

**2006 CALENDAR**

| DATE           | EVENT                                    | LOCATION                                    |
|----------------|--|---|
| March 6, 2006  | Leadership Institute                     | Kellogg Center - East Lansing               |
| March 20, 2006 | Collaborating for Students Success - CSS | Marriott at University Place - East Lansing |
| May 1, 2006    | Spring Forum                             | Kellogg Center - East Lansing               |
| June 19, 2006  | Collaborating for Students Success - CSS | Traverse City Holiday Inn                   |
| June 20, 2006  | Collaborating for Students Success - CSS | Traverse City Holiday Inn                   |
| June 21, 2006  | Collaborating for Students Success - CSS | Traverse City Holiday Inn                   |
| August 2, 2006 | Leadership Institute                     | Traverse City Holiday Inn                   |
| August 3, 2006 | Leadership Institute                     | Traverse City Holiday Inn                   |
| August 4, 2006 | Leadership Institute                     | Traverse City Holiday Inn                   |

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# ESSENTIAL NEWS

**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.”*

## Coaching for Professional Learning

By Shug Brandell

The coaching continuum ranges from the stereotypical coach of sports lore to the more recent occurrence of "life" coach. Coaching for professional learning in schools has as many different images as any along that continuum: from a peer coach, to an internal school-wide coach, to an external school reform coach.

A quick review of the most recent research on coaching led me to the NSDC publication, *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, edited by Lois Brown Easton. Several chapters describe coaching-like strategies but the chapter on school coaching defines the role of coaching as taking people from where they are to where they want to go, serving as a guide and a supporter helping others learn skills to solve problems and achieve goals on their own. When teachers are coached along with engaging in quality professional development, the level of application increases to 90% (from as low as 5%) according to studies by Joyce & Showers, 2002.

The Michigan Department of Education recognized the impact that an external coach has on school reform and created the ABC's Coaches Institute to develop experienced educators as facilitators of school improvement in high-priority schools. Contracting with a coach or a "turn-around" specialist is one of several options for schools that need "corrective action" or to meet "restructuring" guidelines to meet AYP requirements.

The National Council of Teachers of English, NCTE, offers many resources on its web site and reviews a study on the "Promises and Practicalities" of Coaching by Neufeld and Roper. They offer a guide (commissioned by the Aspen Institute and Annenberg Institute for School Reform) for district and school leaders who are considering adding coaching to a battery of PD support, and NCTE collaborated with the International Reading Association and the National Councils of Teachers of Math, Science and Social Studies to recently publish Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches.

These references only scratch the surface as a rich body of research and case studies is emerging on coaching. My experience has been primarily with the external school reform coach, but the diversity of coaching roles is as varied as the needs of each school and the educators within those schools. I'd like to present a brief description of coaching in the context of comprehensive school improvement that could be easily replicated across Michigan.

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*Featured ...*

Special reports from our continuing partner schools:

- Covert MS/HS
- Hunt Elementary
- McCulloch Academy
- Union City HS

Union City Elementary  
(an MCES Affirmed School)

Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools (MCES) is one of several Comprehensive School Reform model providers that relies on school reform coaches as a major intervention to facilitate school-wide reform. The MCES Theory of Action is to provide professional development specific to various school groups; such as, Principals and Leadership Teams, instructional leaders who learn to facilitate collaborative study of student work and other student performance data, parent-action teams, and content standards and alignment with classroom instruction and assessment.

The roadmap to student achievement starts with engaging staff in creating the vision of the school's "graduate" and analyzing student data to determine gaps between the vision and current reality. Next is the small group collaborative work of aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment to the state standards and embedding best practices in instruction into the lesson plan design. Then school systems and structures are changed (if necessary) to support best instructional practice. Finally staff is engaged in collaborative and reflective learning communities that examine student work to inform lesson design and implementation or to engage in other action research.

