

Algebra in fifth grade?

For many Anoka-Hennepin students it's hardly a 'transition'



Eisenhower Elementary School math teacher Ted Erickson talks to students in one of his fifth-grade Transition Math classes.

Derrick Williams
Communication Specialist
Anoka-Hennepin School District

Fifth-grade students with a knack for numbers have access again this school year to the Anoka-Hennepin School District's pre-

algebra Transition Math program.

Educators launched the program a couple years ago after identifying a number of fifth-graders who were performing at a "very high level" in mathematics, according to Dr. Mary Wolverton, the district's associate superintendent for elementary education.

"With the current model at the elementary level, we felt that we needed an additional venue for supporting their academic needs," Wolverton says.

The program is now at full implementation, and each year, about 300 students — or 10 percent of the district's fifth-graders — enroll in Transition Math.

Identifying talented math students and steering them toward math lessons that allow them to advance more quickly is considered an intervention for gifted and talented students, Wolverton says.

The program provides benefits not only to the teachers, who can now meet a broader range of student instructional needs, but also those students who participate in the program.

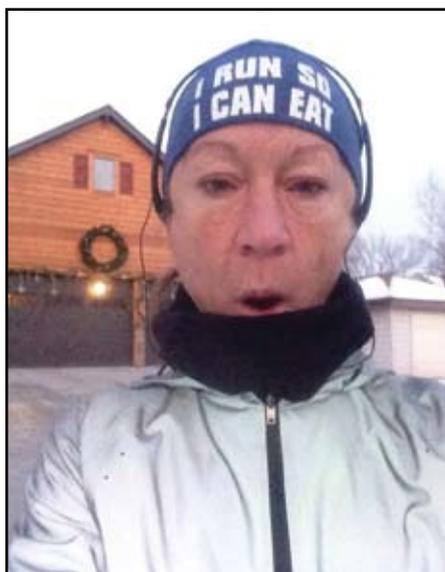
"The program was designed for fifth-graders to help bridge the gap that high-achieving students face when enrolling in middle school math that would jump them ahead two years," says Ted Erickson, who teaches Transition Math at Eisenhower Elementary School. "Essentially, if you haven't had a chance to work with a particular content, you won't understand it."

Erickson says one of the biggest benefits of the Transition Math program is the "rich math conversations" that take place among students and teachers. "The math resource is largely responsible for those conversations, and it lends itself to rich dialogue that requires a lot of reasoning," he says. "The students get an in-depth look at the standards, not just a superficial glance."

Educators and administrators initially noted a gap between fifth-grade math classes and students who went on to advanced math classes in middle school. Transition Math was designed in collaboration with sixth-grade

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Hidden Valley science teacher headed south for next running adventure



Hidden Valley Elementary science teacher Pat Mosey has been using the cold Minnesota winter to help prepare her to run 26.2 miles in Antarctica in March

Aaron Tinklenberg
District 191

Passions for running, travel and learning are coming together this winter for Pat Mosey, science teacher at Hidden Valley Elementary School in Savage. A veteran marathon runner, Mosey will soon be running in one of the most inhospitable climates in the world as she participates in the 2015 Antarctica Marathon on March 9.

Being an educator, Mosey is not missing this opportunity to teach her students — and anyone else who wants to learn — more about Antarctica. Activities in the science classroom have included a live webinar with Antarctic researches, and Hidden Valley's running club is working on running enough miles (8,925) to get Mosey all the way to her destination. Plus, she's been keeping a blog to document her preparation for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Read it at: moseyonisd191.blogspot.com

Here some questions and answers with marathoner and science teacher Pat Mosey:



What made you think to run a marathon in Antarctica?

I have always enjoyed running outside. Unless I'm stuck on a ship or in a dangerous city, a treadmill is my last resort. I prefer running in colder temperatures during the fall

and especially the winter. My mom, at 89, has been on every continent and shared all the excitement of Penguins on Antarctica. I try and tie my races into a vacation, learning

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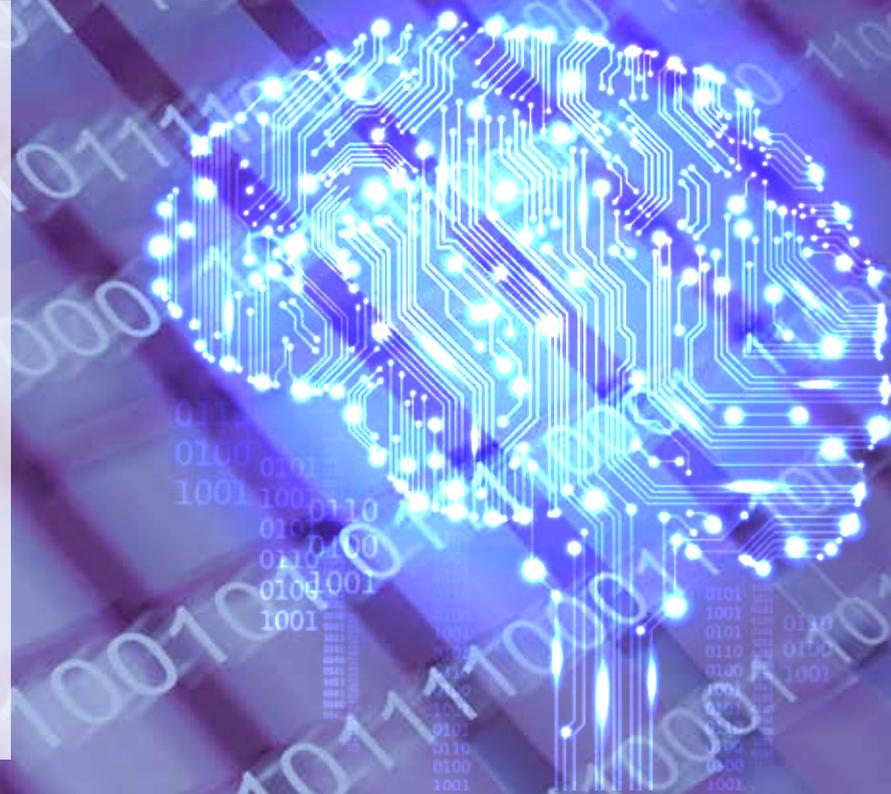
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How educators can facilitate students' goal-setting

Educators should teach students to create and track their personal academic goals to teach them to be self-directed, disciplined learners, teacher-coach Elizabeth Stein writes in this blog post. She offers five ideas and includes links to resources to help students create charts, journals or calendars of their goals.

Invite Community Guests to Your Classroom in the New Year!

Bringing special guests to the classroom is a great way to engage students by offering them a first-hand perspective in an "in-house field trip," notes Illinois fourth-grade teacher Lindsey Petlak. In this blog post, she offers several examples of how community guests have made a difference in her classroom.

Students learn about international culture by connecting with peers online

Illinois middle-schoolers in an international studies class connect with their peers in Norway, France and Canada through free videoconferencing software and social media. Recently, eighth-graders talked with their "keypals" in Norway, asking about holiday traditions, favorite sports, YouTube videos and Norwegian language and customs.

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a child in his life is a hero to me."**
— Fred Rogers

Transition Math

Continued from Page 1

math teachers to fill that gap.

Students are selected for the program mainly through MAP and MCA scores. Students in Transition Math classes undergo faster-paced instruction with more challenging content, along with less repetition and review.

As for this school year, students were identified for placement in Transition Math in the spring, and families are notified.

The district has measured the success of Transition Math by examining MCA math scores for those in the program, Wolverton says. “We look at the number of students who are exceeding on the MCA — not just proficient, but exceeding,” she says. “This last school year, we had almost 93 percent of students in Transition Math exceeding on the MCA.”

In addition to that, the data shows Transition Math is laying the foundation for continued achievement. On last year’s sixth-grade MCA math test, students in high-level middle school math courses that also took the Transition Math class as fifth-graders outperformed students who didn’t. More than 83 percent of sixth-graders who had taken Transition Math

in fifth grade exceeded the MCA standards, while 74.8 percent of those who didn’t take Transition Math managed to exceed standards — a difference of nearly eight points.

