

MASB Headlines

A News Report for Michigan Education Leaders

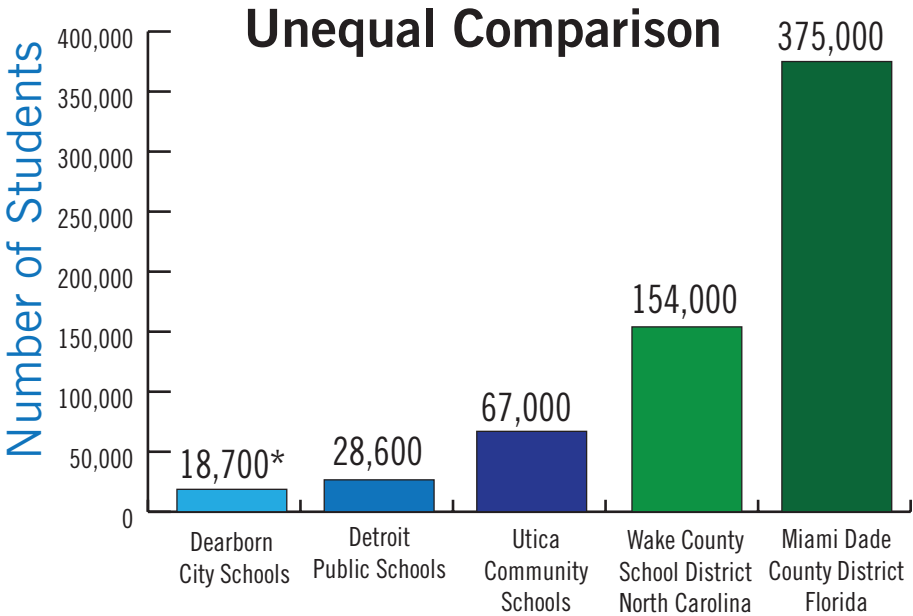
Use Caution When Applying Research Broadly

The following editorial by Executive Director Kathy Hayes first appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* on Sept. 21, 2014. Let us know your thoughts on superintendent effectiveness by sending them to webmaster@masb.org.

In the recent *Free Press* article, “Superintendents: Vital or irrelevant? Researchers, experts differ,” researchers from the Brown Center on Education Policy at the Brookings Institution claim the school district’s system “promotes or hinders student achievement” and that superintendents are “indistinguishable.”

To support that claim, they used student assessment data from the 2000-2001 to 2009-2010 school years for districts in Florida and North Carolina. While they believe their conclusions support their theory, generalizing their findings as applicable to all situations would not be responsible.

Both Florida and North Carolina have county-wide school districts. One of the largest districts in North Carolina, Wake County School District, has close to 154,000 students, three times the size of our largest district. In Florida, Miami Dade County has 375,000 students. It



*Michigan data from 2012-2013 school year; Florida and North Carolina from 2009-2010.

Districts

would be reasonable to expect that the superintendent assumes more of a CEO position where they may have oversight and final say over the district, but rely heavily on senior staff to manage day-to-day operations. That simply isn't the case in Michigan where many of our public school districts are small or moderate in size. In those districts and many others, research shows the

superintendent plays a crucial role in student achievement.

According to the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning and its recent study, “School District Leadership That Works,” “district-level leadership matters.” Researchers say there is strong evidence that

Use Caution, continued on Page 4

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Action Needed: Tell Your Senator to Vote No on Tax Appeals Legislation.....	3
President’s Letter: Join Us for the 2014 Annual Leadership Conference.....	4
Have Questions About School Law? MCSA Fall Conference is Your Answer.....	5
Enforcing School Board Policies During Election Season.....	6
MDE Suggests Ways to Address Teacher Shortage.....	7
School Consolidation Grants Awarded to Support 13 Projects Statewide.....	8
VIP Focus: An Education in Energy Value.....	9



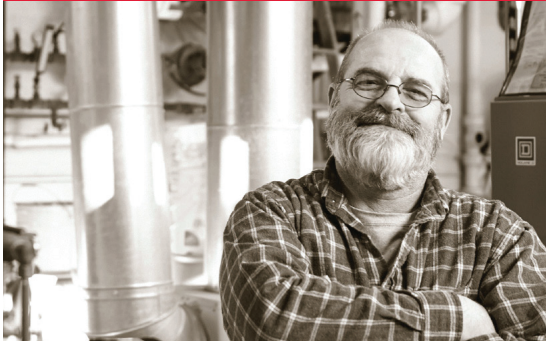
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Legislative Update

