

MICHIGAN COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

2005 CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
February 28, 2005	CSS Cohort 5	Battle Creek McCamly
March 1, 2005	CSS Cohort 5	Battle Creek McCamly Place
March 7, 2005	Leadership All Schools	Lansing Holiday Inn West
March 8, 2005	Leadership All Schools	Lansing Holiday Inn West
May 9, 2005	Spring Forum	Battle Creek McCamly Place
May 10, 2005	Spring Forum	Battle Creek McCamly Place
June 20, 2005	CSS Cohort 5	Traverse City Holiday Inn
June 21, 2005	CSS Cohort 5	Traverse City Holiday Inn
August 3, 2005	Leadership New Schools	Traverse City Holiday Inn
August 4, 2005	Leadership New Schools	Traverse City Holiday Inn
August 5, 2005	Leadership New Schools	Traverse City Holiday Inn

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Our Mission
 "To assist teachers, students,
 parents, and community members
 in their efforts to create true
 learner-centered schools,
 using the principles of the
 Coalition of Essential Schools."

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Carolyn MacKanders conducted a Reflective Questioning training for principals and CSS coaches last fall. More photos of this and the Leadership training inside.

ESSENTIAL NEWS

The MCES "Roadmap to Student Achievement"

By Jim Bodrie

Public schools are being confronted with the necessity for significant and measurable change in the way they deliver services and the results evidenced by those services. This need has been emerging for many years and stems from a new and broader purpose for public education. Never before have schools been expected to educate all students to achieve at high levels of academic performance. In the past, it was perfectly acceptable to provide education of a variable quality. Now, our highly complex and technological society requires that all its citizens be fully contributing participants who possess the knowledge and the skills formerly deemed essential only for a few.

An essential aspect of improving and changing the effectiveness of our schools is to identify and use consistently an efficient, reliable school improvement process guided by a set of sound educational principles. Before any school can engage in the school improvement process, staff must have a clear understanding of why improvement is necessary and what role they play in the process.

Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools staff and school reform coaches have identified and endorsed a school improvement process to accompany the power of applying the Ten Common Principles in positively impacting student achievement. Because the focus is always on student performance, this process is being referred to at MCES as the "Roadmap to Student Achievement". It includes three main components: the Cycle of Inquiry, Curriculum Alignment, and Effective Instruction and Assessment. Everyone must understand the process and recognize that it includes steps that are cyclical in nature. With a good understanding of the process and a shared vision, staff can begin to think in terms of the changes necessary to create improved student achievement. As teams begin to work through the process, they will shape and reshape what they know about instruction, the change process, and school improvement.

The journey toward improving student achievement begins with the "Cycle of Inquiry" and the careful examination of data. The name itself suggests that "questioning" is a major part of this process and that it must be "continuous and perpetual". Data is continuously collected and analyzed to determine specific gaps and needs. It's very important to recognize that if we are to arrive at the correct answers, we first, must ask the right questions. That may seem too simplistic. It is easier said than done and is absolutely essential in order to accurately target our valuable time, efforts and resources to improve student performance. Our insistence on using the available data to inform our research and identify the right questions cannot be overemphasized.

continued

"ROADMAP" (continued)

Another essential part of the journey in ensuring student success is "curriculum alignment". Curriculum alignment can be thought of as the degree to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve to guide instruction in a way which ensures students learn what they are expected to know and be able to do. For example, we know the MEAP test has particular significance and is the primary assessment used to measure student performance. No one can hope to demonstrate acceptable student achievement if the curriculum doesn't match the assessment.

In an aligned system, all standards, benchmarks and content expectations need to be accounted for in some manner. Curriculum, instruction and assessment must be in complete agreement so that what is taught is tested and what is tested is taught. A particularly meaningful and revealing project for any staff would be to engage themselves in the process of "curriculum mapping" to achieve this goal.

As with many a journey, the "home stretch" is exciting! Without it, we never

get to the place where we want to be. In the "MCES Roadmap", it's all about changing, improving and delivering effective instruction in the classroom! All of the research, analysis, alignment and planning will not make even the slightest difference if it never impacts instruction or reaches the classroom.

In the MCES approach, the special relationship between the teacher, student, and curriculum is paramount. It's the portion of the trip where a "journeyman's" knowledge and understanding of the CES Ten Common Principles, Best Practice, Methods that Matter and high standards of instruction and assessment transform our destiny for success from a matter of chance to a matter of choice. Our success will ultimately depend upon our willingness and commitment to change instructional practice. And, as Peter Senge said, "to change...we need to stop thinking like mechanics and start acting like gardeners". The seeds we plant today determine what our students produce tomorrow.

