



Goodhue County Education District

Enhancing educational opportunities through interdistrict cooperation

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[PROGRAMS AND SERVICES](#)

[MTSS](#)

[PARENT/STUDENT TOOLS](#)

[STAFF RESOURCES](#)

[MORE...](#)

Inside this issue

- Reflecting for Clarity
- Pathways Corporate/Urban Field Trip
- MTSS Update/Next Steps
- PBIS: River Bluff Education Center
- In the Spotlight: Cindy Luhman, GCED Administrative Assistant

Important Upcoming Meetings and Events

- End of year celebrations - enjoy them all!
- June 2, 2016 - Last student day at RBEC
- July 12, 2016 - PCM Refresher
- July 26, 2016 - PCM Refresher
- August 2, 2016 - PCM Refresher
- August 3 - 5, 2016 - PCM Initial Training
- August 9, 2016 12:00 - 4:00 pm Principals Meeting
- August 15 - 17, 2016 - PCM Initial Training
- August 22, 2016 - CPI Training @ RBEC
- August 23, 2016 - CPI Training @ ZMHS
- August 24, 2016 - Teaching, Learning, Compliance: PD for all new special education teachers in GCED and member districts
- August 25, 2016 - GCED Day: PD for GCED and all special education teachers from member districts
- September 6, 2016 - First Student Day of 2016-17

The Progress, May/June 2016: Volume 1, Issue 9

The Progress archive

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Comments? Suggestions for new articles?

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Reflecting for Clarity

Reprinted from Spring 2015 MASE Impact Newsletter

by Cherie Johnson and Jillynne Raymond

Recently, a group of educators were talking and each individual in the group had pressing issues that were pulling on their time. It was evident

that they were not only pulling on their time, but also tugging at their focus. I understood. I was going through the same thing. Collectively, we were spiraling with the issues - there was one mandate, one demand, one priority after another. Meanwhile, it is also the time of year that we have potential new mandates coming from the legislature, which weighed heavily on our minds. It was too much. It was time to take a breath and reflect. We spent time reflecting on the issues, which was clearly our attempt to find the logic necessary for decision making and to move forward. As we did so, we kept coming back to the question, what is most important here? Very quickly, we came to a common theme - our students. It feels as if we have a bazillion issues pulling us in different directions. The reality is that we have one issue: our students have needs. We have one focus: student-centered learning.

According to founder and chairperson of the International Center for Leadership in Education, Bill Daggett, Ed.D, our group was discussing the "fog." He describes the fog in his February 2015 article, *Finding Clarity Amid the Fog of External Demands: How Rapidly Improving Schools and Districts are Taking Control and Putting Students First*. The fog is the culmination of the outside forces that schools face every day. The demands come from all around: the federal government, the state government, our local governing boards, the media. While we are not able to ignore the demands, Daggett has identified four critical components from successful student-centered learning schools:

1. Academic Tenacity or Grit
2. Proactive Parent and Community Engagement
3. Methodology
4. Content

I love thinking of learning as grit. Successful schools keep the focus on student learning and do not shy away from the challenging conversations on why learning is challenging. In special education we need to help students learn new behaviors all the time. Learning is a behavior and it is hard. We need to do all that we can to build our students' ability to persevere and thrive in their learning. Have we created the safe conditions for them to learn? Have we helped them learn that learning is hard? Have we helped them learn that we fall down when we are learning?

While helping our students learn how to learn, what conversations are we having with our parents and with our community? If we are helping our students understand that learning is challenging, are we helping our parents and our community understand as well? Are we working with parents that demand only a letter grade that they can visualize? If so, are we helping them understand the process of students learning skills and what a grade may - or may not - mean in that process? Successful schools are engaging parents and community members in the learning discussion. Let's face it. The stories are told out there...at the dinner table, in the local diner, in social media. Shouldn't we, the educators, be a part of the storytelling?

Successful schools also pay attention to methodology. I believe it was called pedagogy when I did my undergrad work. Others call it instructional practices. Whatever you call it, we need to pay attention to how we deliver instruction, how we facilitate learning. Are we making the adjustments to the methods we use to be successful? Our time with our students is limited. Isn't it morally sound that we adjust our practices for the highest impact with our students.