Action Needed: Tell Your Senator to Vote No on Tax Appeals Legislation

This week, the Michigan Senate is expected to vote on Senate Bills 1038-1040, which are intended to streamline the appeals process for all taxpayers. While the intent is a good one, the affect goes well beyond it. The bills would allow taxpayers, homeowners and businesses alike, to appeal their property tax or classification and lookback up to three tax years for relief. Under current law it is one year for most appeals.

MASB has concerns with the expanded three-year lookback for all appeals, including property classification. This will greatly increase the amount of appeals both in number and cost. Schools that have budgeted on expected tax revenue will now see unexpected holes in that revenue stream. This creates instability in the district and could send more schools into financial distress. The School Aid Fund will replace the revenue for schools that are in formula, but it will not be immediate, nor will it cover property tax or millage revenue lost.

MASB is opposed to Senate Bills 1038, 1039 and 1040. We have concerns that these changes could cause financial issues for our local school districts, intermediate school districts and the state School Aid Fund as a whole. **We urge you to call your State Senator and tell him/her to vote NO on this legislation.**

Senate Committee Approves Bills on Unfunded Mandates

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee passed **Senate Bills 495-498** last week, which would require the Legislature to establish a local government mandate panel and require the cost of mandates in bills for local governments and schools to be addressed before they become law. These bills address one of MASB's legislative priorities—maintaining local control and opposing unfunded mandates.

MASB testified in support of these bills as they would benefit our local schools in terms of understanding

what the state is trying to require and how the cost of implementation will be covered. The bills would:

- require the state to appropriate and disburse amounts necessary for locals to comply with requirements of new laws;
- ban the state from requiring new activities or services until a fiscal note is created and funds appropriated;
- ban penalties to locals for not following a new mandate if the state does not follow procedure; and
- create the Local Government Mandate Panel made up of five members, including one person representing intermediate and local school districts.

We hope to see action on the bills in the full Senate before they take their October break.

Regional Priority Setting Meetings Underway

Our fall priority setting meetings have now been scheduled in each of the MASB regions; meetings in Regions 4 and 7 have already been completed. At the meeting, board members and superintendents will brainstorm with MASB's Government Relations staff on what your Association's focus should be for the 2015-2016 legislative session.

All events start at 7 p.m. For more information and to register, visit our **Calendar**, or contact Cheryl Huffman at 517.327.5915 or chuffman@masb.org.

Please join us and encourage your

local colleagues—board members and superintendents alike—to participate in these important events. MASB's legislative agenda is only as strong as the number of voices that create it.

Schedule:

- Oct. 2, Region 8 – Oakland Schools
- Oct. 16, Region 5 – Genesee ISD
- Oct. 16, Region 8 – Dearborn Public Schools
- Oct. 21, Region 3 – Greenville Central Office

Oct. 27, Region 1 – Delta Schoolcraft ISD – (Remote locations available at Copper Country ISD, Dickinson-Iron ISD, Eastern Upper Peninsula ISD, Gogebic-Ontonagon ISD, Marquette-Alger RESA and Menominee ISD)

Oct. 28, Region 2 – Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle ESD

Oct. 30, Region 6 – Van Buren Technology Center

Nov. 12, Region 8 – Macomb ISD

President's Letter

Join Us for the 2014 Annual Leadership Conference

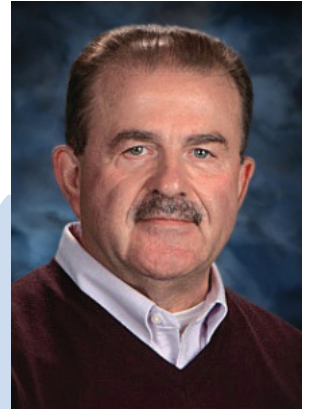
On behalf of the MASB Board of Directors, we are looking forward to seeing you and your peers in Grand Rapids for this year's Annual Leadership Conference, Nov. 6 – 9. Just as we expect our teachers and administrators to continue developing the skills necessary to challenge our students to succeed, it's important we reflect that attitude too. Attending this meeting and making a commitment to professional development in your role as a board member models this approach for your board and community.