"In the MCES approach, the special relationship between the teacher, student, and curriculum is paramount."



Anita Burton
CSS Coach at Covert
Advanced CSS Reflective
Questioning Training

MIDDLE START

Lewiston Elementary School and Middle School An Exhibition of Internal Inquiry

By Nancy Fenton

Tucked in the north woods about 45 minutes east of Gaylord is a community known as Lewiston. In this village is a K-8 school, Lewiston Elementary School and Middle School, part of the Johannesburg-Lewiston Schools. I have the privilege of being able to work with this staff as their Michigan Middle Start Leadership Coach. In that capacity I am able to help the teachers and their principal in their quest to become a learning community for both students and staff.

Lewiston is not a school that allows other people to make its important decisions. It has a large, very committed Leadership Team who takes responsibility very seriously. They are thoughtful in their decision-making and are learning that too many directions in professional development spread their practice too thin. Therefore, Lewiston is focusing on math and literacy this year. More time to embed these strategies in their everyday instruction is always sought after, but there are traces of this work already on classroom walls, in student work, and in teacher discussion. Their thoughtfulness and work to this point have put them in a perfect position to take their work to a deeper level.

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TRAINING

National Program Trains MCES Schools in Parent Involvement

Joyce Epstein's organization, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), trained Parent Action Teams from each of our CSR schools in how to increase Goal-Oriented Parent Involvement. The training provided opportunities for MCES schools to build on their family and community involvement activities to develop a comprehensive program of school, family, and community partnerships linked directly to school improvement goals, such as reading, science, mathematics, behavior, and/or attendance. The one-day session engaged school teams to:

- Connect the Framework of Six Types of Involvement to their schools' needs;
- Identify solutions to meet the common challenges facing partnerships;
- Select partnership practices to support specific student outcomes;
- Organize an Action Team for Partnerships that will lead this work effectively; and
- Draft an Action Plan for Partnerships that integrates with school leadership plans.

Based on national research, the training was facilitated by Natalie Jansorn and Cecelia Martin from the NNPS staff, and was full of examples from schools across the country. Established by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in 1996, the National Network of Partnership Schools brings together schools, districts, and states that are committed to developing and maintaining strong programs of school, family, and community partnerships. Each Partnership School strengthens its program by addressing six types of involvement and by using Action Team approach. Districts and states assist schools to develop and sustain excellent programs of partnerships. The Parent Action Teams in MCES partner schools are currently implementing the Action Plans for Goal-Oriented Parent Involvement as one of many strategies to improve student achievement in their schools.

FALL FORUM '04

MCES Well Represented at CES National Fall Forum

By Janett Bundy

"Equitable Schools for a New Democracy" was the theme of the CES annual Fall Forum in San Francisco last November. The Michigan contingent was active and well represented sending teams from 14 schools, along with MCES staff, coaches, and board member Dr. David Hamilton. The Forum followed its reputation by offering meaningful, stimulating, and thought provoking sessions focused on creating a new system of schools in which students of all races, classes, and backgrounds achieve their full potential.

MCES was proud to have two schools making presentations. From Covert Elementary, Andre Reddick and Craig LeSuer facilitated a session on "Creating Effective Parent and Community Partnerships: The Action Team Model" sharing strategies for integrating steps for implementing Epstein's model for developing parent/community partnerships. From Union City Middle School, Lori Gibson and Sherri Falkner facilitated a session titled "It's Not Too Late! Reading Can (and Should) Be Taught in Middle and High Schools" Their session highlighted strategies for teaching reading in all content areas at the secondary level.

"...the National Network of Partnership Schools brings together schools, districts, and states that are committed to developing and maintaining strong programs of school, family, and community partnerships."



Leadership Training
Participants

CSS

Collaborating for Students' Success A Strong Presence Statewide

By Janett Bundy

The CSS program had a busy fall hosting several sessions throughout the state. Four days were presented in Detroit to approximately 80 participants representing Wayne County (WRESA). These sessions focused on the fundamental beliefs of the CSS program for developing and building professional learning community and facilitative leadership. There was also time spent practicing protocols for looking at student work.

For the first time Advanced CSS - Reflective Questioning was offered to candidates who have completed two years of training and are active, experienced CSS facilitators leading collaborative teacher study groups in their schools. Approximately 50 participants attended all four sessions facilitated by Carolyn McKanders. The participants further developed an understanding of their roles as facilitative leaders and had many opportunities to practice new protocols while establishing identity as mediators of teacher cognition. The series was highly received by the participants and will be offered again next fall.

