile app for MASA Events. Get instant access to the full conference schedule with a detailed description for every session, rate the sessions you attend, and receive last-minute updates and notifications from the conference staff.

Connect with other attendees and share your conference experience.

Search “MASA Events” in the Apple App Store and on Google Play. Once installed, choose “2020 Midwinter Conference.”

MASA thanks SET SEG for generously sponsoring the events app.



REGION 1

Members of Region 1 are hard at work in districts across the Upper Peninsula. As U.P. superintendents, many members lead districts that are geographically large, but not densely populated. This means that superintendents across the peninsula were happy that the governor and the legislature finally worked out a deal that freed up money for small and isolated districts as those dollars represent meaningful percentages of their budgets.

This summer, members had a lively presentation on the importance of school culture and social and emotional learning. Many districts and ISDs have picked up from there and are doing work to help make schools the safest places they can be, especially for kids who have had any level of trauma in their lives. We all know that there are too many kids who fit that description.

At an autumn region meeting, members agreed to support efforts regarding the NWEA exam as a potential growth measure.

This fall found districts having to close schools due to weather even earlier and more often than usual for them. Many Region 1 members will spend the winter hoping for more temperate conditions and looking forward to spring (which you call “June”).

REGION 2

MASA Region 2 has had excellent attendance at the first three meetings for the 2019-20 school year. In October, the region heard from Peter Spadafore, MASA Associate Director, on the status of the 2019 budget supplemental and other important legislative issues facing our school districts.

In November, Dr. Terry Nugent from MDE visited the region to talk about the new Continuous Improvement Process (MI-CIP), which will be taking the place of their current school improvement process and the Assist online platform. Region members were excited to learn how MDE is looking at this from more of a district planning process, and to hear that MDE is trying to streamline the process by pre-populating data that can be loaded directly into the consolidated application.

REGION 6

In November, Region 6 heard from Brandy Johnson, a member of Gov. Whitmer’s Executive Policy Office, provided an update on the governor’s K-12 education policy initiatives for the upcoming year and also provided an update on the progress of the supplemental budget.

In February, Nancy Colflesh, Ph.D., will provide a professional growth opportunity for Region 6 superintendents titled, “Accountability & Support for Leaders of Learning: What Is a Superintendent To Do?” This session will provide superintendents with practical strategies and protocols for principal meetings and professional learning sessions, and resources for holding their principals accountable as leaders of learning while also giving them the support they need. There will be an emphasis on learning from literature, our own experiences, and the presenter’s expertise, examples, modeling of strategies, practical handouts, and straight-forward responses to questions.

Lisa Swem from Thrun Law will attend the March meeting to provide a school law update.

REGION 7

Region 7 welcomed 10 new superintendents this year. New superintendents were encouraged to engage with MASA and the membership benefits provided.

Region 7 members welcomed several guests to meetings this Fall, including Doug Greer and Kyle Mayer who shared information about the Reading Now Network and tools that superintendents can use to support literacy efforts; Diane Talo of St. Joseph ISD; Author Debbie McFalone; Dean Ming Li from Western Michigan University’s College of Education and Human Development, and MASA Executive Director Chris Wigent.

The region looks forward to working collaboratively with the WMU as they seek solutions to the educator shortage issue.

In 2020, Region 7 members will hear from the following: Beth Washington on the importance of a mindset that is supportive of diversity and inclusion; MASA’s Peter Spadafore with a legislative update; and Dr. Michael Rice will share reflections on his new position and the important work he is doing at MDE at the April meeting.

REGION 3

More than 200 school leaders and business partners came together for the West Michigan Career Readiness Conference in Grand Rapids in December to celebrate these practices and to learn from one another.

At the start of the year, superintendents throughout Region 3 completed a survey on professional development. They shared the topics they would like to learn about throughout the year, including: trauma-informed decision making, best practices in instructional leadership, finance-focused PD, the implementation of innovative practices, and growing our understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

Superintendents and districts throughout Region 3 are focusing on the following topics: The development of trauma-informed practices while supporting social-emotional learning as a trauma-sensitive practice; leading with an equity lens to address disproportionality in outcomes for students of color and students in poverty; linking positive behavior support systems with mental health interventions, and career readiness and preparation work.