It seems that every year the challenges that public schools face are potential game-changers. The politics, the competitive environment and even the advancements in the delivery methods create challenges, as well as opportunities. There is no better time for us to come together and find consensus, create new pathways and be different than what we were.

This three-day event is a great opportunity to learn from nationally renowned experts, listen to your peers and share your experiences with like-minded people who are also committed to our children and public education. Featured speakers include:

- Anne Byrne, National School Boards Association President—Leading Children to Excellence

- Cile Chavez, M.Ed., Ed.D.—The Power and Promise of Modeling Transformational Leadership
- Ron Crouch, M.A., M.S.S.W., M.B.A.—Demographic, Educational, Workforce and Economic Trends Impacting Education
- David Berliner, M.A., Ph.D.—Author of “50 Myths and Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools”
- Anthony Muhammad, Ph.D.—Creating and Sustaining Student-Centered Learning Environments



Don Hubler

President's Letter, continued on Page 8

Register Today!

The quickest and easiest way to register is through the [MASB website](http://www.masb.org).

Having Trouble Logging in?

Please note that your username and password are case sensitive. If you need help resetting your password, please contact MASB at membership@masb.org or 517.327.5900.

Use Caution, continued from Page 1

proves superintendent tenure in a district positively correlates to student achievement. These positive effects appear to manifest themselves as early as two years into a superintendent's tenure.”

The study also concluded that superintendents who focus on collaborative goal setting, are in alignment with their boards of education, and monitor those goals and the progress of their districts, have shown immense growth and improvement when it comes to student achievement.

Whenever we are presented with research, we need to be cautious about making broad-based assumptions that the research findings are applicable to all situations. To ensure we are collecting accurate data, we must expand the scope of research. The McREL study spanned nearly four decades, “involved 2,817 districts and the achievement scores of 3.4 million students, resulting in what McREL researchers believe to be the largest-ever quantitative examination of research on superintendents.”

We owe it to our school districts, our

superintendents, our boards of education and, most importantly, our students to use accurate, timely, diverse and comprehensive data to really understand what's happening in our public schools.

In Michigan, we know our superintendents have a direct impact on student achievement. Hiring the right superintendent is the most important decision our board members can make. It's not a position that just anyone can do successfully. To suggest otherwise is doing a grave injustice to our students. Superintendents have a direct impact on student achievement.

Have Questions About School Law? MCSA Fall Conference is Your Answer



Before the 2014 MASB Annual Leadership Conference gets underway, the Michigan Council of School Attorneys will hold its fall conference on Thursday, Nov. 6. Open to all MASB members, MCSA's day-long meeting will focus on various aspects of school law and compliance.

MCSA traditionally offers pertinent and timely topics for school officials and attorneys who are involved in the legal aspects of education and this year is no exception. The 2014 MCSA Fall Conference program includes two early bird sessions for MASB's Annual Conference that focus on the legal issues currently confronting school officials. MCSA President Katherine Broaddus invites you to attend this one-of-kind opportunity to learn from the school law experts about the latest updates and details regarding complying with the Teachers' Tenure Act, the Revised School Code and other school related laws.

School law experts from Clark Hill, PLC, Thrun Law Firm, PC, Varnum, LLP and MASB will offer information, ideas and insights on a variety of topics while delivering the following presentations:

- Emerging Issues in Student Discipline
- Attorney-Client Privilege: To What and Whom Does This Pertain?

- Analyzing Recent Decisions on the Tenure Act: Implications for School Districts
- Child Custody Issues in Schools
- What Every School Board Member Needs to Know About the Legal Requirements of Adopting and Overseeing a Budget
- Legal Issues to Consider Before Approving Your Next Fundraiser

Whether you are an attorney, board member or school administrator, if you are interested in the cutting-edge legal issues that confront school districts, these sessions are designed for you.

Administrators—earn State Board-Continuing Education Unit (SB-CEU) Credits. Application has been made to the Michigan Department of Education for .4 of an SB-CEU.

School Board Members—earn 10 MASB Education Credits for attending both sessions.

To register, [visit the MASB website](#) and select the Morning and/or Afternoon sessions from the MASB Annual Leadership Conference registration page. Each session is \$95 or \$180 for the full day, including lunch.