The school reform coach supports focused professional development by embedding the new knowledge and skills in the daily work of the school, holding all accountable for implementation of best practice and analysis of results. Action research using a Cycle of Inquiry is the basis for a process of professional collaboration, reflection and data-driven inquiry. The coach works with whole staff, the principal, small groups of educators in department, grade, cross-grade or cross-content groups, and with individuals. Thirty-two schools across the state have been or are currently engaged in this comprehensive process. These

schools serve K-12 students and are considered high-poverty schools because 50% or more of their students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. With few exceptions, these schools have shown significant gains in student achievement. The educators in the schools attribute those increases to the professional learning in which they engaged and to the ongoing efforts of the coaches to reinforce and support the professional learning.

MCES has seen similar results in several middle schools focused on literacy and engaged in Comprehensive School Reform through the Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools model as well as the Middle Start CSR model. Through a program originally funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, MCES has provided professional learning for improving literacy across the content areas. The program, Real Reading in the Middle, provides a series of literacy workshops and coaching by external Literacy Coaches. Again, educators in those schools cite the coaches' follow-up as being a significant factor in the student achievement gains in literacy.

In the introduction of the "Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches" recently published by IRA (International Reading Association), it states that "literacy coaching - a form of highly targeted professional development - is a particularly potent vehicle for improving reading skills. Literacy coaching adheres to what research identifies as the essential features of effective professional development. Common components include training that is:

- ❖ Grounded in inquiry and reflection;
- ❖ Participant-driven and collaborative, involving a sharing of knowledge among teachers within communities of practice;
- ❖ Sustained, ongoing, and intensive;
- ❖ Connected to and derived from teachers' ongoing work with their students.

*“These schools have shown significant gains in student achievement. The educators in the schools attribute those increases to the professional learning in which they engaged and to the on-going efforts of the coaches to reinforce and support the professional learning.”*



## Stupid in America! How We Cheat Our Kids

By Jim Bodrie

I'll bet that headline got your attention. It certainly got mine! That was the title of a special ABC 20/20 report done by John Stossel that aired on Friday, January 13, 2006.

*Will Choice Improve Schools?* That's the primary question addressed in this special ABC news report. It's a fairly simple idea: parents and children should become consumers, and schools the product. If a school isn't up to snuff, parents move their children to a better one. Thus good schools flourish and bad ones are forced to improve, or else fall away. In more and more places, "choice" has become a driving force prompting much of education reform in the United States. Charter schools, school vouchers, and the ability to remove kids from failing schools are all attempts to let public education benefit from giving families more choice.

The 20/20 report claims that a major factor in the failure of America's schools is the government's monopoly over the school system. It compares America's system to other countries' where choice brings competition. The 20/20 report contends that choice and competition are the primary reasons that schools in other countries are more successful and their students are "smarter" than ours.

The report questions government officials, union leaders, parents and students and learns some surprising things about what's happening in U.S. schools. The report includes discussion about how the educational system can be improved upon and reports on some innovative programs.

If you missed the show and are interested in knowing more. Simply go to ["abcnews.go.com/2020/"](http://abcnews.go.com/2020/) for lots of interesting information including a message board with reactions from across the country.

## SPECIAL HONORS

### MCES Board Members Honored for their Work in Education

MCES Board President, Dr. David Hamilton, and Board members John Graves and Shelly Saines, were recently honored for their work with minorities and literacy.

John Graves, superintendent of the Jackson County Intermediate School District, was recognized for his work to improve literacy. The honor was given to Graves for his five-year initiative, "Early Literacy in Jackson County -- A Promise for the Future."

Dr. David Hamilton, professor and former dean of the School of Education at Spring Arbor University, and Shelly Saines, chief executive officer of the Jackson County Community Foundation, were presented with the Jackson Community College Martin Luther King Jr. Medals of Honor. Dr. Hamilton has mentored numerous African-American students and Ms. Saines has worked diligently for programs helping youth and minorities.