Schools throughout the region are implementing tools such as Skills4Success (S4S), Project-Based Learning (PBL), The Creative Sequence, and work-based learning academies.

REGION 4

Region 4 members kicked off the year by gathering together for the annual Great Lakes Loons game in late August. The game has become a popular event that allows everyone to have some great dialogue and catch up again before the start of another school year.

At meetings throughout the year, members have reviewed the impact of the budget, which was harmful to several rural schools, and reviewed other legislative proposals. The November meeting featured guest presenters, Josh Williams and Kyle Clement from Williams and Co., who spoke about superintendent contracts and NSI. MASA Executive Director Chris Wigent also attended and presented about the upcoming search for the next MASA Executive Director, MASA services, including the reviewing of superintendent contracts, and language to include in every contract. In December, the group focused on shared services and proposed changes to the Michigan Merit Curriculum and had a roundtable conversation about what is working in contract negotiations with staff.

REGION 5

The Reading Now Network (RNN) collaborative that started in Region 3 has become a catalyst for the literacy focus that is taking shape in Region 5. Four years ago, superintendents from Region 5 committed to connecting to the literacy work that was taking place in Region 3 and formally joined the RNN in 2018. Since then, the region has used the network’s established framework in individual districts.

As a region, members used reading data to identify positive outliers and visited districts, buildings, and classrooms to determine what best practices exist systematically and in individual classrooms that could be implemented across our region. Members also established an outstanding literacy leadership team to provide professional development at each region meeting over the last two years, with a focus on the Essential Practices in Early and Elementary Literacy, primarily, the Essential School-Wide and Center-Wide Practices.

Finally, thanks to the generosity of sponsors that have covered the costs of many region meetings, members built a fund that will donate \$1000 to a district in the region to enhance their focused work on literacy.

REGION 8

This fall, Region 8 welcomed Dr. Nancy Colflesh as a guest speaker. She clarified what it means for principals to be Leaders of Learning and ways that superintendents can support their work. Region 8 superintendents enjoyed this interactive session and learned from Nancy and each other. They will continue their professional learning with leadership coach David Hulings in February.

Additionally, Eddie Manuszak, Dundee superintendent, is collaborating with AASA in the formation of an Early Learning Cohort, focusing on the importance Early Childhood Education (birth-age 8). The AASA Early Learning Cohort met in Michigan Nov. 6-8, 2019, at Dundee Community Schools and Ann Arbor Public Schools. This national initiative brings together superintendents, central office administration, building principals, and other dedicated professionals to address best practices, discuss current research, and advocate for early childhood education. The team will meet again on Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2020, in San Diego, Calif. The next official national cohort meeting will be in Clark County, Nev., March 25-27, 2020. Those interested in joining the cohort can find more information here: <https://www.aasa.org/early-learn-cohort.aspx>

REGION 9/10

Members of Regions 9/10 have collectively worked to be vocal advocates for the needs of their schools, their teachers, and their students. Members have continued to be leaders in the discussions over a new school funding formula based on the work of the School Finance Research Collaborative and have pushed back against attempts to further divert money out of our state’s School Aid Fund.

The annual policy conference hosted by the Tri-County Alliance for Public Education focused on engaging region members on what is happening in Lansing and how they can use our positions to change the debate happening there for the better. Members heard updates from legislative leadership, enjoyed a panel discussion with members of the Capitol media, and were fortunate enough to have Gov. Whitmer provide a keynote address that included signing a bill into law while on stage, updating school snow day policies.

SHARE YOUR NEWS

Do you have news or information to share from your region? Please contact Haley Jones at hjones@gomasa.org.