Beyond fifth grade, students who excel in Transition Math can more accurately be directed toward high-ability math classrooms in middle school, Wolverton says.

The program even has benefits for teachers who no longer teach the Transition Math students. “Those teachers can now meet a broader range of student instructional needs, which has had a powerful impact,” she says. “The teachers are able to center their focus on meeting the needs of the students in front of them — really supporting those learners and being able to build another set of leaders.”

www.anoka.k12.mn.us
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Antarctic Running Adventure

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experience or chance to get together with a family member. When I heard that there was a marathon on Antarctica, I immediately put my name on the waiting list. I’ve traveled and run in the Arctic Circle and now would like to run at bottom of the Earth.

Besides running a lot, how are you preparing for the unique challenges of this marathon?

I love running in the winter. I like to be the first person to put my footprints in the snow. So I get up between 4 and 5 a.m. each day. Weekends I sleep in. I’ve been running in snowshoes and cross country skiing in front of my house on Prior Lake. Also, I’ve been trying different types of clothing for below zero temperatures. I’ve been researching online from past races and what life is like on this continent.

What’s your marathoning history? How many? Other continents?

To date, I’ve completed 34 marathons, in 15 states. I’ve run while on vacation in Europe (Iceland, Norway, England and Scotland), and South America (Galapagos Islands and Ecuador). All of my marathons have been in North America.

Are you using this experience as a teaching tool for your students? How?

Yes, our PALS Mileage Club has been running since Oct. 1. They are putting in the miles that it will take me to travel from Hidden Valley to Antarctica. We estimated about 8,

925 miles. To date (Dec. 19), we have completed 1,076 miles.

I’ve had my students jot down questions about Antarctica, what they want me to find out or test. Here are some of their responses:

- Do Penguins dance like they do in the movie?
- Do they travel in packs?
- What is the tallest glacier? How thick is the ice?
- What is the average temperature?
- When you sweat, does your sweat freeze?

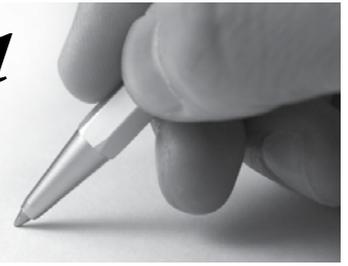
Many want me to bring back a picture.

What else should people know about this adventure?

My sister is traveling with me and is running the half marathon. People always laugh and say that they always see me running. So if they want to hang out with me, they have to run. So a few years ago I had t-shirts made for my kids, who have always been competitive athletes. Their shirts say “I run to be with mom.”

www.isd191.org
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Apply for a Grant



STEM + Computing Partnerships (STEM+C): Track 1

The National Science Foundation (NSF) STEM+C Partnerships program seeks to significantly enhance the learning and teaching of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and computing by kindergarten through grade 12 students and teachers. Programs include research on and development of courses, curriculum, course materials, pedagogies, instructional strategies, or models that innovatively integrate computing into one or more STEM disciplines, or integrate STEM content into the teaching and learning of computing.

Exploratory Integration Project Grants up to \$1.25 million are awarded. Design and Development Project Grants up to \$2.5 million are awarded. Field-Building Conferences and Workshops Project Grants up to \$250,000 are awarded.

Deadline: Proposals are due April 14, 2015.

Website: www.nsf.gov/publications/pubsumm.jsp?ods_key=nsf15537

Toshiba America Grant Program for 6-12 Science and Math Educators

Toshiba America Foundation accepts applications from teachers who are passionate about making science and mathematics more engaging for their students. Science and mathematics teachers in public or private (non-profit) schools may apply for grants to support classroom science and mathematics education, and increase their engagement with the subject matter and improve their learning.

Grants up to \$5,000 are awarded.

Deadline: Grades 6 through 12 applications are accepted year-round.

Website: www.toshiba.com/taf/612.jsp

Saxena Family Foundation Grants

The Saxena Family Foundation, Inc. has a particular focus on initiatives that promote US science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and the empowerment of girls, female children, and young women so that they have equal rights later in life. The foundation focuses on empowerment programs to include economic empowerment, educational empowerment, and political empowerment of women through literacy programs, jobs, and life-skills training.

Most awards range from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

Deadline: Applications are accepted year-

round, and are reviewed by the selection committee as they are received.

Website: www.saxenafoundation.com/guidelines.html

Science and Environmental Grants

Waste Management, Inc. supports environmental and science education programs, such as science fairs and Earth Day projects targeting middle and high school students. There is also interest in proposals to preserve and enhance natural resources.

Deadline: Applications are accepted and reviewed year-round.

Website: www.wm.com/about/community/charitable-giving.jsp

Academic Enrichment Grants

The McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation offers Academic Enrichment Grants designed to develop classroom and extracurricular programs that improve student learning. The foundation considers proposals that foster understanding, deepen students’ knowledge, and provide opportunities to expand awareness of the world around them.

Grants up to \$10,000 are awarded.

Deadline: Online applications are accepted January 15 through April 15.

Website: mccarthydressman.org/academic-enrichment-grants

Japan Foundation Education Grants

The Japan Foundation’s Center for Global Partnership (CGP) awards education grants for projects designed to increase awareness and understanding of Japan in the United States by students and teachers in kindergarten through grade 12. Grants may fund support of teacher training, curriculum development, and community outreach efforts. The program has generally funded projects such as lecture series about Japanese culture and society, and teacher workshops on how to teach Japanese culture and society.

Grants up to \$5,000 are awarded.

Deadline: Grant applications are accepted year-round.

Website: www.cgp.org/grassroots-exchange-and-education/education-grants

Instrumental Music Grants

The Fender Music Foundation awards instruments and equipment to eligible music instruction programs that are part of US public

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The Brainerd lakes area residents are feeling a warm mixture of community pride, gratitude and satisfaction because all six of the Brainerd Public Schools elementary schools were honored as 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools.

Dr. Klint Willert, superintendent, stated, "We could not be more excited with the affirmation of the quality of our schools. We all celebrate the unique and diverse ways in which our elementary schools are effective in meeting the needs of our young people. These awards attest to the amazing educational opportunities provided and supported every day by the wonderful staff and community of the Brainerd Public Schools."

Within Minnesota, only eight schools were awarded this honor and six were each of the elementary schools within Brainerd Public Schools. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan rec-

6 Elementary Schools – 6 Blue Ribbon Awards!

ognized 287 public schools nationwide as 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools.

It's unusual for a school district to pick up so many designations in one award cycle. But the Brainerd Public School District did just that - a feat noted by Minnesota Education Commissioner Dr. Brenda Cassellius.

"We're seeing something unique in this year's winners—multiple winning schools from a single district in a single year, or in recent years. That tells us these schools have figured out something special and important: how to move the needle not for just the kids in one school, but for kids in schools across the district," she said.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors schools where students either achieve very high learning standards or are making notable improvements in closing achievement gaps.

Exemplary High Performing Schools are among their state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests. The 2014 Exemplary High Performing schools included Baxter Elementary, Nisswa Elementary, and Lowell Elementary.

Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools are among their state's highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school's subgroups and all students over the past five years. Exemplary Gap Closing schools included Garfield Elementary, Riverside Elementary and Harrison Elementary.

Lowell Elementary

A 2-level traditional brick school building with colorful art-filled walls, Lowell Elementary is nestled in a family neighborhood in the northeast region of Brainerd, Minnesota. It is a Title I school, and has a diverse population of 408 K-4th grade students, 47% of whom receive free and reduced lunches.

In speaking with Lowell Elementary School Principal Todd Sauer, he said, "The bottom line is that whether you are looking at Gap Closure or High Proficiency rates, it always comes back to a focus on each child. Where are they at right now? What do they need to be successful? What do I need to do TODAY . . . to help them be a little more successful? When we talk about "I" . . . That means EVERYONE in the school. The educational assistants, teachers, cooks, custodians, secretaries, principal, parents . . . EVERYONE! All of us need to feel a responsibility and desire to help each and every child!"