Mmmnnnn....have I asked more questions than anything? Perhaps. Through those questions, through reflection, the clarity comes. My colleagues and I would agree with Daggett....let's keep the focus on the students in our problem solving, in our decision making, in our instructional leadership. Keep the focus and keep on breathing.



Pathways Corporate/Urban Field Trip

by Ann Petersen, Pathways 7-8 Teacher

On Wednesday, May 1st I took my 7th grade Pathways students on a field trip to Travelers corporate headquarters (2,000+ employees in the building, nearly 30,000 world wide). Our students were given a tour of the corporate building. Eight employees from entry level to upper management came to speak to students about the winding paths they took to their



current jobs. They discussed the importance of developing a good work ethic, the importance of education, and of civic responsibility. Students were encouraged to join school clubs and participate in extracurricular activities. They were told to include these experiences on job applications. Employees also provided an age appropriate explanation of corporate structure and insurance.

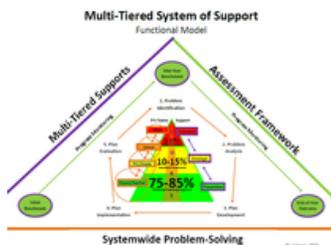
The Pathways students were engaged and behaved well enough that our guide, Michael Newman, Vice President of the Travelers Foundation, brought students on an impromptu foray into the offices where people were actively working in this professional environment. Students saw people working in cubicles, and sitting in a conference room video conferencing with a group in Hartford, Connecticut.

Students were treated to pizzas and salad prepared for them by the company chefs. Finally, students were sent off with water bottles, journals and pens. It was awesome! We ended the trip with a quick self guided tour of the St. Paul Public Library and the Landmark Center. All students followed up the experience by writing formal business letters of gratitude which I forwarded to Mr. Newman. (Yes, I had to teach them how to write a cursive signature.)

The purpose of this trip was to expand the scope of options for students. I wanted to let them see a different environment to consider as an option for their future before they begin to build a high school transcript. One of my students, who had never ridden on an escalator before this trip, told me she thinks she would like to work in an office some day. All students reported that they really liked the trip. Another student admitted, with some surprise, that the people that talked to the students "weren't boring." On the van ride back to Red Wing, students hatched a plan where when they got older, they would get hired together, then split off to different departments. In short, they began to think of future options.

I don't know how long their enthusiasm will last, but at least they had the experience of feeling comfortable and welcome in a professional setting. We start with baby steps.

MTSS Update



On May 3, 2016 a joint superintendents and principals meeting was held at River Bluff Education Center. The main agenda items were (1) to gather input and feedback on the draft of the MTSS Manual and (2) to discuss the current and transition plans for assessment system.

MTSS Manual

- Edits will be made based on feedback. An updated version will be shared with districts in August. It will also be available on our website at the start of the 2016-17 school year.

Assessment System

- 2016-17 is the 5th year of our current assessment system using AimsWeb and STAR.
- Lake City currently uses NWEA; with their transition to GCED the superintendents and principals shared input and perspectives at the 5/3/16 meeting. The discussion will continue as we move to one system for all again in the 2017-18 school year.
- For 2016-17 some districts will work under our current system using AimsWeb and STAR or NWEA for Lake City. Other districts are choosing to pilot FAST Bridge to help inform our decisions for 2017-18.
- 2016-17 Assessment Systems by District
 - Cannon Falls - AimsWeb/STAR
 - Goodhue - FAST
 - Kenyon-Wanamingo - AimsWeb/STAR
 - Lake City - AimsWeb/NWEA

- Red Wing: Sunnyside Elementary - FAST
- Red Wing: Burnside Elementary - AimsWeb/STAR
- Red Wing: Twin Bluff Middle School - AimsWeb/STAR
- Red Wing: RW High School - STAR
- Zumbrota-Mazeppa - FAST



Building the POWER at River Bluff Education Center



Staff members at River Bluff Education Center (RBEC) help their students learn and understand the true meaning of POWER:

- P** Positive Attitude
- O** Ownership
- W** We, not me
- E** Engage
- R** Respect

Just as with other PBIS schools, RBEC has shared school wide expected behaviors. Staff members teach the students those behaviors at the start of the school year. Then weekly lesson plans are introduced to reinforce the learning. PBIS team member Stacey Anderson distributes the lesson plans to teachers that then deliver the lesson. Students have point sheets with them throughout the day focused on POWER and what that looks like.