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING CRITICAL TO STUDENTS’ FUTURES

By Steve Yauch, Rebecca Simmons, and Ebony Lofton

Social-emotional learning. It has a fancy acronym (SEL), a somewhat abstract operational definition, and we have been repeatedly assured that it is critically important to our students’ future and the future of education in general. No wonder that some critics dismiss it as merely the latest educational fad.

But the reality is, social-emotional learning has been a topic of research for decades. And it has a correspondingly strong body of evidence to support the claim that it is critically important to our students’ future and our broader educational mission.

What is SEL & Why Does It Matter?

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was formed at a 1994 meeting of the Fetzer Institute – the same meeting where the term “social-emotional learning” was first coined. In those early discussions, according to Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg (2010), “SEL described a framework for providing opportunities for young people to acquire the skills necessary for attaining and maintaining personal well-being and positive relationships across the lifespan” (p.1017). As more and more targeted school programs and interventions were being created and marketed directly to schools, the urgency at that time came from the need to build a broader framework that could assess, organize, and support a range of youth development programming. The researchers and educators at the meeting recognized a critical need to help schools to identify effective programming options and to align them to broader competencies (Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg, 2010).

Today, according to CASEL, “social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (2019). They have identified the four primary competencies of SEL as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2019).

Colloquially, we sometimes refer to these as “life skills,” “soft skills,” or “non-cognitive skills.” As we look ahead to an economic and employment landscape that is (and will continue to be) drastically re-shaped by advancing technologies and socioeconomic trends, experts outside the education field have begun to recognize that these SEL skillsets are mission-critical for a successful 21st Century workforce. Thus, when schools and districts focus on graduating career-ready students, that criteria now explicitly includes a strong background in the SEL competencies alongside the cognitive skills required for STEM fields such as mathematics or computer science.

In the 2018 Future of Jobs Report, the World Economic Forum concluded, “proficiency in new technologies is only one part of the 2022 skills equation, however, as ‘human’ skills such as creativity, originality and initiative, critical thinking, persuasion, and negotiation will likewise retain or increase their value, as will attention to detail, resilience, flexibility, and complex problem-solving. Emotional intelligence, leadership, and social influence, as well as service orientation, also

see an outsized increase in demand relative to their current prominence” (p.ix). Professor David J. Demming, an economist and professor at the Harvard Kennedy School, has published extensive research on the importance of these skills in the current and future labor market. His research has been summarized in the New York Times and other outlets with catchy headlines like, “Why What You Learned in Preschool Is Crucial at Work.” His 2017 research summary for the National Bureau of Economic Research declared, “we are not witnessing an end to the importance of cognitive skills — rather, strong cognitive skills are increasingly a necessary — but not a sufficient — condition for obtaining a good, high-paying job. You also need to have social skills...Employment and wage growth have been especially strong for professional jobs that require both analytical and social skills. In today’s economy, workers must be able to solve complex problems in fluid, rapidly changing, team-based settings.” After all, Professor Demming notes, the intricacies and fluctuations of social interaction is one area which technology has not rendered obsolete.

.....

“There is a growing body of research about best practices as SEL programs like “Leader in Me” continue to positively impact school communities and student/staff outcomes.”

Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua (2006) attempted to quantify the impact of non-cognitive abilities on economic and socio-economic success. They concluded that, “A low dimensional model of cognitive and noncognitive abilities explains a diverse array of outcomes. It explains correlated [adolescent] risky behaviors among youth. Noncognitive ability affects the acquisition of skills, productivity in the market and a variety of behaviors” (p.28). Additionally, while there is existing research on the role that cognitive ability plays in a student’s decision not to pursue further education – even when there is a financial incentive to do so – the authors identified motivation, persistence, and self-esteem as non-cognitive factors that also play “a substantial role” in that decision (p.28).

What’s the major takeaway from all this?

For every school or district with a strategic plan that identifies career/higher education readiness as a central pillar, social-emotional learning must be central to your efforts to meet those goals. But it’s not merely about the long game. There are immediate benefits to a strong school-based SEL intervention, which we see every day in our “Leader in Me” schools and districts.

Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg (2017) note that “there is also a substantial research base indicating that school-based SEL interventions have been effective in promoting targeted social and emotional competencies, which results in both enhanced social and academic adjustment and reduced levels of conduct problems and emotional distress” (p.2). Their meta-analysis of 97,406 K-12 students involved in 82 SEL programs also identified long-term benefits of participation in a school-based SEL intervention, the positive effects of which persisted years after the program ended in many cases. They examined seven outcome areas: SEL skills, attitudes, positive social behavior, academic performance, conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use. Their data showed a connection between the attainment of social-emotional skills and those positive effects across these seven outcomes. Their analysis also revealed that it was those SEL skills that were predictors of the long-term follow-up success where the more general positive attitude was not. Ultimately, they concluded that “postintervention social-emotional skill development was the strongest predictor of well-being at follow-up” (p.1).

How do you do SEL?

With all due respect to the headline writers at the New York Times, they got it wrong. SEL interventions and curriculum might begin in preschool, but it certainly doesn’t end there. True to that early vision from the 1994 Fetzer Institute meeting, a good SEL program sits underneath and around everything a school (and school community) does. There is a growing body of research about best practices as SEL programs like “Leader in Me” continue to positively impact school communities and student/staff outcomes.

CASEL’s website notes that while there are many approaches a school can take, “a systemic approach to SEL intentionally cultivates a caring, participatory, and equitable learning environment and evidence-based practices that actively involve all students in their social, emotional, and academic growth. This approach infuses social and emotional learning into every part of students’ daily lives — across all of their classrooms, during all times of the school day, and when they are in their homes and communities” (2019). A strong school-based SEL is one that is implemented throughout all grades and learning environments, from their homeroom to the playground, into after-school activities and their home life.

Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg (2017) found that the positive effects from school-based SEL programs were present across the demographic groups in their study, including race, socioeconomic status, and the 38 sites that were international. However, they cautioned against interpreting this as support for a “one-size-fits-all” model for SEL, saying “it is critical that program developers and researchers examine strategies to design and implement interventions in culturally competent ways” (p.11). This was in addition to their findings showing a drop in positive outcomes when educators did not receive sufficient support to implement the SEL interventions and adapt them appropriately. These are important components to ensuring an SEL solution succeeds and delivers the results administrators, staff, parents, and students are hoping for.

The recommendations above, of course, are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to selecting an SEL program that fits your educational setting and needs. But what is hopefully very clear at this point is the critical need and incredible value that comes from a strong, evidence-backed, school-based SEL program. FranklinCovey Education and “Leader in Me” have a long history in this area and we will be presenting a breakout session called “7 Lessons in Building a SEL Environment for the Whole Child” at the MASA 2020 Mid-winter Conference with Dr. Gary Niehaus, Superintendent of Grosse Pointe Public Schools. We hope you will join us there!

Works Cited

CASEL, “What is SEL?” (2019). Retrieved from <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>.

Deming, D. J. (2017). The value of soft skills in the labor market. NBER Reporter, (4), 7-11.

Elbertson, N. A., Brackett, M. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2010). School-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programming: Current perspectives. In Second international handbook of educational change (pp. 1017-1032). Springer, Dordrecht.

Heckman, J. J., Stixrud, J., & Urzua, S. (2006). The effects of cognitive and noncognitive abilities on labor market outcomes and social behavior. Journal of Labor Economics, 24(3), 411-482.

Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school-based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. Child development, 88(4), 1156-1171.

World Economic Forum. (2018). The Future of Jobs Report 2018. World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland.

About

- 

Steve Yauch
Senior Client Partner
FranklinCovey Education
- 

Rebecca Simmons
Client Partner
FranklinCovey Education
- 

Ebony Lofton
Client Partner
FranklinCovey Education

REWARDING STAFF FOR CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

By John Deiter and Ken Dirkin



When it comes to our students, we strive to foster growth mindsets and master important competencies in our classrooms. But when it comes to our own professional development, we so often accept “sit and get” learning sessions that are often hard to incentivize participation. Is there a way school districts can incentivize mastery of complex concepts that will affect change in the classroom?