As a parent and an educator, Lowell Kindergarten Teacher Wendy Becker stated, "Being awarded a National Blue Ribbon for

the second time at Lowell is a huge honor. We take time to analyze data for all of our students, make frequent adjustments to our teaching, and provide a safe and loving learning environment. I couldn't ask for a better school to teach at or a better school for my own kindergarten to attend!"

Educators at all levels are child-focused. Jessica Johnson, Lowell 4th Grade Teacher said, "When I think about being recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School, I just smile because I think of our students. I am so proud of them! As a teacher I can have the best training, curriculum, and work ethic, but it comes down to our connections with our students. It's about teaching them to want to learn and do their best."

lowell.isd181.org
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Harrison Elementary

Harrison School is a trim 2-story brick structure with gleaming hardwood floors situated in the southeast part of Brainerd. Boasting 250 K-4th grade students, Harrison is a Title I school and provides free and reduced lunches to 64% of its students each day.

Within these school walls, teachers and educators are engaging students and providing a place to learn and grow.

Harrison Elementary Interim Principal Cathy Nault stated, "The dedication of each educator and employee within Harrison Elementary is demonstrated as they work closely with families and individual students to close the gaps in learning. Receiving a National Blue Ribbon School award was a great way to affirm these efforts."

Educators have varied backgrounds and bring unique perspectives. Harrison Elementary Media Specialist John Tomonovich shared, "Having worked in several school districts and in another state, I have a somewhat unique perspective on what defines a quality school. Harrison school is faced with

challenges greater than any other school in our district, yet we achieved this prestigious honor through the efforts of a dedicated staff that is committed to making the quality of life better for every student who passes through our doors. When students know you care, they grow in so many ways."

Love of the students is the major motivator. Jennifer Pelowski, Music Teacher, Harrison School, said "Being selected as a blue ribbon school is an honor that we as educators are very proud of. We recognize that it is a rare and extraordinary accomplishment and appreciate the recognition for our hard work. We applaud the parents and our community, but especially our students. They are the reason that we do what we do each day."

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—Jim Borgschagtz,
Principal, Lake City



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Additional information regarding the 2014 National Blue Ribbon Schools is available at www.nationalblueribbonschools.com

A short Brainerd Public Schools video describing methods and strategies for achieving these results can be seen at www.isd181.org under the Success tab.

The mission of the Brainerd Public Schools, in partnership with the community, is to ensure all students achieve their individual potential by providing the highest-quality programs and resources to prepare learners for an ever-changing global society. More information can be found at www.isd181.org

A friend in need is a 'Huskie buddy,' indeed

Derrick Williams
Communication Specialist
Anoka-Hennepin School District

There's a movement happening at Andover High School (AndHS) that's special enough to fill the sweetest of Valentine's Day cards.

Dubbed "Huskie Buddies," it pairs general students at the high school with students who have special needs, using social settings and even school events to help give those students a more complete high school experience, according to advisor and special education teacher Megan Freeman.

"It's not this structured, organized thing like a para or adult hanging out with them during the day," Freeman said. "Instead, it's become this free-flowing environment where the kids with these special needs really feel like they're just there to hang out with other kids."

What's special about Huskie Buddies is it wasn't the brainchild of some academic administrator, or even a school counselor. Seniors Isaac Doppenberg and Brynna Marusic, members of the AndHS student council, led the charge back in August, just as students were coming back to school for open houses and orientation.

"It was an idea we saw elsewhere in the district, and it really caught my eye," Marusic said. "People with special needs deserve to get this part of the high school experience, so we thought about it and ran to (Freeman's) room.

The whole thing was just kind of perfectly aligned."

Indeed it was, as Freeman, too, had thoughts of starting a group. "I didn't want it to be something we were kind of forcing on the general students because so many of them are involved in so much already with sports, drama, yearbook and all of those other things," she said. "But these two came and asked if I'd be the advisor for this, and I couldn't have been happier to say 'Yes.'"

While the first couple of Huskie Buddy gatherings were a bit more formal — Freeman paired students — the last couple of get-togethers, including a trek out to a recent AndHS boys' basketball game, have been more of a natural, high school hangout.

"The parents, last time, just dropped off their kids and picked them up after the game. Sounds like a pretty normal night for a teenager," Freeman said. "It was so much fun."

And more and more students are getting involved, Doppenberg said. "We knew this was something we'd have to start ourselves, so (Marusic) and I were asking a lot of friends to come out. Now, it's just spun off. Everyone wants to be a part of it."

The get-togethers are starting to wind down — there's only about two or three "formal" Huskie Buddy events left before the year-end banquet in April. But, Freeman said the friendships created by the program have spilled into

hallways, classrooms and the lunchroom.

"You see them running to homerooms to say hello, or just hanging out with their buddy in the halls," she said of the general education students involved in the program. "It's become so much fun for them, and of course the kids here in our area light up when they come around. They're so happy to see them."

With more than 40 students now involved in the program, the future for Huskie Buddies looks bright. Marusic and Doppenberg said some junior students have volunteered to plan one of the final events of the year, just so they can get a feel for how to keep the program going after this year's graduation.

"It will be sad, but we're happy we've started something that can keep going," Marusic said.

"The parents can't wait to meet all of the buddies," Freeman said of the year-end event. "So many of them have sent e-mails of how special this program has been for their son or daughter, and it makes me tear up every time. There will be a lot of smiles and a lot of hugs as



we wind this down. It's been something amazing for us to watch as teachers and administrators. We're very proud of it."

Freeman has started a website that journals the activities of the Huskie Buddies program, which you can check out online via the school district's website.

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Building Rapport with Students

How and why do we establish rapport with students . . .

Most of us try building harmonious relationships with others, recognizing the importance for our well being as well as our communities and families, but professions like school counseling require relationship building as crucial for success.

This particular skill is also called building rapport, and it goes beyond simply agreeing with others in order to "connect." It's recognizing that others have differing points of view, yet allowing people to communicate without feeling judged, condemned or guilty. When students have rapport with school counselors they openly share their thoughts, and feel respected and understood.

How to establish rapport with students . . .

Trust . . .

This is the foundation that allows students to share feelings and thoughts with confidence that the counselor will not negate or judge these feelings, nor will the counselor indiscriminately share these feelings with others who are not trustworthy. The counselor never promises not to notify others if the situation requires such advocacy, but students trust the counselor's discretion.

To build trust, school counselors must be genuinely accepting. They should know the student's culture, not trying to be a part of it, but understand the norms and trends, which shows students that the school counselor truly understands.

Trust also takes place when the school counselor shares a part of himself or herself with the student. The student needs to see the counselor as a person too, with the same fears, dreams and problems as every other person, creating mutual respect and honesty.

Listening . . .

School counselors must be active listeners. This means listening to the words that students are using, hearing the tone of those words, and watching students' non-verbal expressions and body movements. Active listening also means identifying what is left unsaid or unspoken.

This type of listening requires a school counselor's full attention, both physical and mental, as the counselor pushes aside all other thoughts and focuses exclusively on the conversation. This means not thinking of answers as the student talks, and not interrupting. It means listening to how things are said, and avoiding stereotyping. It involves making eye contact, and listening to the

student even when he or she stops talking.

Empathy . . .

Simply listening to students isn't enough. School counselors must be able to experience the students' feelings as their own, or live an experience with a child that the counselor never lived.

Having empathy means understanding the emotional states of others, and helping those with emotional problems develop appropriate solutions. Empathy is the pinnacle of moral development, as it also means understanding one's own feelings and behaviors.

Empathy is a skill that requires understanding — a skill learned over time. It does not mean abdicating one's own point of view, rather compassionately understanding a different viewpoint and finding healthy, appropriate responses or opinions to tough and difficult situations.

Laughter . . .

Kids gravitate toward those who know how to laugh and have fun. Laughter also makes kids relax, and develops that important foundation of trust that's essential for all school counselors.

Laughter has other benefits for students as well. Medical researchers now say that laughter reduces levels of certain stress hormones, which tend to increase when individuals experience stress, anger or hostility.

Humility. Kids are often the first to sense a "know-it-all." When counselors show kids that they don't have all the answers, nor do they think they have all the answers, that increases the students' ability to connect and form a positive relationship.

School counselors also must demonstrate to students that although they don't have all the answers, they are willing to search and problem-solve with the student to find workable solutions.