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Enforcing School Board Policies During Election Season

As the Nov. 4 election draws closer, candidates and special interest groups will be ramping up their campaigns by increasing phone calls, commercials and mailings to deliver their political messages. During this time, school districts will have to remain vigilant to ensure their funds and resources are not being used to support such political messages, which would be contrary to Michigan's Campaign Finance Act.

Most school boards have adopted policies to regulate political activities on school district property to avoid violations of the Campaign Finance Act. So, now is the time for school administrators to reacquaint themselves with the policies that cover issues relating to campaigning on school property or political activities by employees.

The community relations section of a school board's policy manual is likely to include several policies covering activities relating to political campaigns. For example, a school board's policy that addresses relations with special interest groups might indicate the following: "All materials or activities proposed by outside political sources for student or staff use or participation shall be reviewed by the Superintendent on the basis of their educational contribution to part or all of the school program and benefit to students, and no such approval shall have the primary purpose of advancing the name, product or special interest of the proposing group." (NEOLA Policy 9700)

In regard to facility or equipment use, the same policy would likely emphasize that: "[s]chool facilities or equipment may not be used as a means of producing or disseminating to the community any materials that advertise or promote a political party, a political cause or the candidacy of an individual for public



office. Students and employees of the Board shall not be used to distribute campaign literature within the schools or on school grounds." (NEOLA Policy 9700)

Likewise, a school district's policy on advertising and commercial activities would support the above policy by including the following prohibition: "No advertisement shall promote any specific religion or religious, ethnic or racial group, political candidate or ballot issue and shall be non-proselytizing." (NEOLA Policy 9700.01)

The Political Activities by Public Employees Act sets the legal parameters for public employees in regards to participation in political activities. Section three of the act confirms that school employees may "[e]ngage in... political activities on behalf of a candidate or issue in connection with partisan or nonpartisan elections" (MCL 15.403). However, section four clarifies that such activities shall not occur "during those hours when [a public employee] is being compensated for the performance of that person's duties as a public employee." (MCL 15.404) Thus, a school board's policy addressing outside activities of staff should prohibit staff members from: Campaign[ing] on school property during

duty hours on behalf of any political issue or candidate for local, state or national office." (NEOLA Policy 3231)

And, a staff ethics policy should direct staff members to refrain from using their positions or public property, or permitting another person to use their positions or public property: "for political... purposes." (NEOLA Policy 3210)

Lastly, school districts may adopt policies and administrative guidelines that prohibit employees from using the school district electronic network for campaign or political reasons. Thus, a school district's staff network and Internet acceptable use and safety guideline could simply state: "Any use of the Internet for commercial purposes, advertising or political lobbying is prohibited." (NEOLA Administrative Guideline 7540.04)

If a school district confronts a situation involving political campaigning that doesn't appear to apply to a specific policy, the administration shouldn't hesitate to contact MASB Legal Counsel Brad Banasik bbanasik@masb.org or 517.327.5929, or their NEOLA associate for assistance.

MDE Suggests Ways to Address Teacher Shortage

State Superintendent Mike Flanagan issued a press release yesterday, primarily to address the reported teacher shortage in Detroit Public Schools, but the suggestions he provides can be used by any district having trouble filling a position.

Flanagan proposes:

- Getting retired teachers back into the classrooms;
- Encouraging outside career professionals to transition into teaching;
- Having businesses allow their highly skilled employees to do teaching sabbaticals; and
- Bringing this issue to the attention of certified teachers currently out of the profession to return.

“Teaching is the most noble and important of professions and I have no doubt there are people out there who are willing to make a difference,” Flanagan said. “There are alternate routes for quality people to step up, step in and teach our kids.”

He also urged the Legislature to pass

Senate Bill 907, which would continue to allow retired teachers in critical shortage subject areas to return to the classroom without jeopardizing their retirement benefits.

Individuals with bachelor’s degrees also can utilize several options in order to become a teacher in Michigan. Those interested in teaching full time can apply to a state-approved alternate route program in order to gain certification. Alternate route programs are approved through Davenport University, Schoolcraft College, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor and University of Michigan-Flint. Individuals who wish to work part-time or for a short duration can take advantage of a variety of permit options. These permits are issued by MDE to a local school district after the district has verified the teaching position is unable to be filled otherwise.