At Dewitt Public Schools, we believe that we can do better, and that, by working together, we can motivate a paradigm shift across the district by incentivizing competency-based professional development in the area of cultural proficiency.

With the advent of microcredentialing — a digital badging system that offers an alternative to the SCECH model — we believe that we can define positive outcomes for our staff and students by rewarding the recognition of skills gained towards goals that our district cares about deeply.

Problem to Solve

The salary schedule in the master agreement for DeWitt Public Schools allows teachers to receive additional compensation for earning credits for courses beyond the bachelor’s degree and master’s degree levels. Recently, many teachers in DeWitt have been completing online courses through providers, such as Learner’s Edge. Teachers can earn up to three credits per course, which leads to a salary increase when they complete 35 credits beyond their bachelor’s degree or 30 credits beyond their master’s degree.

The salary incentive is there to encourage in-service teachers to keep learning to expand their knowledge so they can continue to improve their practice. We have seen a positive impact in the classrooms from our teachers completing these classes. The downside is that teachers do not get a reward until they have completed at least 10 courses, and more importantly, the learning does not always align

.....
“Microcredentials are a relatively new concept in education. They are a form of micro-certification — typically symbolically represented as a digital badge — that operate as a stamp of approval for mastery of a particular skill.”

with our district priorities and our school improvement initiatives. For example, cultural proficiency has been a significant initiative in our district for the past three years, but there are few, if any, classes in this area on the popular platforms like Learner’s Edge.

What is competency-based PD?

It is a model for professional development that rewards learners for providing evidence of competency in a particular skill, rather than rewarding participants for their attendance at a particular session. Under this model, educators are evaluated based on their ability to do the work, rather than being evaluated based on mere exposure to a particular concept.

This is a personalized approach to PD, unique to the needs of the learner. Wherever you are in your understanding of a particular topic, a competency-based course should encourage you to pick up where you left off and move toward mastery and the practical application of skills.

For example, If you chose to take a competency-based PD course on using wait time in the classroom, rather than sitting through a lecture on effective wait time practices, you would be provided with relevant resources and then asked to demonstrate evidence of your efforts to incorporate this skill into your classroom.

Who benefits from our program?

In the 2019-20 school year, we are piloting a microcredential program for our teacher leaders in diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are using a train-the-trainer model to build capacity around cultural proficiency in DeWitt Public Schools. Several teachers have volunteered to receive extensive training from a highly skilled trainer/consultant and then take the learning back to their colleagues.

Currently, there is not a way to recognize the knowledge that has been acquired by our trainers or the amount of time that they have volunteered. We feel that microcredentials are a way to allow teachers to demonstrate their knowledge, and by attaching a financial incentive, it rewards them for their time and effort. This incentive is available regardless of their “lane” or educational level on the salary scale.

The microcredential is currently available for our trainers, but we plan to open it up to all staff if the pilot goes well. Eventually, we would like to offer microcredentials for other initiatives such as co-teaching and project-based learning.

What are microcredentials?

Microcredentials are a relatively new concept in education. They are a form of micro-certification — typically symbolically represented as a digital badge — that operate as a stamp of approval for mastery of a particular skill.

Microcredentials follow the paradigm of competency-based professional learning by allowing educators to focus on a discrete skill related to their practice — for instance, checking for student understanding — and collect the evidence — such as classroom videos or student work — to demonstrate ability in that specific skill.

For example, one of MASA’s microcredentials focuses on the skills district administrators need to craft effective and legally sound communication plans. This course was developed to meet a pressing need from administrators — the need to develop the practical skills necessary to support and defend their districts from legal issues.

Following a competency-based model of professional development, if you are already competent and actively using a particular skill, you can demonstrate competency without spending hours sifting through lessons already learned.

Just as SCECHs operate as Michigan’s reward system for honoring teachers for the time they spend on their professional development, microcredentials operate as a reward system for honoring educators for the competencies they have mastered.

