



# Goodhue County Education District

Enhancing educational opportunities through interdistrict cooperation

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## Important Upcoming Events/Meetings

December 2, 2016: Special Education Day  
 December 5, 2016: Instructional Coaches PLC  
 December 6, 2016: GCED Wide Principals Council Meeting  
 December 9, 2016: MDE Special Education Directors Forum  
 December 10, 2016: Human Rights Day  
 December 16, 2016: National Chocolate-covered Anything Day  
 December 19, 2016: GCED Special Ed Leadership Team  
 December 21, 2016: Superintendents Council Meeting  
 December 21, 2016: Winter Solstice  
 December 31, 2016: Make Up Your Mind Day

**Note:** Shelly Angell was inadvertently left out of the November article, "Who's Teaching *Our* Students?" Shelly began with GCED as a paraprofessional in 1994, then became a licensed social worker for us in 1998. *My apology for the omission and many thanks to Shelly for her years of service!*

## The Progress, December 2016: Volume 2, Issue 4

### The Progress archive

[Click here](#) to view past issues from the current school year.

### Comments? Suggestions for new articles?

Contact Jillynne Raymond, Editor, The Progress,  
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## Student Data/Student Problem Solving in Zumbrota-Mazeppa

### Essential Questions:

1. What do we want our students to know?



2. How will we know if they have learned it?
3. How will we respond when they have not learned it?
4. How will we respond when they have already learned it?

By Jillynne Raymond

Although we have been working on MTSS for several years, there is still fear. Some sites may not feel they are ready to fully implement; they may not have the right paperwork or feel they need more training or that they need something, although they may not know what specifics. Some still want it to just go away.

I get it. I do. I was in the classroom and watched initiatives come and go. MTSS is not another initiative though. MTSS is simply the framework of ALL that we do. As I visit districts, there is one message that resonates similarly among all and that is the desire to do what is best for kids. We focus on the four essential questions and we respond to students' needs; that *is* best for kids. This work *is* our Multi-Tiered System of Supports...one system, multiple supports. Our districts *are* working on MTSS, though all are working to make the system their own as is the case in Zumbrota-Mazeppa.

Approximately once a month, substitutes step into the classroom in order that teachers have time to collaborate while examining student data. It was my honor to watch this in action recently in Zumbrota-Mazeppa. Attending part of a 2nd grade PLC at ZM Primary one day and part of a 4th grade PLC at ZM Elementary the next day, it was clear that the focus was all about doing what is right for kids.

The two-hour 2nd grade level PLC consists of the 2nd grade teachers, special education teachers, ADSIS teachers, Title teacher and her paraprofessionals, school psychologist, assistant director of special education and/or principal or superintendent. Students that had been identified for additional support from their benchmark assessment data. For ZM, this year that data comes from FAST™. Plus teachers' impressions provide qualitative data that "always correlates" according to ZM Lead Title teacher Mary Jo Schwartau. For example, a student discussed has a medical issue, which can cause or lead to academic issues.

Teachers and interventionists collaborate to problem solve using shared resources. Based on the data, one student's concern may be the same as others. Students receiving Title services struggle with the visual perception of B, D, and P. The data reveals it is not just Title students; the issue is more wide spread. The title teacher will intervene with her students, but she also offers resources to the classroom teachers to use as well. Further discussions demonstrate the collaboration:

- Collaboration focuses on the data wall where each student is represented on an index card. The color of the card identifies classroom teacher, the dots indicate what service the student receives.
- Special education staff offer expertise with small group and individualized interventions based on student data;
- Staff members are still learning FAST, which brings out training needs for staff as they build everyone's capacity to read the FAST assessment data, including progress monitoring data.
- Classroom teachers and interventionists ask questions about antecedents to behaviors: Is there a medical or medicine issue? Is it a friendship need? Are there family changes going on? Discuss the need to be proactive when they see a decrease in academics. What is going on behind the decline?
- What about benchmark targets? Do we need to set benchmarks to impact the rate of improvement?
- If a student is receiving services, how does ZM respond once the student learns the intended targets?
  - Together they agreed that to exit K – 1 Title, students need to score at present target and 2 scores at spring target; they need to be consecutive.
  - For 2nd – 5th grades, students need to score at current FAST targets and 2 scores at the upcoming assessment window.
  - Once a student exits Title, ADSIS or any intervention, the student's card remains on the data wall. The team wants to monitor the student's progress without receiving services; they will be progress monitored every 3 – 5 weeks.
    - The discussion includes the expectation that there will be an initial drop in the student's proficiency once the child exits from an intervention or service, but then it should go back up. If it does not, s/he is still on the radar and the team fits them in for support.
    - Further discussion on continuum of supports – students served in ADSIS need less intensive help than students served in Title.