Undoubtedly, school counselors enter the field in order to change and affect the lives of students. That requires the ability to connect or build rapport with students, which takes patience, understanding and compassion. Working on the skills listed above, school counselors will create the type of bonds that ultimately impact and significantly alter lives.

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www.school-counselor.org/topics/rapport-with-students.html

Grants



Continued from Page 4

schools or qualified nonprofit organizations. The instruments and equipment are lightly used, blemished, or otherwise imperfect and have been collected from manufacturers and retailers. The foundation provides information on specific imperfections to programs that are selected to receive instruments.

Deadline: Applications are accepted year-round.

Website: www.fendermusicfoundation.org/grants/grants-info

Music Performance Attendance Grants

The Sharon Gewirtz Kids to Concerts Fund provides small grants to provide the opportunity for children and youth to attend live performances of classical music and other related programming. Grants are open to schools and nonprofit music programs throughout the United States, and eligible applicants must demonstrate financial need to be considered. Grants are awarded one time, annually, and are made on a one-time basis.

Grants up to \$500 are available to music programs for students in kindergarten through grade 12.

Deadline: Applications are due June 30, annually.

Website: sites.google.com/site/gewirtzkidstoconcerts

Library Grant Program

The Lois Lenski Covey Foundation annually awards grants to rural, urban, public, and school libraries and agencies that serve children who are economically or socially at risk, have limited book budgets, and demonstrate real need. Funds are earmarked for purchasing books for young people, and are not intended for administrative or operational use. Grants for 2015 will range from \$500 to \$3000.

Deadline: Applications are due May 29, 2015
Website: www.loislenskicovey.org/index.html

Snapdragon Book Foundation Books to School Libraries for Disadvantaged Children Grant

Founded by a former school librarian, this foundation exists to put books in the hands of kids. In a time when many schools are reallocating their funds to technology and audiovisual equipment, we hope to make sure that school libraries are still offering children good books to read.

The Snapdragon Book Foundation accepts applications from January through April each year. The winners are notified by email in June and checks will be mailed to the schools at that time.

Deadline: April 24, 2015

Website: www.snapdragonbookfoundation.org/index.html

Dollar General Foundation Youth Literacy Grants

Youth Literacy Grants provide funding to schools, public libraries, and nonprofit organizations to help students who are below grade level or experiencing difficulty reading. Grant funding is provided to assist in the following areas:

- Implementing new or expanding existing literacy programs
- Purchasing new technology or equipment to support literacy initiatives
- Purchasing books, materials or software for literacy programs

Deadline: May 21, 2015

Website: www2.dollargeneral.com/dgliteracy/Pages/grant_programs.aspx#alg

LilySarahGraceFund Grants

The mission of LilySarahGraceFund, Inc. (LSGF) is to challenge and empower teachers in underfunded elementary schools across the United States to teach their curriculum through the universal language of art and creativity. The LSGF grant program aims to support schools that value the importance of arts and creativity and are looking to incorporate them in the classroom.

Grants up to \$450 for project costs are awarded.

Deadline: Applications are accepted year-round, and are reviewed on the 1st and 15th of every month.

Website: lilysarahgrace.org

Pathway to Financial Success Grant

The Pathway to Financial Success Grants are intended to bring financial education to classrooms to help children learn to make sensible financial decisions and reach their goals. US high schools are eligible to apply for a grant to incorporate financial education into the curriculum.

Deadline: Applications are accepted year-round.

What Floats Your Boat?

Students Compete in MWHS Engineering Regatta

By Becca Heistad Neuger
Communications Coordinator
Westonka Public Schools

To sink or not to sink, that was the question for Mound Westonka High School engineering students during the First Annual MWHS Engineering Regatta Jan. 13.

Dale Kimball challenged his PLTW engineering students to create seaworthy vessels using principles of engineering and design. Each team of students had one week to design, document and build a boat that could carry at least two people from one end of the high school pool to the other, following strict construction guidelines.

Rules for Construction

1. Boats must be made before the race, using only cardboard and duct tape
2. Cardboard must be only broken-down boxes
3. Only one roll of duct tape may be used
4. There is no limit to the amount of card-

board that may be used

5. No sealants may be used
6. Boat must fit within a cube measuring 7 feet on a side
7. Propulsion must be provided only by hands and cardboard. No feet may be used in propelling the craft. (i.e., no pedal-powered paddles)
8. Any illegal materials will disqualify the team

At noon on Tuesday, MWHS students, staff, parents and community members packed the pool viewing gallery to watch the inaugural regatta. Also in attendance was Jim Mecklenburg, state program director for PLTW. MWHS School Connections Coordinator Jen Bormes served as emcee for the event, and Assistant Principal Marty Fischer kept watch as lifeguard.

As the boats launched, it was clear that most would not survive their maiden voyage. Many teams didn't make it out of the shallow end of the pool, while other crafts foundered along the journey.



In the first heat, a leaden watercraft engineered by sophomores Adam and Sam began taking on water as soon as it entered the pool. As junior Braeden's boat began to sink below the surface midway through the race, he gave a salute to spectators and went down with his ship. Things were going swimmingly for junior Kyrie and freshman Amy until their beautifully-constructed cardboard cruiser capsized at the turn.

Two boats in the competition lived to race another day. A flat, raft-like vessel captained by seniors Addie and Connor won the first heat with a time of 1:35. The third member of their team was junior Hans. In the second (and final) heat, freshmen Jacob and Sam paddled a rectangular racer to victory, finishing four seconds faster than Addie and Connor. Other members of the

winning construction team were juniors Alex, Broc, sophomore Ian and freshman Logan.

Whether they crossed the finish line or had to hoist soggy shipwrecks onto the pool deck, the engineering students learned important lessons about trial, error and the scientific method. They also learned that, no matter how carefully you plan, it's always good to wear a life jacket.

To view an excellent video of the race created by Mound Westonka High School senior, Brock, go to <http://youtu.be/MA8qeJc70zg>

www.westonka.k12.mn.us
(952) 491-8000



Editor's note —g Instructor and Mark Femrite, Asst. Supt. of Teaching and Learning a few questions about the regatta. Here is what they had to say:

What was the reason for planning this event and what did you hope the students (both directly involved and the general population) would get from it?

The purpose of hosting the Engineering Regatta was two-fold:

1. To build awareness across the high school student body that taking engineering classes can be fun and for students to consider taking the new engineering courses offered at the high school.
2. Provide an opportunity for current engineering students to apply the engineering concepts that have learned in class to a real-life project.

We were excited about how serious the engineering students were about the regatta competition. The students spent many hours designing and building their boats. We were also pleased by the turnout of the student body and parents who came to watch the competition. A primary goal of the regatta was to build awareness about engineering and demonstrate to the student body that taking engineering courses can be challenging at times but also a lot of fun while getting the opportunity to solve problems that impact the world around them.

What are some of the problems that the students encountered during the design and building of the boats? What were some of the ways that the students solved these

issues?

A few problems the student encountered were time constraints and the lack of material. Students had to find ways to split up their workload to finish in the few days they were given. The biggest challenge for students was that they only had one roll of duct tape. I am not going to change the amount that they get to use next year, because I feel that this is a great example of what engineers face on a day to day basis. Engineers are given certain constraints and they need to design and develop a solution within these constraints.

In the video it was said that there was a lot of positive feedback. Could you please share some of that?

It was amazing how much students were talking about the regatta after seeing it. Students that are in my engineering class stated that they were answering questions about the engineering course even a few days after the event. Staff members took time out of their schedule to come and watch the event and to support the students. Administration stated that this was a huge success and that they were looking forward to seeing what the students could accomplish next year. The best feedback that I feel was a parent of one of my engineering students emailed the administration to tell them that they thought the regatta was a great idea and that they love being invited in to the school to see what their child is doing. They mentioned that this was the first time that they were invited to the high school during the day for something like this and they would love to see more of this.



JUNIOR VISIT DAYS

These Visit Days are designed for students and their families looking for important steps and information relevant to their current academic year. The day consists of an admissions presentation, student-guided campus tours and refreshments with students and staff. Arriving promptly at 10 a.m. is encouraged to get the fullest MSOE experience.