Another benefit of these digital badges is that they are shareable, meaning that once educators earn microcredentials, they can display their badges on Edmodo, LinkedIn, or a blog to signal their demonstrated competency.

It’s also highly motivating for teachers. According to the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, 97% of respondents to a post-course survey for one of their microcredential courses indicated interest in pursuing another microcredential in the future.

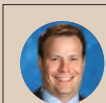
What is the program in Dewitt?

Dewitt Public Schools is committed to providing training to our staff that makes a difference in their practice and in the classroom. Microcredentials are a tool in our toolbox that helps our administration to better incentivize proficiency in areas that we strategically care about in our district. Working with teachers, staff, and students, we will continue to build opportunities for everyone to continue to grow in our schools through important initiatives like this.


To truly maximize the learning for our teachers, we can choose the credentials that we will recognize for additional salary. The next step will be to work with partners such as Michigan Virtual and experts such as Dr. Jay Marks, our diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant to develop our own microcredentials. By targeting areas of importance, we feel we can take our in-services to a higher level by rewarding teachers for their learning.

We look forward to seeing you at our session at the MASA Mid-winter Conference January 22-24 in Detroit. We’ll give you an opportunity to connect directly with Ken and me to answer your questions about the opportunities that Dewitt Public Schools are providing our staff with microcredentials. We look forward to the conversation!

This article cites the MACUL Community article “Microcredentialing & the dawn of competency-based professional development” from July 11, 2019, written by Ken Dirkin.



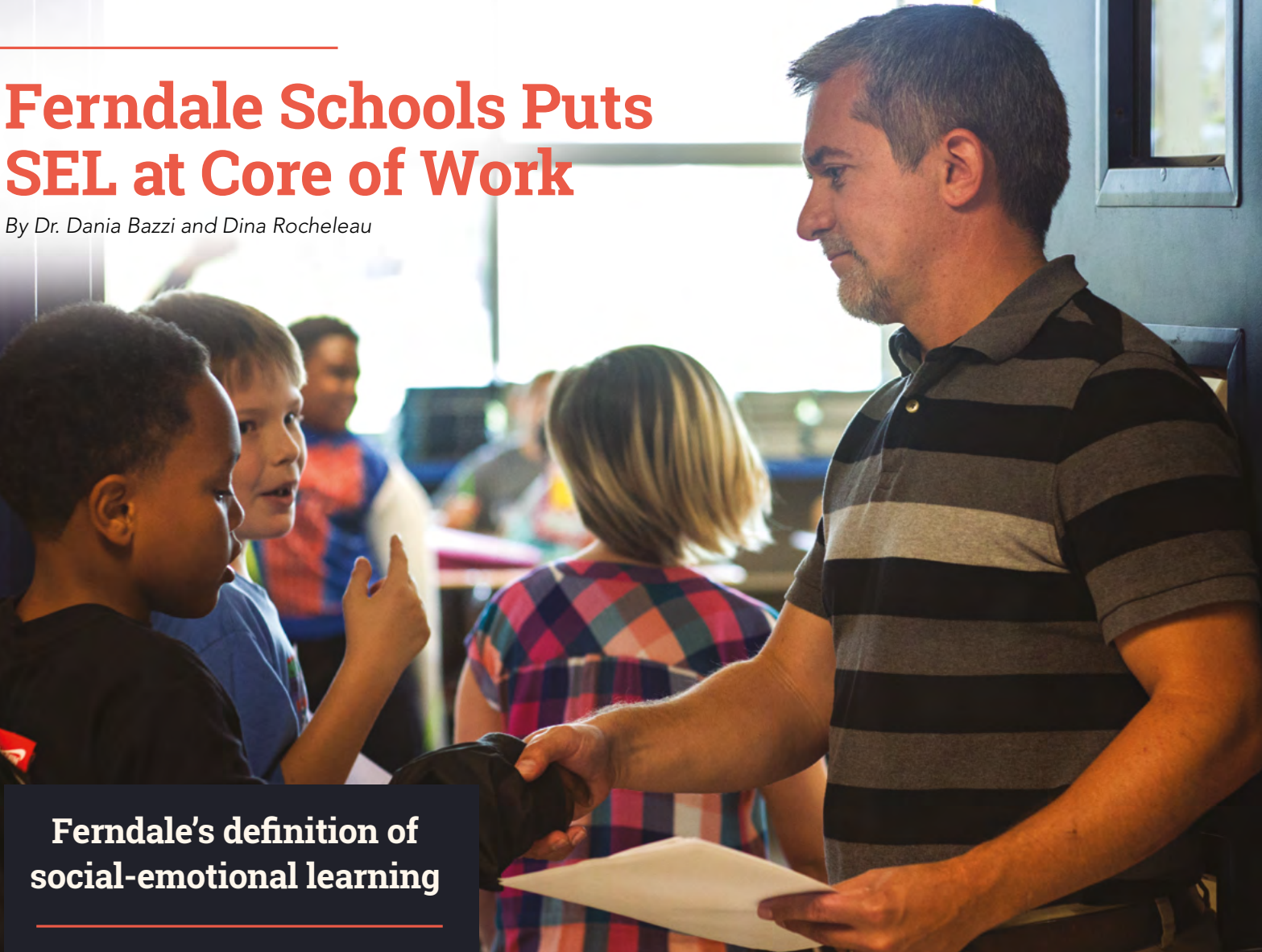
John Deiter
Superintendent
Dewitt Public Schools