The behavior matrix is used throughout the building to help re-direct students' behaviors. PBIS team member and social worker reports that she uses the matrix when processing with students and reteaching expectations. Posters in the classrooms and common areas serve as a tool for that redirection as well as reminders for students.

Students are rewarded for meeting the behavior expectations. School wide there are weekly 90s incentives. Social workers and teachers take turns planning activities each Friday for students that have averaged 90% or higher on their point sheets for the week. Rewards also come in the form of POWER tickets that students can use to purchase items from the school store or to have POWER Pancakes for breakfast once a week. Elementary EBD teacher Rebecca McQuiston has a specific reward in her classroom as well. She offers POWER time; students get choice time at the end of the day if all of their work is in. If it is not, the students work on missing assignments.

Data is always an area for improvement when it comes to PBIS but the data helps the PBIS team see where students are exhibiting more behaviors and then adjust accordingly. For example, bus referrals were an issue earlier in the year. The PBIS team gave the bus drivers yellow POWER tickets to hand out to students and it worked. They have now seen a decrease in the bus referrals. Students earn extra attention with bus tickets being a different color. Michelle Schulz reports that "because they are a different color than the POWER tickets used in the building it's easy for staff to see that they received those on their bus and give positive praise for that as the students use them for a reward".

Spotlight: Cindy Luhman, GCED Administrative Assistant

Moms know best. Well, some do at least.

A few years ago Cindy was happily living in Goodhue with hubby Brian. She was working as a Post Bulletin rural motor route part time and working with Pine Island Public Schools part time when her mom noticed an ad in the newspaper. Her mom called Cindy and encouraged her to check out the advertised program secretary



Cindy Luhman

position with Goodhue County Education District. Cindy applied for and got the job. Though there is a rumor that her Led Zeppelin ring tone may have gotten her hired initially, Cindy has certainly proven herself to be much more than a pretty face with an awesome ring tone. After a successful year and a half as program secretary, Laura Clemons left as administrative assistant so Cindy applied for and transitioned into the position.

Cindy is now the administrative assistant at GCED. She is the face that people go to for questions on almost anything. That is an aspect that she really enjoys about her job. It doesn't matter if it is a teacher or a paraprofessional, "anyone can come to me with questions or needs, or even a moment to vent." Being that go-to person comes naturally for Cindy; she cites the people she works with as her favorite thing about her job.

Cindy also enjoys the variety with her position. There are a multitude of tasks and she enjoys them all – from helping our business manager to being Cherie's secretary and point person for all. With that variety comes challenges as well. For example, ordering and distributing school psychologists' testing materials for multiple member districts is a challenge. "It's Greek to me!" Cindy explains but then goes on to focus on those wonderful people she works with and how the team is here to support. Heather Mortel is wonderful with those annual orders. In other areas Cindy keeps learning and growing to meet any professional challenges that come her way.

In addition to supporting education at work, she does similar work at home overseeing her two daughters' educational journey. Cindy values the education they are receiving at Goodhue Public Schools. "I'm really impressed with Goodhue. Both girls do such an awesome job with their school." Cindy credits the small setting being a good fit for them; plus in a small district there are ample opportunities. Her daughter Mackenzie has been very active in FCCLA in recent years and will serve as president of FCCLA next year. Goodhue teacher Mrs. LaGosh is supporting Mackenzie's education, too, encouraging her to take AP classes next year. Cindy feels good that her younger daughter, Alyssa, will follow in this positive path that Mackenzie is on.

When not overseeing education at work or with her two youngest children, Cindy enjoys spending time with family – her husband Brian, daughters, and son Brandon and his family. It doesn't matter if they are at a Viking game, camping and boating in Faribault, or just hanging out, the time together is treasured.

Thanks to her mom, our go to person extraordinaire Cindy Luhman is here to help answer any questions. If your question is about who will win the 2017 Super Bowl, her answer is easy and immediate – the VIKINGS, of course.

Have a wonderful summer everyone!



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Goodhue County Education District is a group of six southeastern Minnesota school districts: [Cannon Falls](#), [Goodhue](#), [Kenyon-Wanamingo](#), [Lake City](#), [Red Wing](#) and [Zumbrota-Mazeppa](#). Working together, the districts provide effective and efficient educational services and funding for special education programs, staff development, extended and alternative summer school services.