The **teacher permit options** include:

EXPERT-IN-RESIDENCE: Can be utilized for a maximum of two hours a day and is valid for the entire school year once issued. Individuals must demonstrate

expertise in the field being taught.

Full-Year Permit: Appropriate for core subject areas; individual must have either a degree in the subject area or demonstrate content knowledge through testing.

Emergency Permit: Appropriate for noncore subject areas and non-special education assignments; individual must have a degree in the subject area or currently be enrolled in an approved teacher preparation program leading to certification.

1233b Permit: Appropriate for grades 9-12 in the subject areas of computer science, foreign language, mathematics, biology, chemistry, engineering, physics and robotics. The individual must have a degree in the field of specialization in which he or she will teach, plus recent and relevant work experience in the content area (exception made for foreign languages).

Additionally, MDE is developing a Michigan Teacher Corps program, a new initiative to select, train and provide highly skilled teachers and teacher leaders for Michigan’s lowest-performing schools.



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School Consolidation Grants Awarded to Support 13 Projects Statewide

Twelve school districts will receive \$4.3 million to help defray costs in their efforts to consolidate districts and services, the Michigan Department of Education announced on Sept. 26, 2014.

The state funds for the School Consolidation Grants, initiated and approved by the Michigan Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Rick Snyder, provided competitive grants to 15 total districts. Three grants were awarded in the first round, earlier in the year.

“To help increase efficiencies across the state, the grants support an effective and important ongoing strategy of consolidating districts where it makes sense, and streamlining their services and operations in other cases,” said State Superintendent Mike Flanagan. “These will help maintain or improve district finances and operations.”

This second round of funding was available through a budget supplemental that allowed projects consolidating administrative services or operations.

The MDE reviewed, rated and rewarded what was available to applications that demonstrated the most efficient and effective impact of consolidation efforts. One district, Ann Arbor Public Schools, is getting \$1.4 million to help pay for its planned annexation with Whitmore Lake Schools. Eleven remaining districts receiving grant funds are consolidating services or operations. Receiving grants in the first round were: North Huron Schools; Marshall Public Schools; and Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District.

Below is the complete list of recipients in this latest round of consolidation grants:

School District/ISD	Award Amount	Type of Consolidation
Ann Arbor Public Schools	\$1,405,064	Complete Consolidation of Ann Arbor Public Schools and Whitmore Lake Public Schools
Calhoun ISD	\$945,454	Tech support staff, State data reporting, data warehousing system
Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle ESD	\$49,188	Shared internet services, data center, tech services
Coopersville Area Public School District	\$198,337	Financial services, Special education director and services
Eastern Upper Peninsula ISD	\$310,950	Student Information, Student Achievement Data, Financial Information, and Teacher Evaluation systems
Fowler Public Schools	\$8,850	Business services
Imlay City Community Schools	\$27,500	Transportation services, facilities maintenance services
Ingham ISD (1)	\$194,342	Shared academic student data
Ingham ISD (2)	\$282,000	Transportation services
Kalamazoo RESA	\$82,064	Technology, Business services
Lapeer ISD	\$11,006	Payroll system/services
Saugatuck Public Schools	\$27,052	Food services
Wexford-Missaukee ISD	\$760,000	Tech services/support

Source: Michigan Department of Education Press Release, Sept. 26, 2014.

President’s Letter, continued from Page 4

- And that’s just a handful of all of the sessions available on Friday and Saturday covering a variety of education-related topics in the categories of governance and executive leadership, innovations in district management, school board/superintendent/community partnerships, student achievement, accountability and data, student, family, community, wellness and environment, and technology + learning solutions.

MASB is also emphasizing both member and district team development by offering free registration for a superintendent who attends with a majority of his/her board. Additionally, first-time attendees can attend for half the price! There are other learning opportunities taking place on Thursday and Sunday with Early Bird Workshops, MCSA Fall Conference, Urban Conference and CBA classes. There truly is something for everyone. **Check out the full program on the MASB website.**

This is your conference—if you haven’t registered yet, **sign up today.** We look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,
Don Hubler
MASB President
L’Anse Creuse Public Schools/Macomb ISD

VIP Focus: An Education in Energy Value

Prepared by Consumers Energy

Michigan schools are saving energy and money and getting paid to do it.