Our fifth group of CSS participants (Cohort 5) attended sessions 7 & 8 in East Lansing in October. The sessions provided more tools for improving instruction and looking at student work. School teams had time to reflect on the implementation of CSS, its impact on professional learning community, and revised goals and action plans. The emphasis on standards of instruction continued with focus on deep knowledge. Our next sessions will be February 28 and March 1, 2005 in Battle Creek.

MIDDLE START (continued)

As we looked at the grade level content expectations this year we realized that in order to accomplish these expectations students would need to use higher order thinking skills. They would need to not only know and understand classroom material, but they would have to know how to apply this knowledge in new ways, be able to break it down into its component parts, be able to take those parts and rebuild them into new wholes, and learn to evaluate. In order to ensure that their students are learning important thinking skills the teachers and administration asked the question, "How are students showing that they understand higher order thinking skills?" To be clearer with its own work, the staff has been studying each thinking skill individually. Lists of classroom examples of what student work would look like with application and analysis understanding abound.

The staff has also engaged in walk-throughs, a process originally started by Principal, Rick Holt. During staff planning time teachers make short visits in to their colleagues' classrooms expressly looking for evidence of higher order thinking. Small groups get together to talk about what they have seen. It helps the staff to strengthen its own knowledge, share ideas, and realize what is being done well in the building and what is still presenting a challenge. It helps that Principal Holt also teaches a class, participates in the training, invites staff into his classroom and is learning right along with them.

Over the past few years the staff has also engaged in studying student work. This involves using specific protocols to review the work that students have completed in order to gain greater insight into student understanding. Many of the staff has reported that this process has made a difference in expanding their insight into the work their students have done and has changed their instructional techniques.

Growth is a continual process for Lewiston staff. Some teachers started a study group on Mosaic of Thought, a book about literacy. Principal Holt and I are reading and discussing a book on leadership together. In April they will be involved in a school self-assessment. An external group will visit the building looking for evidence of student achievement and use of higher order thinking. The Lewiston staff is ready for this. Its work with internally questioning, discussing, and evaluating its own practice puts the school in an enviable position. We wish them well in this next step and know that it will add even more depth to Lewiston's work.

"How are students showing that they understand higher order thinking skills?"



Reflective Questioning Training Participants

HOT TOPIC

Gender and Achievement Gap

By Jim Bodrie



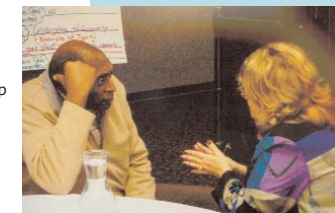
Despite what some "pop" psychologists claim, females and males are not from different planets. In fact, studies show that girls and boys share an overwhelming number of characteristics. They have the same capacity to succeed in reading, writing and mathematics. And until puberty begins, they have similar physical development, so that coed teams before puberty would have as many outstanding girl stars as boy stars - assuming of course, that the two had comparable practice and coaching. Contrary to public opinion, parents, rather than peers or the media, have the greatest influence on their daughter's lives and life choices. Expectations and experiences from family and community members are more likely to influence girls' decisions than their innate abilities. Differences in achievement come from different expectations for success and different experiences.

Developmentally, girls take the lead. They talk earlier, read earlier, and count earlier. In preschool, they score higher on IQ tests than their male peers. They usually receive better grades in elementary school than boys, yet in public schools, far more gifted boys than gifted girls are identified by fifth grade. Girls begin to go underground with their talents and abilities sometime between fifth and ninth grades. Traditional teacher training has focused on teaching to boys' interests and behaviors. This strategy is thought to help keep order in classrooms. Boy's predominately express their frustrations by acting out, disrupting the classroom in a variety of ways. Girls predominantly express their frustrations by acting in, becoming silent, withdrawn and non-participative. One way to control boys was to be sure that they were contributing - therefore, teachers have traditionally called on boys more often than girls. Boys and girls come to very different conclusions about themselves, even when the data on which they base their decisions are the same. Research shows that boys are more willing to accept success and take credit for their accomplishments than girls are. Adults, even teachers, often have different expectations of boys and girls, especially in the area of mathematical achievement. Have you taken a close look at your test scores by disaggregating according to gender?

'Expectations and experiences from family and community members are more likely to influence girls' decisions than their innate abilities.'



Goal Oriented Partnership Program - Leadership Training Participants plan for parent involvement programs.



