



Goodhue County Education District

Enhancing educational opportunities through interdistrict cooperation

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Important Upcoming Meetings and Events

- **Superintendents Council:** March 16, 2016
- **MASE Day at the Capitol:** March 22, 2016
- **Principals Meeting:** April 12, 2016, 12:00-4:00 p.m.
- **River Bluff Education Center Spring Open House:** April 21, 2016, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

What is that smell coming from your office?

Special Education Coordinators are asked many questions in any given school year. When the question is about the smell coming from their office, it is a true sign of the upcoming testing season. The smell came from milk cartons (not yet rinsed out very well) that were accumulating in the office for creating MTAS Kits.

The Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) replaces the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) for students that qualify. Students' IEP (individualized education program) team members apply state criteria to determine how students with a disability will participate in statewide testing. If the team determines that an individual student's cognitive ability prevents participation in the MCA, then the team considers more criteria:

- Is the student receiving instruction linked to the general education curriculum to extent appropriate?
- Is the student's cognitive functioning significantly below age expectations?

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The Progress archive

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Comments? Suggestions for new articles?

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- Does the student's disability have a significant impact on his/her ability to function in multiple environments?
- Does the student need explicit and intensive instruction and/or extensive supports in multiple settings to acquire, maintain and generalize academic and life skills?

If the answer to these questions is yes, the student may be properly assessed using the MTAS. An MTAS kit is the set of items the student uses as graphic representations to be able to understand and respond to the questions on the MTAS.

Each year a team comes together to create these MTAS kits, which are shared among the teachers that will use them. Per the team "we get more efficient every year." Previously, kits were made for each school in GCED; the system to share the test kits among the member districts has added to their efficiency.

Putting the kits together create challenges. One team member commented "you have to put yourself in that student's place to give them the items to be able to understand the question and their response." The MDE materials, including the response cards have improved over the years which make their job a bit less complicated.

In other districts the expectation is that classroom teachers will assemble their own materials. Teachers new to GCED are grateful that MTAS kits are created for their use.

So the next time an odd smell is coming out of a special education coordinator's office, be sure and stop in with a thank you!

ESY...an acronym with substance



ESY 2016

July 18- 21
July 25 - July 28
August 1 - 4

8:00 - 11:00 am
12:00 - 3:00 pm

Extended School Year or ESY is a crucial part of some students' IEP. Minnesota statute requires school districts to provide ESY services if the IEP team determines that the services are necessary for that student's free and appropriate public education. The team will determine if ESY is necessary if the student meets one of the following criteria:

1. There will be a significant regression of a skill or acquired knowledge from the pupil's level of performance on an annual goal that requires more than the length of the break in instruction unless the IEP team determines a shorter time for recoupment is more appropriate;
2. Services are necessary for the pupil to attain and maintain self-sufficiency because of the critical nature of the skill addressed by an annual goal, the pupil's age and level of development, and the timeliness for teaching the skill; or
3. The IEP team otherwise determines, given the pupil's unique needs, that ESY services are necessary to ensure the pupil receives a free appropriate public education.

Wendy Ahern, ZM Special Education Coordinator, and Lindsay Woodard, Assistant Director of Special Education, coordinate ESY for GCED member districts. Wendy sees ESY as beneficial since there is a requirement for our students that show regression to attend ESY. When those students are able to ramp up their basic skills before the school year begins, the students win with a great start to the school year.

Of course there are challenges with ESY, but the challenges can be overcome in order to do what is right for students. One challenge is creating classrooms with an array of disabilities and needs. Quality staff members are able to set students up for success as they design the classroom. Often times our students have teachers for ESY that are with them during the regular school year.

ESY will be held in Kenyon, Red Wing, and Zumbrota this summer. Cannon Falls

will not hold any ESY sessions due to their construction project. Their qualifying students *will* receive ESY services at a different site. Individualized transportation is provided for ESY.

MTSS Stakeholder Meeting Agenda/Notes



Agenda and Notes (in italics) from 2/25/16 MTSS Stakeholder Meeting:

1. Welcome/Grounding - Connect to Prior Knowledge

We briefly reviewed information from November 2015 meeting to connect to current implementation work. Remember, we are in the thick of implementation just like others at the state and national levels.

2. When to refer a student for a special education evaluation?

We reviewed a draft version of the referral process. Using MTSS we need to document the interventions and progress monitoring data of those interventions. As districts reviewed the draft, many asked for more uniform documentation materials. School Psychologists had great insight to the referral process. We will work with smaller stakeholder groups to gather feedback on proposed forms and process.

3. MTSS Section of GCED Website - Virtual Tour

Please let us know if you are not finding something you are looking for from our last websites - GCED and Literacy District.

4. Problem Solving at the System Level

We looked at STAR reading data GCED-wide and by individual district. From the existing data, districts worked on their collaborative problem solving, emphasizing that problem solving is a process. It requires teams to collaborate, discuss, and to look at the problem from various views. Problem solving generated great discussion; more to come as we continue to implement MTSS across the county.



Cannon Falls keeps it REAL

This school year marks Cannon Falls' fourth year of implementing PBIS in their elementary and secondary schools. In Cannon Falls they keep it REAL at both levels, "By keeping it REAL, we will respect ourselves, others, and our community and we will be responsible for learning."