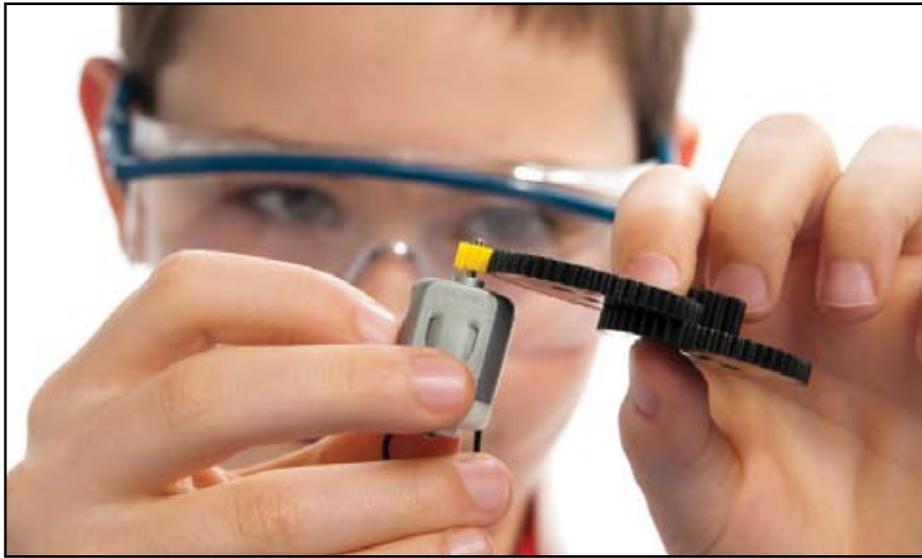
The following Junior Visit Days will be held from 10 a.m.–1 p.m.
Feb. 27 and March 13



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Apple Valley middle school's 'Fab Lab' built to engineer better students



By Christopher Magan, Pioneer Press

Valley Middle School eighth-grader Jarett Huard manipulated water-filled syringes attached to hoses that served as a hydraulic system for a mechanical arm he built out of wood, cardboard, plastic and hot glue.

The Apple Valley student's goal was to pick up and move a small disc with his creation. He used high-tech tools such as a three-dimensional printer, laser etcher and vinyl cutter to make parts for the robotic tool.

"It's my favorite class," Huard said. "If I could do it all day, I would."

This isn't your father's woodshop or even your older sister's "tech-ed" class.

Valley Middle School celebrated the opening of a fabrication lab on Friday that pairs computers and precision tools, allowing students to learn advanced manufacturing skills.

There are even a few drills and band saws around to complement the digital age.

For Huard, the so-called "Fab Lab" rein-

forced his desire to study engineering in high school and college.

"I think it's a privilege," he said of working in the lab. "It's something everyone should have a chance to do. It helps develop real world skills."

The Fab Lab is part of the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan school district's effort to encourage collaborative learning and creative problem solving across its elementary, middle and high schools. All schools in the district have a growing focus on STEM education, short for science, technology, engineering and math, that encourages project-based learning and student exploration.

"These are things that are great for all learners," said Cathy Kindem, who coordinates STEM and magnet programs for the district.

A handful of district magnet schools will serve as STEM hubs and feature dedicated programming and spaces like the Fab Lab. Cedar Park and Glacier Hills already have similar equipment, and Apple Valley High School is expected to begin work on its own lab in the coming weeks.

The Fab Lab concept was developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and versions have popped up in a handful of Twin Cities schools, including Mahtomedi and Prior Lake. Valley Middle School leaders

believe their lab is one of the region's first at the middle school level that is open to every student.

Principal Dave McKeag said all of the school's roughly 800 students will use the lab, and not just in math and science classes but during their English, art and communications studies.

"It's not just about making little engineers," he said. "It's about making better thinkers and better collaborators."

Total cost of the lab was about \$100,000, including the high-tech tools that were funded through a partnership with BTD Manufacturing in Lakeville.

BTD President Paul Gintner said the Fab Lab was an easy project for his company to support because it will help develop workers with skills that businesses such as his need.

"When I walked into the lab today, it felt like a little BTB," Gintner said.

Reprinted with permission from the St. Paul Pioneer press — www.twincities.com/education/ci_26998475/apple-valley-middle-schools-fab-lab-built-engineer

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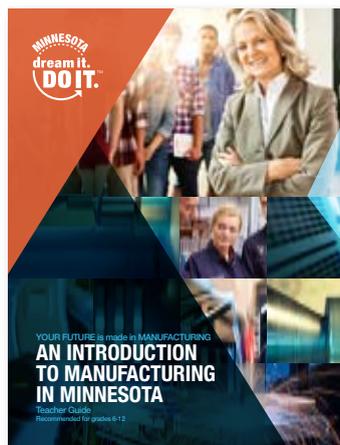
We want this guide to be **relevant and useful to you**, so in each chapter we have included applicable educational standards, including talking points and ways to engage students' different learning styles.

Manufacturing is the backbone of Minnesota's economy. In fact, according to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development,

- Minnesota has more than 307,200 manufacturing careers statewide.
- Manufacturing contributes \$43.7 billion to the state economy.
- The average manufacturing salary is around \$59,000.
- Many top manufacturing brands are based in Minnesota, including Land O' Lakes, General Mills, and Ca

This is just a little bit of the information we've developed for you to share with your students, and we hope you find this guide and disc to be effective tools in sharing manufacturing information in your classroom.

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dreamitdoitmn.com



An Introduction to Manufacturing in Minnesota (recommended for Grades 6-12), provides lesson plans and videos to introduce middle school and high school students to manufacturing and careers in manufacturing. **To win \$2,000 for your classroom, email jmeyer@bemidjistate.edu for more information.** The opportunity will be awarded by the end of 2015. For more information about resources to share with students and parents visit www.dreamitdoitmn.com

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These programs are supported by an NSF ATE Program Grant, award number 1204550. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation (www.nsf.gov).



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Survey: Manufacturing Strength to Continue in 2015

Manufacturers are optimistic, point to an increase in productivity



ST. PAUL — Minnesota manufacturers are optimistic about the industry in 2015, with more than 90 percent saying they expect production and employment levels to increase or stay the same — up more than 10 percent from 2014 for both indicators— according to a survey by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and the

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

In the random survey of Minnesota manufacturers conducted in November, 52 percent of those that responded expect orders to grow in 2015 and 42 percent expect to hire more workers.

“Based on the results of the annual Manufacturing Business Conditions Survey,

manufacturers have a positive outlook for their industry and for the state’s economy in 2015,” said DEED Commissioner Katie Clark Sieben. “In terms of new jobs, Minnesota’s manufacturing industry is growing at more than double the national pace, and the continued positive expectations from industry leaders reflect added confidence for the coming year.”

Among other findings in the survey:

- 93 percent expect exports to increase or stay the same, up 2 percent from 2014.
- 95 percent expect productivity to increase or stay the same, up 5 percent from 2014.
- 85 percent expect profits to increase or stay the same, up 17 percent from 2014.
- 85 percent expect investments in plants or equipment to increase or stay the same, up 5 percent from 2014.
- 90 percent expect orders to increase or stay the same, up 13 percent from 2014.

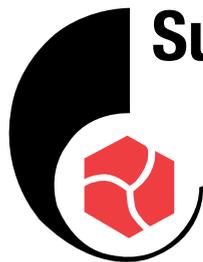
In addition, manufacturers were also optimistic about the outlook for the overall

state economy in 2015. The survey showed that manufacturers were more optimistic than a year ago about overall corporate profits, economic growth, consumer spending, business investments and employment. The full report is available at the site below:

Website: www.mn.gov/deed/data/research/manufacturing-conditions-survey.jsp

The survey, prepared by the DEED Office of Analysis and Evaluation in conjunction with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis elicited 267 responses from 1,000 randomly selected Minnesota manufacturers. The sampling error is +/- 5.9 percent. As one of 12 regional Reserve Banks that serve as the nation’s central bank, the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis is responsible for making and carrying out monetary policy, supervising and regulating banks and bank holding companies, and providing financial services to depository institutions and the U.S. Treasury.