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

MEAP Results Increase with MCES Comprehensive School Reform Efforts

By Shug Brandell

The Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools is a comprehensive school reform model provider in 15 schools and has a long tradition of school improvement success. Recent MEAP test results provide evidence that within two years of adopting the Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools (MCES) reform model, the six elementary schools increased an average of: 40.6% in reading compared to the state increase of 23%; 10% in writing compared to the state average decrease of 8%; and 33% in math compared to the state increase of only 8%.

The three MCES CSR middle schools had an average increase of: 19% in reading compared to the state increase of 11%; and 13.2% in math compared to the state increase of 11% from 2003 to 2004. From 2003 to 2004, the five high schools adopting MCES had an average increase of: 15% in reading compared to a decrease of 1% in the state; and 3% in math compared to a decrease of 1% in the state.

While these schools all celebrate improved student performance as measured by the MEAP, they also celebrate their improved capacity to collaborate more effectively. They exhibit the attributes of professional learning community as they focus on student data and the best practices to improve teaching and learning. They are closing the achievement gap that frequently exists between high-poverty schools and the state average. Former MCES CSR elementary schools have sustained their comprehensive school reform efforts and on average meet or exceed the state averages in reading, writing, ELA, and math.

Comprehensive School Reform grants are again available and eligibility is determined by student poverty levels of 50% or more. District superintendents have received information regarding eligibility for schools in their districts. Most of the funds will also be dispersed to schools identified in phases 1-5 of AYP. Tom Watkins, State Superintendent, issued a letter in March 2004 to Michigan schools notifying each building of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status. In addition, a packet of information was provided in his correspondence. The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) was specifically mentioned as a primary resource available to any Michigan school seeking assistance with school improvement.

The CES regional center is located in Jackson, Michigan. Michigan CES is a state-approved comprehensive school reform model based in Michigan. Michigan CES (MCES) currently provides school improvement support to 29 schools representing all grades and diverse populations. We would like to talk with you about how we can assist your school in receiving a CSR grant and provide the professional development that will significantly improve student achievement in your school. We invite you to contact us for further information about our services or to answer any questions at Miller@michigances.org or 517-780-9814.

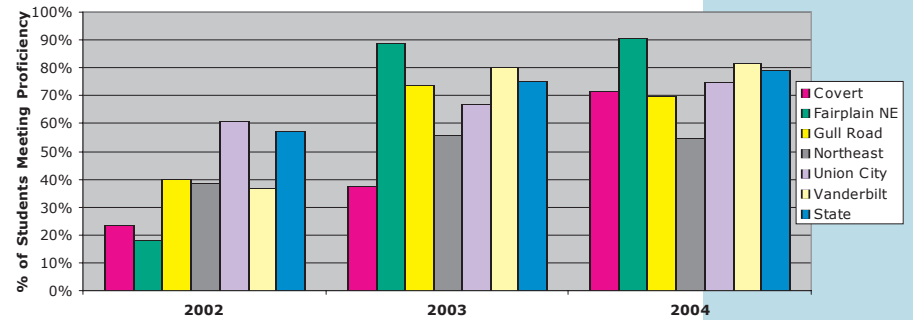


Goal Oriented Partnership Program - Leadership Training Participants learn how to look at student work to improve teaching and learning.

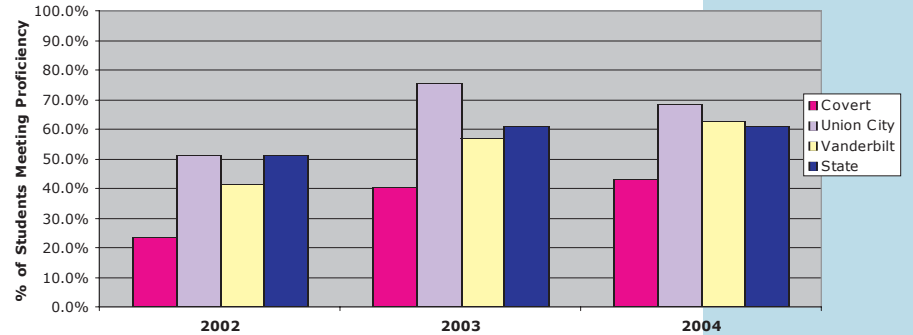


"While these schools all celebrate improved student performance as measured by the MEAP, they also celebrate their improved capacity to collaborate more effectively."

Elementary School MEAP Reading Scores



Middle School MEAP Reading Scores



High School Reading MEAP Scores