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## LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

### CES/CSR Schools Gather for Leadership Institute

By Janett Bundy

On December 5, 2005, the leadership teams representing fourteen CES/CSR schools attended a full day institute in East Lansing. The eleven first year schools were joined by four third-year schools for the first morning activities focusing on the CES network. A demonstration of the MCES Website enhanced the understanding of its usefulness for networking while providing tools and strategies for CES schools. Numerous participants reflected their "thanks," as the web site demonstration acted as a reminder of another great tool for learning and CES networking.

The third year schools were able to focus on their CES Affirmation planning coming up in the spring of 2006 in a separate session, while the first year schools built on their leadership training and school change. The group was asked to continue its networking capacity during the "lunch time table talks," where leadership team members purposely mixed up with other new and continuing schools discussing the various priority principles, successes, and challenges related to CSR and school reform. As one participant said, "The lunch time conversation with the third year school affirmed that we are struggling in the right direction. They were understanding of our issues and our dilemmas."



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## COACHING (continued from page 2)

The research on coaching in general supports the inclusion of these components. Said another way in the Standards mentioned above: Coaches need to be skillful collaborators, skillful job-embedded coaches, skillful evaluators of (literacy) needs and skillful instructional strategists. As described in the school coach chapter in *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, coaching can take three forms: directive coaching, collaborative problem solving, or non-directive coaching (or a combination of all of the above). This chapter suggests that the coaching process generally requires that coach and client (school):

1. Agree on a desired result;
2. Understand the current reality;
3. Explore the assumptions leading to that reality;
4. Generate alternative actions;
5. Monitor progress;
6. Move toward self-sufficiency.

Effective coaches have curiosity and the ability to listen, question, focus, and achieve results. "Great coaching is transformational... and can help people see the world with new eyes and continue down the lifelong path of self-discovery and professional growth."

#### Resources:

- ❖ National Staff Development Council, *Powerful Designs for Professional Learning*, edited by Lois Brown Easton;
- ❖ International Reading Association, *Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches*;
- ❖ National Council of the Teachers of English, [www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org);
- ❖ The Journal of the National Staff Development Council, Spring 2004;
- ❖ Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools, [www.MichiganCES.org](http://www.MichiganCES.org).

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## MCES SCHOOL PARTNERS

2005-2006

|                                  |                                  |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Albion High School               | Morton Elementary                |
| Bunker Middle School             | Pattengill Middle School         |
| Comstock Alternative High School | Ricker Middle School             |
| Covert Middle/High School        | Roosevelt Middle School          |
| Fennville Middle School          | Shelby Middle School             |
| Green Meadow Elementary          | South Middle School              |
| Hope of Detroit Academy          | Standish-Sterling HS             |
| Hunt Elementary                  | Steele Middle School             |
| Inkster High School              | Union City High School           |
| Lewiston Middle School           | Washington Gardner Elementary    |
| Longfellow Middle School         | Washington Gardner Middle School |
| Marquette Elementary             | Wenzel Elementary                |
| McCulloch Elementary             | Wilson Elementary                |

## SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

### Union City Elementary Sustainability

Did you say, year four and separation anxiety? You bet! Early in year one, our reform coach Patricia MacArthur kept saying, "My job is to work myself out of a job!" We wondered, what was that all about? Soon enough year three was in progress, and year four was a topic of discussion well before the culminating affirmation visit took place. We are pleased (and proud) to report that "sustainability of the work beyond the grant," as Patricia put it, is apparent. We feel three key factors contributed to our sustainability.

The first factor is being a supportive, pro-active leader at the building level. Principal, Lori Vaccaro, continues to promote existing "best practices" while helping move us forward with new initiatives. Recently, we were awarded a Reading First Grant. The position of literacy coach was filled from within. She has been able to build on the goals of CES by incorporating much of the work done previously by our staff. The focus around the Priority Principals helped to prepare us so we could continue down a path for continuous reform/growth.

Secondly, our school climate has genuinely prospered through the efforts of our Leadership Team and staff to establish a professional learning community. We maintain outcomes, and create action plans that function within the 10 common principles. The value behind using norms is key to our PLC and also guides our staff in its day-to-day operations.