Flushing Community Schools wanted to spend less on utilities and more on students in the classroom, so in 2007, they upgraded to more energy-efficient equipment and entered into a partnership with ENERGY STAR® as another way to track their consumption of electricity and natural gas.

The six district buildings they upgraded started with an average rating of 41 and improved to their current score of 92, earning them the prestigious ENERGY STAR plaque. Flushing Community Schools was also one of only three districts nationally to achieve ENERGY STAR's highest Top Performers Award in 2009, 2010 and 2011. In 2011, they received the only 40 percent reduction award in America from ENERGY STAR.

Upgrades included energy-efficient T-8 fixtures in gymnasiums, T-12 lighting and motion sensors, occu-

pancy sensors on vending machines and LED exit signs. All faulty steam traps were replaced and boilers were tuned up.

Flushing Community Schools took advantage of the incentives offered by Consumers Energy and has received more than \$17,000 to date.

When the WoodsEdge Learning Center in Kalamazoo was built in 2010, they took advantage of a new energy efficiency program offered by Consumers Energy.

This innovative educational building provides individuals with autism and severe cognitive impairments a learning environment where they

can safely connect to the world.

Energy-saving features included a heat recovery chiller, radiant floor heating, exhaust air energy recovery, a high-efficiency pool dehumidification unit and heater, high-efficiency condensing boilers plus LED and dimmable lighting. These features helped reduce overall energy consumption by 33.7 percent, saving approximately 167,000 kilowatt hours of electricity and 2,740 MCFs annually (one MCF equals 1,000 cubic feet of natural gas).

The WoodsEdge Learning Center received almost \$49,000 as part of the Consumers Energy new construction energy efficiency incentive program.



For more information on energy efficiency programs, visit www.ConsumersEnergy.com/mybusiness.

Consumers Energy offers many other energy programs and incentives for schools:

- **Rate Analysis**—Customers have a number of rates available to them. Consumers Energy can analyze accounts to ensure the best rate.
- **Education Credit**—Most Michigan K-12 school electric accounts have the Educational Institution Service Provision (GEI) credit available. School administrators should check their bill to make sure they are receiving it.

- **Business eBill**—Receive, view and pay invoices online anytime, anywhere. Users also have the ability to group accounts and control access to account groups. Bills are downloadable to accounting software and email notifications of new invoices are sent out.
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Education News

Award is Instrumental for Fitzgerald Music Students

The Fitzgerald High School band students are playing a happy tune.

After a rigorous application process, FHS band director and music teacher Brian Roelandt was the recipient of more than \$20,000 worth of brand-new instruments for his students from the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation.

It took a lot of hard work on the band director's part. To be considered for the program, Roelandt had to answer survey questions in essay form over a period of time.

"Once you turned all of that in, it was submitted to the panel and they sat down with sponsors who fund the foundation," said Roelandt, in his 16th year of teaching at FHS.

Based in Studio City, Calif., the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation donates musical instruments to under-funded music programs. The new equipment comes to FHS at a time in which budget cuts have become standard in districts throughout Michigan, including that of Fitzgerald Public Schools.

Through the foundation, FHS received one tuba, one baritone saxophone, two alto saxophones, two clarinets, two flutes, seven pairs of marimba mallets and 10 mouthpieces.

"We would not be able to purchase that on our own," Roelandt said. "They're brand-new and super-shiny. The kids love them."

The new instruments equal several years of budgeting. A brand-new saxophone or tuba, for example, could cost between \$6,000 and \$10,000. The donation also paved the way for more students to join band who otherwise would not have.

"We ended up with five new students in the ninth-grade band because of the instruments," Roelandt said.

The use of the new instruments was based on student need. Roelandt also is applying for other grants. The music teacher was recognized for the Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation accomplishment at the Sept. 18 Fitzgerald Public Schools Board of Education meeting.

"Mr. Roelandt represents the outstanding teachers we have in Fitzgerald Public Schools. He gives countless hours to our music program and shares his talent and expertise with our music students," district Superintendent Barbara VanSweden stated in an email.

The band director appreciates the support he receives from school officials. FHS has a ninth-grade concert band, a symphony band, a wind ensemble and a marching band. Students must audition to be in the wind ensemble.

"It's our most advanced program we offer," said Roelandt, who taught in Harper Woods Public Schools prior to coming to FPS. "It's advanced high school music and early college music."