From: mn.gov/deed/newscenter/press-releases/newsdetail.jsp?id=466-152465



Productivity Inc®

by Hope Riska

What is Oktoberfest Student Career Day 2015?

In support of Manufacturing Education, every other year we hold our Bi-Annual Oktoberfest Machine Tool Show, with the first day being dedicated *only* to Education. Our next Oktoberfest Student Career Day will be September 21, 2015. We invite middle, high school and post-secondary schools in our 5.25 state area to come see the latest Manufacturing Technology under one roof where they will have the opportunity to see many different machines and witness first-hand what these machines can do. Learning how *manufacturing impacts lives* — from Medical Devices that save lives, to automotive innovation as well as robotics and automation.

Everyone seems to have all of the latest devices — iPads, iPhones/Smartphones, etc. — but where did they come from? Someone had to *imagine* it, someone had to *design* it, someone had to *build* it and have it ready to *sell* . . . then, and *only then* do these things end up in YOUR hands.

At our 2013 Oktoberfest Student Career Day, we hosted over 1,100 Students and Teach-

Supporting Manufacturing – Locally and Nationally!

ers from 29 schools (Middle, High School and Post-Secondary), as well as 14 Local Manufacturing Companies participating in the Career Day part of the event. Some Post-Secondary students even brought their resumes most of the companies were hiring!

What is HTEC?

As a Machine Tool Distributor, we work with many machine tool builders. Haas Automation, in particular, has continually gone the extra mile in their support of Manufacturing Education. They include free “membership” in the HTEC (Haas Technical Education Centers) Network, offering educators from across the country, and even throughout the world, the opportunity to network with each other and possibly discover new ways they can improve, continue or start manufacturing programs in their schools.

When they join the “network,” members have access to a wide variety of contacts, benefits and services, including equipment discounts, training conferences, teacher training, educational and online training software as well as many HTEC Technology partners. HTEC Members can contact, collaborate and network with over 1,600 schools — High School and Post-Secondary (Community and Technical Colleges, Universities) throughout the US and Canada.

We were fortunate to have co-hosted the National HTEC Educator Conference last summer with Dunwoody College of Technology. Dunwoody hosted 168 Educators and Industry Partners. Coming up July 27–30, 2015 the National HTEC Educator Conference will be



2013 Oktoberfest Student Day.

hosted by Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, CA. See www.HTECNetwork.org/conferences.cfm for more information. Registration for the 4-day event is \$150. The 4th day of the conference even includes a trip to the Haas Automation, Inc. factory for a tour!

Why is it so Important to Productivity Inc?

We, as a local Distributor, are fortunate to work with schools in our area — Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska and Western Wisconsin — not only to provide them with educational discounts on Haas machines, but to support and encourage them in their programs as well.

As an Industry, we not only have an opportunity, but also a *responsibility* to do what we can to encourage today’s youth to pursue careers in Manufacturing. When you look at the next 10 years, there are a lot of people in our industry retiring. Yes, we hear all of them time about the shortage of skilled workers. We need to DO something about it, not just talk about it. If WE don’t get Industry and Education working together to excite THIS generation about Manufacturing Careers, who is going to encourage the generations to come?

Watch www.productivity.com for more information on Oktoberfest Student Career Day 2015. If you would like to know more about Student Day or the HTEC Conference, feel free to contact hriska@productivity.com.

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Student Contests and Awards

STEM Voice Video Competition

The STEM Voice™ Video Competition is nation-wide opportunity for kids in grades 5-12 to artistically explore the importance of STEM. The competition encourages you to be creative and use video to show how much you love STEM. Act it out, create an animation, sing it but, make sure it is appropriate for all ages. One semi-finalist from Middle School (grades 5-8) and one semifinalist from High School (grades 9-12) will be selected from each of the three regions. Each semifinalist (6 total) will receive a \$500 cash award. Two grand prize winners (one from Middle School and one from High School) will receive \$1,000 cash awards.

Website: www.csbinstitutes.org/go.cfm?do=Page.View&pid=13

Young Scientist Challenge

Discovery Education and 3M invite students in grades 5 through 8 to participate in the Young Scientist Challenge. Entrants must create a one- to two-minute video describing a new, innovative solution that solves an everyday problem.



Green in Action Awards

Green In Action Awards will be granted to inspiring projects based on GEF's sustainability themes. Winners are those schools, classrooms or youth groups who have demonstrated their commitment, creativity, or passion for sustainability in their application. Great application materials include photos, videos, essays, or artwork describing your environmental project, weigh-in, activity, community service project, or green team program!

Winners receive \$250 for their class! They will also be featured in national news and have their application materials (such as videos, photographs and scanned artwork) shared on the National Green Week site.

Deadline: May 2, 2015

Website: www.greeneducationfoundation.org/greenweek/contests/green-in-action-contest.html

Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators

The Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators Program, a partner-

Ten finalists will each receive \$1,000. The grand-prize winner will receive \$25,000.

Deadline: Entries are due April 21, 2015.

Website: www.youngscientistchallenge.com/

VSA Playwright Discovery Award Competition

The annual VSA Playwright Discovery Award Competition invites middle and high school students, with and without disabilities, to explore the disability experience through the art of script writing for stage or screen. Entries may be the work of individuals or groups of up to five students. Young writers are encouraged to examine how disability affects their lives and the lives of others, and express their views in a one-act script of fewer than 30 pages. Scripts can feature fictional characters and settings, or present students' actual experiences and observations.

One winning script in the Primary Division (grades 6 and 7) and Junior Division (grades 8 and 9) each receive \$500 cash award for the winning schools; Senior Division winners receive a weekend workshop in Washington, DC, and possible performance at

the Kennedy Center. language. **Deadline:** Nominations are due May 31, 2015. **Website:** www.aatg.org/?page=EmbassyAward

ship between the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), recognizes outstanding K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context for learning for their students. Up to two teachers from each of EPA's 10 regions, from different states, will be selected to receive this award. Winning teachers will receive an award of up to \$2,500 to further the recipient's professional development in environmental education. Each winning teacher's local education agency will also receive an award of up to \$2,500 to fund environmental educational activities and programs.

Deadline: Apply by March 13, 2015

Website: www2.epa.gov/education/presidential-innovation-award-environmental-educators

German Embassy Teacher of Excellence Award

The German Embassy Teacher of Excellence Award recognizes outstanding teachers using modern methods and media to achieve excellence in teaching the German language in the United States. Teachers of any level are eligible for this annual award. The prize includes a two-week professional development course in Germany provided by the Goethe-Institut, which offers award recipients the opportunity to gain new teaching techniques, as well as experiences with German culture, society, and

the Kennedy Center.

Deadline: All script entries are due April 13, 2015, at 11:59 p.m. (PST).

Website: www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/programs/about_playwright_competition.cfm

VSA International Art Program for Children with Disabilities

VSA proudly presents a unique opportunity for student-artists with disabilities from around the world to display their artwork side-by-side in an online exhibition. A selection of artwork from the online entries will be chosen for a live exhibition in Washington D.C.!

Deadline: May 11, 2015

Website: www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/programs/vsa_iap.cfm

2015 Science Without Borders Challenge

This annual international art competition is open to kids ages 11-19 worldwide. This year's theme is "Reef Relationships"; to enter,

language.

Deadline: Nominations are due May 31, 2015.

Website: www.aatg.org/?page=EmbassyAward

Teachers for Global Classrooms (TGC) Program: American Teachers

The US Department of State, through the Teachers for Global Classrooms (TGC) Program, will provide a yearlong professional development opportunity for US teachers to build twenty-first century skills as practitioners and ambassadors of globalized classroom teaching and learning. Eligible applicants are current, full-time middle or high school teachers with five or more years of classroom experience in disciplines including, but not limited to, English language learners, English language or literature, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Deadline: Applications are accepted through the online application system through March 18, 2015.

Website: www.irex.org/application/teachers-global-classrooms-tgc-american-teachers-application-information/

TEAMS (The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages) Teaching Prize

TEAMS is seeking submissions for its third annual teaching prize for K-12 teach-

submit an original art work that reflects this theme. Judging will be done in two age categories (middle school and high school) with a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner in each age category.