Similar data discussions occurred the next day at ZM Elementary with the 4th grade PLC. On this day though, Assistant Director of Special Education/Assistant Principal Wendy Ahern had an IEP meeting so Superintendent Gary Anger led the group. With older students there was a shift in issues, but focus was consistent on the 4 essential questions in regards to the student being discussed.

- She needs extra help with her blending; her fluency is not solid yet.
- We were right in the middle of Title reading FAST data when he yelled "I like reading!" after he learned that he increased from 40 wpm to 50 wpm.
- Let me tell you, he has improved so much since 2nd grade when he was first referred to special education. Look at these math scores.
- Discussing a student that struggles with reading, Superintendent Anger asks "What does he use for choice reading?" After a quick laugh that all appreciated his question and one teacher was pleased that it was a question she could answer, the focus returned to the student and his needs. The student's classroom teacher and Title teacher were on top of it. They had just found a set of books that the student was now enjoying; the books were beyond his reading level. This brought up further good discussion. Students need to practice reading at their own reading level to improve. However, they are not stuck there and student choice is a strong motivator for a student to struggle through more challenging text. As Superintendent Anger suggests, "Let's get him out of the deep end of the pool [struggling with reading] and get in the shallow end of new waters" [let him try out some more complex text that he is interested in].
- We still should watch her, but her confidence has grown. She was actually talking during conferences and explained what she is comfortable doing. She knows what she can do now rather than last year when she was a guesser. Another teacher chimes in that she does ask for help now when she needs it. The school psychologist adds that the student's anxiety has improved tremendously. Because of that the student's attendance is good, unlike a few years earlier when no one could pry the students' hands off her mother.
- At the end of the next assessment window we need to look at him more closely; something isn't clicking but I'm not sure what it is. The Title teacher offers to do a phonics assessment to identify phonics "holes". Then the classroom teacher and Title teacher can work on filling the holes and work more specifically on comprehension.

Data tells a story and there is usually more to most stories. These students discussed are receiving specific, targeted help in reading, math, and/or social emotional learning. It was data that helped to identify students needing interventions and data drives their progress monitoring. This quantitative data is one part of the students' stories. Collaborative work around the data includes qualitative data. Teachers sharing what they have and have not seen from a particular student; what interventions the student has or has not tried with or without success; or a social worker sharing the personal struggle a student's family is going through all build to the student's story. All of the data, quantitative and qualitative, can be used to drive the problem solving to meet the ultimate goal: providing the supports necessary for the student to learn the intended target(s).

Zumbrot-Mazeppa's MTSS extends beyond the primary and elementary levels. Principal Dave Anderson and a secondary team collaborated on their continuum of supports at the recent MTSS workshop at SE Coop. MTSS at the secondary level may look a bit different, but it continues to focus on the 4 essential questions.

No matter the level, the work is happening. Just as with all learning, it is continual. We are not looking for a checkbox that says "Did MTSS"; we are continually monitoring our students' learning and responding to needs. We do this with the WHY at the forefront of our work....every student is unique with his/her own individual strengths and weaknesses and need for support. Each and every student deserves our support – whatever form that support takes (a phonics intervention, a math intervention, Check & Connect, etc.) and whenever that student needs it.



ZM Elementary Team collaborating on "Data Day".



ZM Secondary Team collaborating during an MTSS session at SE Coop.

## Intervening with MATH 180



When we focus on the 4 essential questions, we need to intervene when students are *not* learning what they need to know. Math 180 is an academic math intervention that is being used throughout the county. Per their website, "Math 180 is designed to address the needs of struggling students in grades 5 and up, and their teachers, equally - building students' confidence with mathematics and accelerating their progress to algebra. "

Emily Grobe coordinates the program with our member districts and refers to the program as the "basic stepping stones a student needs to use to prepare for algebra - working with the pre-skills to be effective in Algebra". The program starts with multiplication, having students manipulate and work with equal groups in the beginning. Emily admits that Math 180 is not quite as user friendly as Read 180, but she is learning. Her learning entails thinking differently about math and learning to teach math differently. For just one example, she is learning to use her Smart Board more the interactive student learning activities.

