



For Immediate Release
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Smaller Learning Communities Consortium Receives Grant *The \$6 million grant will impact six Michigan high schools*

October 2007 – Jackson, MI – The U. S. Department of Education recently announced that the Michigan Smaller Learning Communities Consortium will receive over \$6 million for a Smaller Learning Communities implementation grant. The Michigan Smaller Learning Communities Consortium includes Grand Rapids Creston High School, Grand Rapids Union High School, Marquette High School, Muskegon High School, Traverse City Central High School and Traverse West High School. Each school will receive approximately \$1 million over the next five years.

The Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) grant will provide the resources to create school environments that support student growth and achievement by creating small learning communities and a more personalized environment within the six participating high schools. The Michigan SLC Consortium was formed by The Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools (MCES) in an effort to bring significant financial resources to these large Michigan high schools to create school environments that are conducive to student growth and achievement; increase the achievement of all students; and sustain smaller learning communities through ongoing professional development and full stakeholder participation.

The Smaller Learning Communities grant was available nationwide to any high school with 1,000 students or more. The SLC grant process was very competitive and the USDOE received 235 proposals nationwide. Of those proposals, only 38 were funded totaling \$86,315,247.

The first of its kind in Michigan, the Smaller Learning Communities Consortium represents a collective commitment by these high schools to create successful, personalized learning environments for each and every student, resulting in increased achievement and success following graduation for all. The Consortium schools, representing four diverse geographic areas within Michigan, unanimously agreed that a collective and collaborative effort would dramatically enhance the likelihood of success as opposed to individual efforts to improve and reform. These schools share a commitment to improve student achievement for all students by personalizing the learning environment through creating smaller learning communities. According to national research, smaller learning communities within large high schools will result in improved academic performance, fewer discipline problems and reduced dropout rates.

Educators from each Consortium school came together with a shared vision of all students being engaged in relevant, intellectually vibrant pursuits of learning that will positively impact their communities as well as their futures. They committed to establishing smaller learning communities that will personalize the high school experience and create an environment in which teachers and other adults within the school know the needs, interests, and aspirations of each student well, monitor each student's progress, and provide the academic and other support each student needs to succeed. To meet this commitment, each school will receive extensive support over the next five years from the Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools and Michigan State University.

The Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools (MCES) is part of the national network of Coalition of Essential (CES) schools and centers engaged in restructuring and redesigning school organization and curriculum to promote better student learning and achievement. The CES mission is focused on classroom practice, the simple authenticity of its Principles, and its determination to measure the long-term impact of school reform on the lives of students. The work of MCES is to help educators, parents, students, and other stakeholders in developing students' ability to use their minds well. Rigorous academic standards and high expectations for all students are at the core of this effort. MCES has served as the school change partner in over 50 schools across the state.

Michigan State University's Department of K-12 Outreach and Educational Administration in the College of Education will be extensively involved in the project by evaluating the implementation of the Michigan Smaller Learning Communities Consortium program. MSU will provide timely and regular feedback to the Consortium schools throughout the five-year implementation. They will collect, analyze, and report data related to the implementation of the Michigan SLC Consortium program and the impact of this program on student achievement. The Consortium schools, along with the Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools and Michigan State University will begin the work of this grant immediately.

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