Students are taught expected behaviors with their respect, attitude, effort, and learning. A passport system is used at the elementary level. Students travel to different stations to learn expected behaviors in different areas, such as in the lunch room, bathroom, hallway, and even on the buses. Once students complete their passport they can take home to review with parents.

At the secondary level most of the learning takes place in the classroom, often as a part of their "Ramp Up" schedule when students are in smaller groups by grade level. Once expectations are taught, they are rewarded with REAL tickets at both levels, which can be entered in drawings for prizes. In addition students celebrate the end of terms with an academic recognition for the REAL students. Students particularly enjoyed last year's end of the year dunk tank. This spring's plans are still underway but taking advantage of nice spring weather is on the minds of team members.

The PBIS leadership team meets twice a month. Their notes then are pushed out to the full staff so that all understand the PBIS events. Four years into implementation and the team is pleased with its progress. One new addition that the team is working on is to include students whenever possible. The synergy created with the collective team is



The Cannon Falls School District's PBIS Mission Statement: By keeping it REAL we will respect ourselves, others, and our community and we will be responsible for learning.

good; now it's time to get more input from students.

Students and staff have been positive regarding the PBIS framework. EBD teacher and PBIS team member Kate Dahlen reports that the ratio of REAL tickets to behavior referrals has been good this year. From a special education perspective, the population "has been great lately. They are even-keeled." School Psychologist and PBIS team member Kristin Kirk adds that "we've done it [PBIS] for so long now that it's part of our culture."

While part of the culture, the PBIS team does not want to take staff members' efforts for granted. They continually look for ways to make it easy for staff to share the message. Each year brings changes to keep things fresh. They now use graphs for visual representation of REAL tickets earned by grade level. Also, they now have tickets that fit in their lanyards making it easy for staff members to positively recognize students. Staff members wear PBIS shirts every Wednesday and school spirit wear on Fridays, which often end up as PBIS shirts. All of it works; students see that teachers are into it, which creates a unity between students and staff members.

Staff members are also recognized for their positive behaviors. A favorite reward is Principal Tim Hodges covering a teacher's class for an hour or simply having a hot cup of coffee delivered to them in class is appreciated. This type of positive reinforcement is the foundation of the PBIS framework.

Spotlight: Jen Grove, Twin Bluff Middle School Assistant Principal

"As an EBD teacher by trade I have learned that all I can control is me and my reactions."

-- Jen Grove



Jen Grove

Special Education was not Jen's original career path. It was a natural path, however. Jen began college to major in biology and then to teach science. Very soon, though, she felt compelled to move to special education. Some could say the pull started as a young girl. Her younger sister was an infant when she stopped breathing long enough for it to impact her brain. Jen observed her sister's struggle with learning and helped however possible. In high school Jen enjoyed volunteering for Special Olympics in track and bowling. Then in college she volunteered for the Council of Exceptional Children and served as president of their college chapter as well. Jen was a volunteer tutor for 7th graders at Jefferson Middle School in Dubuque, Iowa. It was there she also volunteered to work with early literacy needs where she discovered her still-to-this-day favorite book *Bootsie Barker Bites*.

After college Jen was the behavior disorder teacher for 900 middle school students in Dubuque. When husband Dave started law school in Des Moines, she moved on to a new middle school with new challenges. In her true spirit, Jen immersed herself in her work and learning as a member of the coaching academy and technology committee (discussing Apple Bundles, of course). Her students there volunteered at a nearby residential treatment school. The experience taught *her* behavioral students patience. Through the lens of this experience they were able to see life beyond their own toes. That's just the way it is with some students. They don't have the brain space; it's fixed on moving from one drama or crisis to the next. Again at this school, she was the *one* behavior disorder teacher.

After Dave finished law school and they moved to Spring Valley where Jen worked at Grand Meadow, a K-12 school serving 350 students. She loved it, though it was a big change with all grade levels in her room. A great mentor helped her adapt well. Although she loved Grand Meadow when Goodhue County Attorney's Office hired Dave it was too far of a commute from Red Wing. She worked as an EBD teacher for Cannon Falls for 3 years before moving to Red Wing Public Schools. All of which has led her to this new adventure in roles – transitioning from teacher to administrator. So what has she learned?

She has learned new vocabulary, such as TBMS Principal Chris Palmatier's term of sleuthing. It's important to "sleuth" for accurate information because *sometimes* students do not tell the truth. She doesn't believe the kids are malicious in doing so; they just don't want to get busted. Through active listening and questioning she gets

to the source of information. Willingness to ask questions and reflect how others “hear” your messages are a part of the learning curve. Just as it is working on her administrative poker face, “managing your nonverbals ALL the time!” Again Mr. Palmatier is there to help and support; “he gives me good perspective.” She comes with her own perspective as well, “I like kids. They’re weird. They make me happy.”

Bottom line, Jen landed in the right profession and spot. She, her husband Dave, 9th grade son, and 8th and 2nd grade daughters (her own little Bootsie Barkers) make their home in Red Wing.

River Bluff Education Center Spring Open House



Join us!

River Bluff Education Center Spring Open House
Thursday, April 21, 2016
5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

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