Her students are also learning, thanks to their engagement with the program. Her older students from our Pathways ALC come in and get right to work; "they love it!" The lessons are set up using an *I do, We do, You do* model. In each lesson, Emily begins by demonstrating a practice example. Then together, she and students work through two practice examples. Finally, the students are on their own completing the practice; they show all of their work on their lessons so that Emily can check for genuine understanding. Students' exit slips reveal what they have learned or any areas that they need additional help. In addition, students monitor their own progress with one minute timed tests; they graph their progress every Friday.

We all know the importance of student engagement, but what about Math 180 is engaging for students? Emily cites two main reasons:

1. Math 180 connects the math skill to real life. Each lesson begins with an anchor video demonstrating how the math is applied in a real life example. For example, students apply math to decisions if you have your own business.
2. Math 180's technical aspects is appealing to students. The lessons are quick and fast-paced. Plus Math 180 is computer adaptive so it automatically adjusts to students' skill level. Each lesson concludes with an interactive game.

In addition, Math 180 operates similarly to the MCA tests on the computer. This is an added bonus to help prepare students for the MCA. Students click and drag in the program and operate an on-line calculator; both skills necessary for the online MCA test. As with most interventions, attendance is one piece that can throw a crimp into the work. Students need to be in attendance to access the program; they need to be here.

Teachers from GCED, CF, KW, and RW-TBMS were trained at the start of the school year. They have more training scheduled throughout the school year, including classroom visits. In January all Math 180 students will have a benchmark test. County wide results will be shared at the February Principals Council Meeting.

## FastBridge Assessment System Pilot: An Instructional Coach's Thoughts

By Weston Johnson

As many know, this year several schools are piloting the FastBridge Learning assessment system. Over the past several years districts across GCED have been using STAR and AIMSweb assessment systems. These two separate systems were used because the measures within each system complement each other. STAR provided computer adaptive measures (CAT); Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is another CAT. AIMSweb provided curriculum based measures (CBM). The benefits of CAT measures include being great for measuring broad achievement and predicting performance on high stakes tests; however, they are less sensitive to short term growth. Complementing these are CBMs which are good measures of broad achievement, assess lower level skills, and are sensitive to short term growth. As many educators point out, there are limitations to CBMs because they do not directly measure certain academic components or they are timed which is why complimentary measures are beneficial.



### PROS

- Multiple assessment types in one system

The current pilot of FastBridge Learning brings both CBMs and CATs into one assessment system. It is convenient to look at multiple sources of data for a student when it is stored in a single location. Another reason for the FastBridge Learning pilot is that these measures provide better tools for our Multi-Tiered System of Support implementation; this is based on a review of measures by the Iowa Department of Education, a local review of measures, and informal discussions across GCED. Also, support and acceptance for FastBridge Learning has increased significantly over the past several years. Even when member districts initially were considering a common assessment framework, FastBridge Learning was being considered. Lastly, as schools continue their work with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, they may find the behavior measures for social, academic, and emotional skills useful. As we emphasize on-going improvement across GCED, the pilot of FastBridge learning is providing us an opportunity to evaluate the current state of common assessments.

It has been a few years since our last evaluation of the assessment framework. With the current pilot, we can compare our current assessments with other options. There have been some clear benefits with the new system. As for the issues, the towel has not been thrown in. Together we need to take a look at the tools that will help us get where we are heading. Common assessments are an important part of building capacity across the various levels of a system. Together we can move forward with meaningful relationships and meaningful work to reach our shared goals.

- Easier data merges when needed
- Behavior measures included
- Improved early reading and math measures
- Opportunities to collaborate with other schools implementing FastBridge
- Built in training modules with certification
- Standardized suggestions for interventions and goal setting
- Skill reports by scale score, similar to STAR and MAP

#### Cons

- Server issues during universal benchmark screening resulted in delays
- No writing measures at this time
- Initial training requirements are high for grades K - 1
- System issues have occurred with progress monitoring
- Intervention graphs are standardized, which requires additional consideration for intervention documentation

## Southeast Perkins IV Consortium



By Brian Cashman

Carl D. Perkins is a federal grant that provides funds for approved Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. In Minnesota, funds are distributed on the basis of state-approved career and technical education programs and appropriate teacher licensure.

Funds can be used in CTE programs for professional development, to promote student attainment of academic and technical skills, upgrading of equipment, school- and work-based experiences, and career counseling and guidance.

On July 1, 2008 the twenty-two school districts that make up the Goodhue County Education District and Hiawatha Valley Education District (two previous Tech Prep and secondary Perkins consortia) partnered with their area's post secondary provider, Minnesota State College-Southeast, to form the consortium entitled Southeast Perkins IV Consortium.