Deadline: Submissions must be received by April 27, 2015.

Website: www.livingoceansfoundation.org/resources/for-educators/science-without-borders-challenge/

State Fish Art Contest

This annual art contest for kids is sponsored by the Fishing League Worldwide. To enter, submit an original work of art that is 9"x12", and done horizontally. The artwork maybe of any state fish (there is a list of state fish provided on the State Fish Art Contest site). You must also include a written page about the fish you have illustrated.

Deadline: March 31, 2015.

Website: www.wildlifeforever.org/contest/details

ers. Teachers are encouraged to submit their original, unpublished lesson plans dealing with medieval studies topics for consideration. Teachers of winning submissions will receive cash prizes and publication of their lessons in the Once and Future Classroom. Lessons might have been designed as part of a medieval unit, a component of a survey course, or be drawn from a class designed around a specific text or topic (i.e. Beowulf or Robin Hood).

Award: Winning lessons will be published in the fall edition of The Once and Future Classroom. The first prize recipient will receive a cash award of \$1000, and the second prize recipient will receive \$500. Circumstances allowing, the first prize recipient of the 9-12 category will be asked to present his or her paper in a TEAMS-sponsored session at the following year's International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan, at which time their award will be formally presented to them. A travel subsidy will be provided to the prize recipient to help make their involvement at the conference possible.

Website: www.teamsmedieval.org/ofc/Spring%202013/2014TeachingPrize.html

Mind your “P’s and Q’s”

Erin Caughron

Woodbury Middle School teacher
South Washington County Schools

November 26th was not only the day before the Thanksgiving holiday, but it was also the last day of the trimester in *4C’s* (*Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity*) for the Woodbury Middle School 7th grade students in Hurricane House. It was a day of celebration, and in many ways preparation for the students at their *4C’s Etiquette Breakfast*.

4C’s is a class designed to prepare students for the “real world.” *Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity* are buzz words in today’s working world. Adults work with others on a daily basis, whether they are coworkers, clients, or family members. Every day they have to communicate their thoughts and ideas. They have to find the most effective ways of working and analyzing what is in front of them. They have to think outside the box to problem solve and find new solutions. In class, students are asked to reflect on questions relating to each of the *4C’s*. How do we learn to work with others when we don’t always see eye to eye? How do we draw out individuals’ strengths when working in groups? How do we communicate in ways

that promote success? Is it always what we say that counts, or is it more about how we say it, or maybe even what we don’t say?

This fall, the 7th graders began by exploring personality types and learning styles. It was important to understand that we all are different and approach situations differently; something that can be both refreshing and frustrating. From there, the trimester flew by with mock survival scenarios and timed skits where students had to write and perform under pressure. They explored various skills needed in the business world during their extensive Amusement Park Project. Students designed, planned, and marketed what they wanted their Amusement Parks to look like before they gave their proposal to the bank (aka the teacher) for a loan. After receiving a budget, they then strategized the final layouts and loan repayment plans.

So why an Etiquette Breakfast? Much of the year has been spent on the power of verbal and nonverbal communication. Impressions are important and can be what leads to future successes. The *Etiquette Breakfast* evolved in a fun way.

Woodbury Middle School has five houses, all named after natural disasters: *Avalanche, Hurricane, Tsunami, Tornado,*



and *Firestorm*. The *4C’s* students recognized a problem on school spirit days where many of our teachers are split between two houses or even teach all five houses. Instead of forcing the teachers to choose one house over another to support, the students choose to design and market t-shirts to staff and students that combined all five houses into the “Perfect Storm.” All the students contributed design ideas and then they reviewed, critiqued, and combined design elements before taking them to a custom t-shirt shop in Woodbury. The shop’s team showcased *Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity* throughout the entire process.

When given the opportunity to choose what to do with the proceeds from their t-shirt sales, the 7th graders surprised their *4C’s* teachers by turning down pizza parties or field trip extras. Mrs. Hill and Ms. Caughron had been discussing how much people’s actions and other nonverbal communications influence impressions — even at the dinner table. Family gatherings, fine-dining restaurants, weddings, even job interviews can be situations that require knowledge of table etiquette. The students voted to spend their t-shirt money on an *Etiquette Breakfast*. This delighted the teachers because it showed how much the students valued investing in concepts studied in the previous weeks.

The *4C’s Etiquette Breakfast* was planned for the last day of the trimester just before Thanksgiving. In the week leading up to it, the students practiced common courtesies, fine dining skills, and conversation. They learned how to set a table properly, how to signal when they were finished eating, how to properly pass items around the table, among other table etiquettes.

Students also practiced “small talk” to better prepare for the upcoming Thanksgiving weekend where students might sit across the table from a distant relative,

or someone they may not know well. To alleviate awkward conversations, students explored engaging conversational topics and how to be inclusive to others while in social situations.

Shelly Caron, one of WMS’s staff members, recommended working with Dan Klassen, the store manager for a Woodbury market. He quickly made what could have been a stressful event into a worry-free experience. The students were able to dine family style with fruit, eggs, hash browns, and sausage donated by the Woodbury grocery. Their professionalism, generosity and expertise created a memorable experience for the middle schoolers.

“We are truly blessed to have companies like the custom t-shirt shop and the grocery market in our community. Woodbury has been in the national spotlight for excellent academics and our school success ties to our community. Our students directly benefit from local businesses and individuals who are willing to share their time, expertise, and resources. Thank you to the Mrs. Lopez, our WMS principal, Shelly Caron, and Dan Klassen and his team for making this experience special!”

—Ms. Caughron

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Digital curriculum helps personalize students' learning

Teachers personalize material, deepen learning through students' use of iPads

District 197 Communications Office

Last year sixth grade students at Friendly Hills Middle School and Heritage E-STEM Magnet School began studying Minnesota's history in a new way. Using iPads with a digital-based social studies curriculum has allowed students to dig deeper into learning, easily analyze multiple sources of information, improve collaboration skills and amplify their learning.

Where classroom learning used to be limited to words printed in one history textbook, now a world of articles, news reports and resources are available at students' fingertips every day. Teachers still guide learning, but with a wealth of resources, they can more easily adapt lessons and personalize learning.

Fran Olson, social studies teacher at Heritage, sees value in using digital curriculum in her classroom, especially because she can easily incorporate up-to-date resources and multi-media such as video and audio files into her lessons. On the iPads, students can click on interactive maps to see where historical events happened. They can watch videos of prominent figures being interviewed, or see slideshows of photos from special events. All of these tactics are used to help students gain a deeper and lasting understanding of the material.

Students also learn how to be responsible digital consumers and producers while using the iPads. These are skills students will use beyond the classroom.

"We're providing students with the tools and resources they need to be successful," Olson said. "Technology helps students develop skills they will find extremely useful in high school, college and the job market."

Last year was the first year the digital social studies curriculum had been in place in District 197. The digital curriculum was created through the new "Minnesota Partnership for Collaborative Curriculum" which has more than 40 school district members, including District 197, Bloomington, St. Paul, Eden Prairie and South Washington County.

Teachers from districts in the partnership are working together to create and share digital curriculum that meets State Standards for various subjects for grades 3-12. This collaboration helps reduce costs for curriculum development and allows our teachers to be part of the curriculum writing process.

Over the next year, digital curriculum is expected to expand to District 197 middle school math courses, high school world history, and 6th grade language arts.

Last year, students in Olson's 6th grade

social studies classes responded well to the transition to digital curriculum, and enjoyed using iPads in the classroom each day. They liked communicating with each other and accessing lessons and multi-media resources online in ways that are natural and relevant to them, Olson said.

While the District 197 Curriculum office expects digital curriculum to eventually become the norm in many classrooms, the implementation can only go so far. The success of digital curriculum is dependent on the number of technology devices available to students, the infrastructure to support and update that technology, and the amount of training provided to teachers, said Kate Skappel, District 197's digital learning coordinator.