Ken Dirkin
Director of Professional Learning
Michigan Virtual

Ferndale Schools Puts SEL at Core of Work

By Dr. Dania Bazzi and Dina Rocheleau



Ferndale’s definition of social-emotional learning

The process for helping ourselves, young and old, to continue to develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.



The WHY behind putting SEL at the Core of Our Work

Our children deserve to be supported in a whole child framework and be afforded dedicated time in a school environment built around acceptance and belonging. The emotional brain works hand in hand with the thinking brain and thrives when who we are is valued, and our contributions matter.

Research shows us that a sense of belonging plays a huge role in learning and protection against stress. Stress interferes with learning, so as adults, how can we be conscious of alleviating stressors for students and teaching students (and ourselves) what to do when life doesn’t go our way.

Putting students and relationships first promotes a school culture of equitable practices for all. As a district, we can help promote conditions that enable all children to build on their unique assets and abilities to reach their full potential and have a passion for life.

Our staff deserves the same support, and they deserve to work in a climate that is built on acceptance and belonging. Teacher burnout, stress, and emotions run high as an educator in today’s world. If we can focus on the social-emotional supports for staff, they, in turn, can be stronger to support students.

For many of us, this is a shift in our way of thinking. We must take an intentional approach to learn the research and be bold enough to make shifts in our mindset and adjust our practices and policies. This is not an easy task. We have moved into this with a ‘Commitment’ over the ‘Compliance’ approach.

For as long as we can remember, we have had practices in place where logic and reasoning lead the process, and emotions were not a key contender in many ways. Now we know that the emotional system, cognition driving attention, memory, decisions, and engagement are all interconnected.

One of the strongest predictors of having a sense of belonging in school is the relationship with a teacher. And belonging is linked to better academic, psychological, and health outcomes. Giving teachers ‘permission’ to step back, build relationships, and understand the importance of connections will create more teaching time. So let’s continue to find ways to take off a neurological load, not only for our students, but our teachers as well by embedding research into our daily practices and living into the understanding that a sense of belonging plays a huge role in learning and protection against stress.

We wrote a title to our presentation for the MASA Midwinter Conference with a hint of sarcasm just to challenge ourselves and others – “Do you have a black and white TV with rabbit ear antennas?” It’s true that none of us still use a black and white television with rabbit ear antennas; however, many of us hold onto established practices from way back when. (Anyone remember reading the book, “Sacred Cows Make the Best Burgers” by Robert Kriegel and David Brandt?)