The 22 districts are: Caledonia, Cannon Falls, Chatfield, Dover-Eyota, Fillmore Central, Goodhue, Houston, Kenyon-Wanamingo, Kingsland, La Crescent, Lake City, Lanesboro, Lewiston-Altura, Mabel-Canton, Plainview-Elgin-Millville, Red Wing, Rushford-Peterson, Saint Charles, Spring Grove, Wabasha-Kellogg, Winona, Zumbrota-Mazepa.

The Goodhue County Education District serves as the fiscal host for the Perkins funding, in addition to providing programming support among the 22 local school districts of the consortium. The Reach, Pathways, and Alternative High School Programs connected with the Goodhue County Education District are also considered part of the Southeast Perkins IV Consortium.

In Minnesota, 247,651 high school and college students were enrolled in career and technical education courses in 2015 <sup>1</sup>. There are many examples of strong CTE programming across Southeast Minnesota. One misconception that sometimes intersects the CTE conversation is four-year degrees versus two-year degrees/industry certification and licenses. The data bears out that this is not necessarily an either-or

Do you have questions or comments about the Southeast Perkins IV Consortium and/or CTE programming?

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 651-764-9016.

<sup>1</sup>information from the Minnesota

State Colleges, Minnesota  
Department of Education, and  
Center on Education and the  
Workforce Georgetown University  
\*citations available upon request  
– taken from the Association for  
Career and Technical Education  
[ACTE] CTE Today! Publication

choice. CTE-related degrees via two-year programs, as well as industry and trade certification and licensing, provide opportunities for students to learn and participate in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand areas. Consider the following data\*:

- The skilled trades are the hardest jobs to fill in the United States, with recent data citing 806,000 jobs open in the trade, transportation, and utilities sectors and 293,000 jobs open in manufacturing;
- Health care occupations, many of which require an associate degree or less, make up 12 of the 20 fastest growing occupations;
- 27 percent of people with less than an associate degree, including licenses and certificates, earn more than the average bachelor's degree recipient;
- A person with a CTE-related associate degree or credential will earn on average between \$4,000 and \$19,000 more a year than a person with a humanities associate degree;
- The average high school graduation rate for students concentrating in CTE programs (more than 270 hours) is 93 percent, compared to a national adjusted average of 80 percent.

## Happy Special Education Day!



On December 2, 1975 the very first federal special education law was signed into law. IDEA, or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2005. National Special Education Day was created to celebrate the event.

IDEA guides our work with providing services for students with disabilities. The intent of the law is to provide access for our students with disabilities to the same educational outcomes as their peers without disabilities. After all, *everyone* is a general education student first.

As we continue our work under MTSS we are committed and focused to improve outcomes for *all* students. This includes our students served in special education as well as our students served in general education.



## Going the Extra Distance: December Recipients

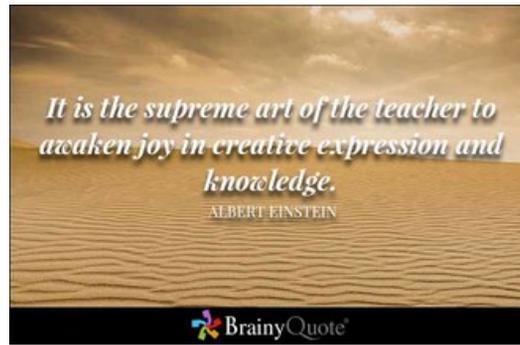
GCED is so fortunate to have dedicated staff members committed to serving our students, our member districts, our communities. *Thank you all.* We would like to recognize the following staff members that have been nominated for an Extra Distance award.

**Shelly Angell** serves as a social worker at River Bluff Education Center. She is consistently and continually 100% focused on students' needs. She is always willing to take anything on as long as it is in the students' best interests. Shelly is consistently a calm presence when our students are most dysregulated. Shelly is an ideal fit for our federal setting IV world.

**Angie Dahlen** serves our deaf and hard of hearing needs throughout the county. In fact, Angie took on a 1.4 overload in order to cover students' needs when short staffed. She is always willing to support and has a keen sense of looking forward in order to best help others. Angie's dedication to being a resource for others is remarkable.

**Ashley Rohwer** serves KW as a new EBD teacher. She understands due process and shares that knowledge while supporting colleagues. Ashley is willing to make changes, to work with students providing the supports necessary for student success. Even in the most difficult situation Ashley maintains her sense of humor and smile.