"While traditional teaching methods will continue to be appropriate for some students — especially our youngest learners — digital curriculum provides undeniable benefits for our



students and teachers," Skappel said. "In fact, many other schools in Minnesota are ahead of us in using digital curriculum. We must keep on track with integrating technology into our classrooms to teach students the 21st century skills they'll need to succeed in college and careers."

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It's Not the Same Old Gym Class



Carissa Keister
Community Engagement Coordinator
Stillwater Area Public Schools

Gone are the ill-fitting gym uniforms of the past. Instead, students across the Stillwater Area Public School district are donning the next generation of physical education gear - high-tech foot pods, fitness watches and activity trackers. And the change isn't just winning fans in our district. Educators across the country are noticing and looking to Stillwater as a leader in the movement to improve the overall health

and wellness of students by focusing on lifetime physical fitness.

"It used to be teachers looked around the gym and thought, 'It looks like you're trying,' and that's how we gave grades," said Darrell Salmi, physical education teachers at Oak-Land Junior High. "Now we have these great tools to measure intensity levels and provide meaningful feedback to kids. We can see how hard a student is working and modify a workout based on their specific needs."

Students at all grade levels are using the

new devices as part of their phy ed classes. Elementary students are attaching small foot pods to their shoe laces. The pods measure the number of steps taken and distance traveled. Junior high and high school students use more sophisticated watches that measure heart rate as well. All of the devices show how much energy students are exerting and sends all of this data to a computer, which displays charts on a large screen in the gym. Students can see their progress and watch as their activity changes the color on the screen - from blue at low levels of activity all the way up to red for high levels.

"Kids really respond to it," said Mike Mustar, physical education teacher at Oak Park Elementary School. "They're seeing the impact of active lifestyles. Like the video games they play, they're getting real feedback and it motivates them to keep moving. Even the non-athletes enjoy being here."

The technology is just one part of a movement to overhaul the physical education program. In the past, gym classes focused on team sports and rewarded students for strength and agility. Today, using this new technology, Stillwater area teachers are focusing more on students' physical fitness. While skills are still being covered, the focus of gym class is to keep kids moving and active.

"I like gym class way better," said Ben Jackels, an Oak Park fifth grader. "I can compete

with my friends to see who takes more steps and is in the red zone. You can see where you're at on the screen and it keeps you moving."

The new technology, as well as training to help teachers use it in the classroom, has been paid for with a federal Physical Education Program (PEP) grant from the Department of Education. As part of the grant physical education and health teachers are also provided time to come together to develop a new curriculum focused teaching students about good nutrition and healthy eating habits, and helping them develop their own personal fitness programs. New fitness rooms at the junior highs and high school, equipped with health-club type elliptical machines, treadmills and spinning cycles, have also been purchased with federal funds and donations from parent and community organizations.

"This is groundbreaking," Mustar said. "Nobody else in the world is using this advanced technology with students. We are getting to the point when others are saying, 'Wow, look what Stillwater is doing.'"

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Connecting with families with FUEL at Woodbury Elementary



Woodbury Elementary School in the South Washington County School District recently implemented the FUEL program, which stands for Families United and Engaged in Learning. FUEL was adopted from the Parent Institute of Quality Education (PIQE) Program, and is a free series of classes for students' parents and guardians. The classes

provide families that are new to the community with the necessary tools to support the success of their child's education.

As a school with a culturally and ethnically diverse population, Woodbury Elementary School found it would be beneficial for the school to reach out and collaborate with families. "Many times families from other

cultures will have a lot of questions," said Principal Kristine Schaefer. "FUEL enables us to invite those families into our school not only to answer those questions, but to inform them on how our public school system works."

Woodbury Elementary staff members kicked off the six-week series in January by inviting families from India to learn about the district's educational system and to answer any questions parents new to the community may have. "It is important to listen and provide the resources that families need," said Marty Fridgen a trained teacher in the FUEL program. "FUEL is an engaging opportunity for the school and families to share information."

FUEL assists parents in navigating the school district's procedures, helping them become strong advocates for their child's education and able to make informed decisions. Charissa Bates is a social worker at the school and is also trained in the FUEL program. "It is wonderful that families are learning about our education system and using what they learn to become better informed advocates for their children," said Bates.

Each session features a free class, light meal, and childcare while parents attend the session. Focusing on the kindergarten through grade twelve curriculum, topics will cover: the

home to school and community connection, positive discipline and academic achievement, the importance of reading and comprehension, academic standards, and the path to college and career readiness.

"The end goal is really about helping all children succeed from elementary to post graduation," said Fridgen. "We want families to feel informed about our school system, but also welcomed as valuable members of our school community. It's important to work together as a partnership when educating students." Woodbury Elementary School has found that the more a school can collaborate and work together with families, the more comfortable families will be in making informed decisions about their child's education.

The intent is to eventually expand the program to involve all cultural groups and schools throughout School District 833. A recap of a recent FUEL session is available on the district's YouTube Channel at youtube.com/ISD833.

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St. Cloud Schools Super-Fan

By Tami DeLand
Director of Community Engagement and Communications
St. Cloud Area School District

Amber Wiese feels that she has an umbrella view of the St. Cloud Area School District. She has a 5th grader, Dominic, at Madison Elementary in the Chinese Immersion program; an 8-year-old, Amara, in special education at Kennedy Community School; and a 3-year-old, Morgan, in preschool at Kennedy.

A recent graduate from SCSU in social work, Wiese understands both the importance and urgency of early-childhood education. Living in low-income housing while raising her children and going to school, Wiese benefited from Early Childhood and Family Education (ECFE) classes, Head Start, and preschool programming provided through the district.

In addition, Amara was born at 24 weeks, weighing only 1 pound and 5 ounces, and spent the first six weeks of her life in the neonatal unit of the St. Cloud Hospital.

"The district provided early intervention services to us right away, in our home, until she was three," Wiese said. "The schools were like family. They were teaching her, teaching me. It was all part of the journey."

Amara attended summer school at Roosevelt Early Childhood Center and Head Start for one year, and is currently mainstreamed in her classes at Kennedy.

Wiese is very intentional about her children's education. She credits her college experience, especially in social work, with creating awareness about many issues, including the early communication needs of children. She deliberately chose the Chinese Immersion program for Dominic, wanting to give him

both a jumpstart to his education and a sense of cultural perspective.

"I've learned a lot about the refugee experience," Wiese reflects. "There have been lessons for Dom and me."

She also has come to value education as a top-shelf priority. At SCSU she served as the Vice President of the Student Social Work Association, became a part of the Dean's Advisory Council on Health and Human Services, and received the Scholarship and Leaders In Excellence Award upon graduation. (25 recipients out of 1800 graduates)

This quest for achievement is something she hands down proudly to her children. Dominic is flourishing in his immersion program and tested well on his MCA's last spring. He also has already made his own mark in community service, raising funds for a local playground. Amara is making gains

in her schooling, and Morgan will follow in Dominic's footsteps to Madison in the Chinese Immersion program.

What Wiese appreciates most about her family's experiences in the district are the relationships each school and program forged with them.

"The schools are really lifelines," she says. "Whether through early interventions or extra-curriculars. They are life-links to the families."

Note: Wiese was recently hired by ISD 742 as a paraprofessional.

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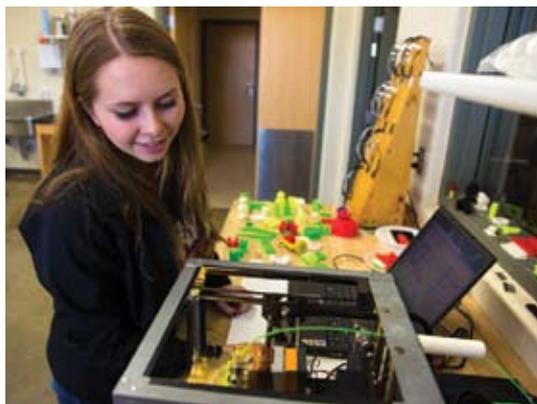
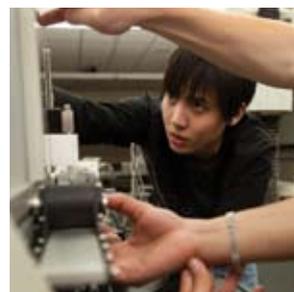
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