Our presentation at the MASA Midwinter Conference is organized to allow us to have difficult and courageous conversations on how to move daily practice and adult mindsets to focus on the newest research, and support students social-emotional development and the fine line with behavior/discipline practices. Participants will use critical thinking muscles to look at current discipline policies, procedures, and practices to find connections and disconnects in support of neuroscience research.



.....
“One of the strongest predictors of having a sense of belonging in school is the relationship with a teacher.”

Why Did We Start?

We had some pockets of excellence in Ferndale, but a fragmented approach from class to class and school to school. If we truly want to support students, you need an intentional, integrated approach to social-emotional and academic development districtwide that embeds essential components aligned to child and brain development. We can’t ignore that there are practices in place that fragment a student’s executive function. It’s time for us to be honest about this and make adult/system changes that promote brain development while looking at practices that may do more harm than good.


We have only just begun

Our district is on the right path by putting SEL at the core of our practices, but we recognize there is so much more to do! This shift in practice has led to more recognition of the importance of relationships, a greater understanding of diverse backgrounds and experiences (not only of our students but also of our staff!), and more honest conversation among school leaders and faculty about what types of adult learning are necessary to continue fostering a true, equitable environment.


As we continue to strengthen our work and teach essential skills to students, our focus on learning about neuroscience, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, equitable educational opportunities, and restorative efforts has made as adults more conscious of our words, actions, and understanding of others, and more aware of the importance of our recognition, understanding, and intentions.

When adults begin to have internal shifts in their thinking and behaviors, the heavy lifting can begin to occur with work around implicit bias, inequities, access, meaningful participation, and other large-scale practices. In time this will lead to true culturally sustaining practices that support each and every student.

One of our favorite sayings is, “**cognitive functions are built on emotional platforms.**” We are proud of the Ferndale School family for putting our beliefs into action and knowing what’s best for our students. We’d love to partner with each of you so that we all take courageous steps in moving from a traditional school approach based on logic and reasoning to one where emotion and cognition are at the intersection of all we do.



Dr. Dania Bazzi
Superintendent
Ferndale Schools



Dina Rocheleau
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Ferndale Schools



Leadership Academies

Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators

The Horizon Leadership Academy is a two-year, MDE-approved program that gives participants the opportunity to earn their Central Office Endorsement and/or Administrator Certificate. These credentials can only be earned through a four-year university or MASA's Horizon program. [Learn more at gomasa.org/horizon](http://gomasa.org/horizon).



* Cost varies by MASA membership and credentials earned at time of registration. Maximum cost not to exceed \$6,600.

TAKING CARE OF **YOU**
SO YOU CAN
TAKE CARE
OF **THEM**



THAT'S THE **SET SEG** DIFFERENCE

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT SERVICES | PROPERTY/CASUALTY | WORKERS' COMPENSATION | FOUNDATION

www.setseg.org @setseg



Michigan Association of
Superintendents & Administrators
1001 Centennial Way, Suite 300
Lansing, MI 48917-9279

INVEST IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN 2020

MASA and its partners are hosting numerous professional development opportunities in the coming year. There's something for everyone!

Check the MASA website for more information.

- **New Superintendents Leadership Academy**
January 17, 2020
9 a.m – 3 p.m.
MELG Building
- **MASA Midwinter Pre-Conference + Conference**
January 22-24, 2020
Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center
- **AASA National Conference on Education**
February 13-15, 2020
San Diego, CA
- **MASB Winter Institute**
February 21-22, 2020
Lansing, MI
- **Drive-In: Emergency Operation Plans**
March 2, 2020
Lansing, MI
- **MSBO Annual Conference**
April 21-23, 2020
Amway Grand Plaza Hotel
- **Women in Leadership Conference**
April 30-May 1, 2020
Inn at Bay Harbor, Bay Harbor, MI
- **MASA 2020 Fall Conference**
September 16-18, 2020
Grand Traverse Resort

For more dates and information, visit gomasa.org/calendar.