**Mick Wendlund** serves RWHS as their work-based teacher and coordinator. Using his strong communication skills, Mick drives to build strong community partnerships. He is dedicated to meeting students' needs, fully understanding that each student and his/her needs are unique. Mick's contagious enthusiasm inspires students and colleagues.



## In the Spotlight: Mark Opsahl, Principal of Goodhue Elementary School

The expression that there's no place like home must ring strongly for some. Having been born and raised in Goodhue, just 1 1/2 blocks from his office window, Mark is proud to call Goodhue and Goodhue Public Schools home.

After graduating from Hamline University he returned home to Goodhue. That year his 4th grade teacher was ill and Mark would sub for her frequently. The following school year he took over for her. He and Paula, fiancée at the time and now wife, sought jobs (he in teaching and she in sales) in the metro area, closer to where she was from. During that time Mark and Paula married, started a family, and Mark obtained his principal license. After teaching in Burnsville and Champlin, fate intervened. Just as Mark and Paula are thinking they need to get back closer to family, Goodhue Elementary School was looking for a new principal. Mark started in 2002 and has not looked back. "I wanted to raise our kids in a small community" and "I have the best job of all - watching kids grow. To top it off, my own kids are close by."

Mark and Paula stay on top of busy family life with Ben (12th grade), Kate (10th grade), and Will (6th grade). Over the years they have enjoyed camping and fishing together. These days they are primarily a sports family spending a lot of time in the gym. In addition to his principal duties, Mark coaches. He is the assistant basketball coach, head cross country coach, and he also coaches Will's baseball and basketball teams. The coaching is a win win for Mark and students alike. Great fit for Mark since he has always had a love for coaching; great fit for Mark and the kids because of an ideal opportunity to build relationships.

It is those relationships with the kids that make Mark jump out of bed in the morning. He loves his job: watching students grow, helping and supporting teachers. He is clearly proud of the work they are all doing in Goodhue. There are many wonderful things going on but he credits the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to open up communications and collaboration among staff. Their focus is on doing what is best for kids. Through this work much is being looked at from grading changes to differentiated seating in the classrooms. Although the physical space may look the same as when he was a student here, the learning in the classrooms looks different because of the changes they have made. The PLCs have offered a safe environment to try new things. Mark encourages others not to be afraid to make mistakes, understanding that is where innovation comes from.

An innovative idea that grew from PLCs is Goodhue's course in Project Based Learning (PBL), which is a part of the specialist rotation so that students in kindergarten through 6th grade learn about and practice inquiry based learning. In some cases, students are using coding and programming to problem solve. The Goodhue Lions provided seed money for this class. Now funds from magazine sales and Target cards support the class. As with anything new added in school, we need to take something off the plate. "For us, the trade off was guidance class



Mark Opsahl, Goodhue Elementary School Principal

*You've never made a mistake if you haven't tried something new. Go ahead, make a mistake!*

*- Mark Opsahl*

### Rapid Round with Mark

#### **Pizza Topping?**

*Pepperoni*

#### **PERSON that turned you into a reader?**

*Greg Nixon, Mark's 5th Grade Teacher*

#### **Favorite spot/activity on weekend?**

*Gym*

#### **Favorite Movie?**

*Hoosiers*

where students learned about anti-bullying and building character." Mark went on to explain that those pieces are being covered now building wide and class wide as part of their PBIS. Needs changed; resources were reallocated; students are engaged in learning that prepares them to be college and career ready. PBL would align nicely with personalized learning, which Mark sees as very exciting in the future of education. *An aside note - this PBL course will be an interesting one to watch in Goodhue. I once read a study where a kindergarten girl chose apples to study for her project. Staying in the same district, each school year she built on her apple theme. By the time she headed to college she had her own apple orchard and was working on drought resistance hybrids. She truly followed her passion.*

A final thought about Mark...it is quite fitting that he is "In the Spotlight". Had it not been for teaching, coaching, or a principalship Mark may have worked his way to the spotlight on stage as a rock star. It was only the singing and dancing that held him back; he excelled with the wigs, costumes, and wild behavior. Next time you see him, ask him about Hairball. He's willing to share. After all, it is this side of him that helps build relationships with all, but especially the kids. It shows them that although he is their principal; he is also human. Indeed, he is...a very good human.



**Top of the bucket list?**

*Learn to Pilot*

**Favorite Subject in Elementary School?**

*Social Studies*

*(Mark has a minor in SS/Poly Sci)*

**Creamy or Crunchy Peanut Butter?**

*Crunchy*

**Dog or cat person?**

*Dog*

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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.