Source: candgnews.com, Sept. 29, 2014.

Students Hit the Links, Thanks to the First Tee

When Bowen Elementary School fifth-grade student Breanna Scott took her turn putting, the golf ball rolled past the hole.

Brendan Coallier, an intern for The First Tee of West Michigan, paused to give Breanna instructions, showing her how lightly to hit the ball with the club.

"Nice and easy, not a hard as you did last time," he said. "Line it up. See the little line on your putter? Line it up with the hole."

Breanna putted again. The ball went in.

"See? Nice job," Brendan said.

Breanna and Brendan were partners for a game of putt-putt golf, during Bowen Elementary School students' weekly golf lesson at Fellowship Greens offered through The First Tee of West Michigan. The week's lessons were twofold: putting and responsibility.

Each Tuesday for six weeks, students from Bowen Elementary are taking part in the program that teaches values and life skills through golf. As every player knows, golf requires patience and perseverance, and the etiquette of the game calls for maturity. There's no referee; players keep their own score and tally their own penalties.

Bowen students, many playing golf for the first time, are learning these things with experienced golfers. They not only perfect the students' swings, but get them thinking about how skills necessary on the golf course are important at home and school too.

"We are using golf as a trigger to think about becoming a good citizen," said Tyler Smies, The First Tee's executive director.

Lessons on the links focus on nine core values: honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy and judgment (decision-making). They also help instill healthy physical, emotional and social habits.

During a recent session, students discussed respect and responsibility. In golf, you have to respect equipment, other players and the course. At home, you have to respect your parents and at school, your teachers, students agreed. "I like to sit down after the lesson and talk about respect," said fifth-grader Tariya Barnett.

Golfing through The First Tee is offered through Kentwood Public Schools' after-school ARCH program (Academics, Recreation, Community

and Health), combining tutoring, healthy activities and field trips.

Source: School News Network, Sept. 26, 2014.

Ypsilanti Teachers Look to Crowdfunding Websites for School Supplies

At the beginning of the school year, Aimee Conat, a first grade teacher at Adams STEM Academy in Ypsilanti, was given \$200 to share with another first grade teacher to purchase school supplies for the year.

“We have about 50 first graders so that’s \$4 per kid, for the whole year. That’s for pencils, paper, crayons and we have to make our own copies so that pays for toner and everything,” Conat said.

In need of a creative way to make sure that her students were well-prepared for the school year, Conat looked to DonorsChoose.org, a crowdfunding website specifically for teachers.

“Before school started, knowing what was going to happen, I got onto DonorsChoose and created a website for my class to get the basic stuff we were going to need,” Conat said, then she started sharing the link to her fundraising page on social media.

Conat asked for almost \$700 and had it funded within 24 hours.

Conat said that after hearing about the success of her crowdfunding project, Adams Principal Christopher Johnson asked her to do a

presentation so that other teachers in the building could use the tool to stock their own classrooms.

Several Adams teachers jumped on board and created projects. Two of them, by third grade teacher Kayla VanEgmond and fourth grade teacher Stephanie Moyski, were funded through a partnership by Google, along with nearly 300 other projects in the metro Detroit area this month.

So far five teachers at Adams have successfully used DonorsChoose to raise a total of \$2,736 for the school.

Once a project gets funded through DonorsChoose, the organization purchases and ships the materials directly to the teachers.

Conat said it’s been a great resource for teachers at her school and more teachers are in the process of creating projects.

“I’m really lucky that I’m in a school with a really supportive principal who said, ‘Yeah, let’s do it,’ and a staff that was really open to getting on there and getting their projects funded,” Conat said.

While there aren’t any projects currently listed on DonorsChoose.org for Ypsilanti teachers, Conat said more are on the way, as teachers are allowed to do two projects per year. Those interested in contributing can visit the website and search for projects by zip code.

Source: The Ypsilanti Courier, Sept. 26, 2014.

What Innovative Things Are Your Local Schools Doing?

The U.S. Department of Education is soliciting submissions that describe innovating programming being implemented in schools and districts around the country.

Secretary Arne Duncan wants to know what’s happening in your community and wants you to share the innovative things the schools in your area are doing—or what you’d like to see happen.

Submit your examples or ideas through the [Web form on the White House website](#).