A third factor is the role that data now plays in decisions we are making around instruction. Our CSS teams continue to meet monthly. Valuable information is gained by looking at student work using appropriate protocols to frame our discussions. Grade levels meet regularly to establish SMART goals based on data being collected. The Cycle of Inquiry is used to monitor our instruction and the impact it is having on student work. Our district continues to enlist the services of our reform coach during this fourth year by having her meet periodically with grade levels. Data is collected and reviewed. The Cycle of Inquiry is our lens. We use it to see where we've been, where we are, and where we plan to arrive. Our reform coach remains as our "guide," helping us make sure to ask the hard questions and reflect upon them. We regularly collaborate to smoothly transition our CES knowledge into the federally funded Reading First Grant and all it encompasses.

### Hunt Elementary Best Practice Study Groups Meet Monthly

Teachers at Hunt Elementary School meet monthly in half day sessions in "Best Practice Study Groups." It is in these grade like groups that the staff is able to collaborate on looking at student work using various protocols, study the standards of instruction, best practice, and the CES 10 Common Principles while identifying the evidence of what these elements look like in classroom practice and student achievement. As one participant reflected, "I can't believe how much I get out of the "Tuning Protocol" from my coworkers. They are able to help me look at my lessons from a different perspective." The implementation of the Best Practice Study Groups is also an important piece in the preparation for CES Affirmation May 16 & 17, 2006!



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## SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

### Covert MS/HS Third Year MCES/CSR Focus on Sustainability

Covert MS/HS has been active in high quality PD this fall starting with Educators for Social Responsibility "Partners in Learning" (2 days), followed by Diversity Awareness, and 6 +1 Traits Writing. In efforts to collaborate and sort out the various strategies, Collaborating for Students' Success (CSS) groups meet in 90 minute rotations during the school day. In addition one staff meeting each month is dedicated to CSS. By creating a schedule early in the year, and following the routine of CSS meetings, accountability is built in as well as enhancing the level of professional learning community, thus establishing a norm for sustainability. As Covert diligently plans for their CES Affirmation in April 2006, they are finding that CSS is a great vehicle for collecting student work and using common lesson plan designs for their Affirmation portfolio.

### McCulloch Academy Immersed in MCES/CSR Activities

It is evident by the work in the halls, the attitudes of the teachers and the achievement of the students. A highlight this year is a new way to de-privatize practice and develop collaboration. Each month the staff meeting is hosted by a teacher in their classroom. He/she is responsible for refreshments and they share not only their physical room, but also their favorite teaching "tips" or ideas. They present samples of student work and a lesson description to be used with a CSS protocol. Together the staff looks for Standards of Instruction, HOTS and Best Practice. The "teacher-of-the-month" benefits from the feedback and the staff receives further training in examining lessons and student work. This practice has not only brought the staff closer together, it is a great step toward sustainability of the CSR.

### Union City High School Collaborating Action Teams

This year, Union City High School has expanded its Collaborating for Student Success groups into Collaborating Action Teams (CAT). While the groups continue to use protocols such as the Tuning and Descriptive Review Protocols to examine one teacher's lesson or student work, all teachers bring a lesson based on a Best Practice Structure the group has studied to share each month. In addition the group is studying the book Teaching the Best Practice Way. Monica Hacker, one of the group's facilitators, notes, "Instead of reading and hoping to understand the structure while implementing it in class, we have the opportunity to discuss it further, clarify our questions, and get implementation ideas from other group members. These Collaborating Action Teams take more time, but we have made much more progress this year with Best Practices, Standards of Instruction, and learning protocols to use in our classrooms."

Steve Brown, another of the group's facilitators said, "This experience has worked very well. It allows staff members to get together and talk professionally with a focus on improving learning for all students. Making the CAT groups small has helped with the tricky process of de-privatizing our teaching and lessons. The CAT groups have also helped in the process of bringing an accountability piece into place and this has made professional development much more effective and meaningful."

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