MASB Datebook

Board Leadership Development

Oct. 2, 2014

[Region 8 Oakland County Legislative Meeting @ Oakland Schools](#)

Oct. 6, 2014

[CBA 252 @ Marquette-Alger RESA With Distance Learning Sites](#)

Oct. 7, 2014

[Go-To-Pros Summit](#)

Oct. 9, 2014

[NSBA - COSA School Law Practice Seminar](#)

Oct. 15, 2014

[Creating Agenda Packets With BoardBook](#)

Oct. 16, 2014

[Region 5 Legislative Meeting @ Genesee ISD](#)

[Region 8 Wayne County Legislative Meeting @ Dearborn Schools](#)

[View Complete Calendar](#)

MASB Headlines

A News Report for Michigan Education Leaders

A publication of the Michigan Association of School Boards

Mission Statement

To provide quality educational leadership services for all Michigan boards of education, and to advocate for student achievement and public education.

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Worth Repeating

Put Our Children First

Blog Post From Detroit Free Press, Sept. 11, 2014. Written by the Detroit Free Press Editorial Board.

Dear Governor and State Lawmakers,

Schools are supposed to be about children.

Not money. Not power. Not endless debates about traditional public schools versus charter or private.

We have schools to educate our children—all of them, fully and adequately.

We can agree on that, can't we?

And if we can find common ground on that, can we agree that Michigan's relaxed grip on our charter school system needs to be tightened?

Free Press reporters recently looked deeply into two decades' worth of charter school history in Michigan and found the good, the bad and the many self-interests that put children anywhere but first.

Charters absorb nearly \$1 billion a year in taxpayer dollars with mixed academic results—from spectacular to numbingly, chronically awful—in a leaky state system that allows some bad actors to prosper through self-dealing and management companies to hide taxpayer money and their own profits behind a cloak of privacy.

That's not putting children first—but you know that, really. We all do.

Truly putting children first means reforming how charter schools are authorized, operated and managed—emphasizing high standards, deadlines to meet those standards and transparency on behalf of management companies.

It means looking at other states—the *Free Press* report lays out many ways other states have stronger rules.

It means devoting more money to education.

It means demanding improvement in traditional schools, too. Diverting \$1 billion annually to charters doesn't help them, but traditional public schools suffer from their own entrenched interests.

You, as lawmakers, have the power to do all that, and more. You could start with a hard look at the decision to remove the cap—done without enough quality measures—on the number of charter schools. That has exacerbated Michigan's problem.

Having more options doesn't translate into better options for parents and children.

And look at it this way: You can help the charter school movement live up to the promise of being truly life-changing for students and parents who are counting on these schools to provide a superior education. You can help lift charter school students in low-income areas out of the cycle of poverty.

Ultimately, with the right regulations for any school that accepts public dollars, all students will benefit. So will quality-of-life and economic measures across the state, with more attractive school systems, more students ready to succeed in college and graduate into careers instead of low-wage hourly jobs. That's what we're really talking about here—the opportunities that Michigan gives our children to succeed for years to come.

In demanding accountability and transparency in charter schools, there is absolutely no downside, not for children, only an upside. What's good

for children ought to bring us together, in lockstep.

But in the two months since the *Free Press* charter series was first published, reaction has broken down along distressingly partisan lines. That's not surprising when so much unsophisticated heat is generated in Lansing on education issues—from charter school advocates, from the Michigan Education Association, from the Mackinac Center, from any number of ideologically driven interest groups.

We're heartened by the response from state Superintendent of Education Mike Flanagan, who has promised tougher oversight of charters and is threatening to suspend 11 charter authorizers, meaning they would not be able to authorize new charter schools. The state Board of Education has proposed a set of reforms that begins to address the problem. And on Thursday, a bill was introduced in the Legislature to put a moratorium on new charter schools until accountability is tightened.

Some charter supporters welcomed what the *Free Press* reported, seeing it as a way to strengthen Michigan's lax oversight and clean out rogue operators who give all charter schools a bad name. Greg Richmond, president and CEO of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers, said Michigan laws should have stronger performance standards and accountability for authorizers and operators.

But now it's up to you, lawmakers.

Will you act?

Will you put children first?

Worth Repeating doesn't necessarily reflect the views or positions of MASB. It's intended to spark dialogue and inform readers about what's being said about public education around the state and nation.
