



# The Review

## Celebrating Students

Fall 2014  
[www.swsc.org](http://www.swsc.org)

## Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City School District Wins National Award

By Carolyn Lange, West Central Tribune. Reprinted with permission.

The kindergarten through sixth-grade students and teachers in the Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City School District are celebrating September 30th's announcement that they have been selected as a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. The award will be presented Nov. 10-11 in Washington, D.C.



"It's amazing recognition, not only for the students, but also for the staff that works with them," said Elementary Principal Kodi Goracke.

ACGC is one of eight schools in Minnesota, and one of 337 schools nationwide, to receive the award this year based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Most schools received the award in the category of exemplary high performance. ACGC is one of just 47 in the nation to receive the award in the category of "exemplary achievement gap closing schools." The school was among the top performing schools in the state for both reading and mathematics based on its progress in closing achievement gaps between the school's subgroups and the state's all-students group over the past five years.

After being nominated by the Minnesota Department of Education, the district completed the detailed application earlier this year to document students' performance and growth. Since then, the staff has been eagerly awaiting word about whether they would make the National Blue Ribbon list or not. ACGC Superintendent Sherri Broderius said the news was "very exciting" for the district. Being one out of 47 schools in the country to be recognized for closing the achievement gap is "pretty outstanding," she said. Broderius praised Goracke for implementing changes in the K-6 grades, especially in the Title I programs for assisting disadvantaged students, which helped reduce the gap in test scores between student groups. "It's a result of her leadership," Broderius said. The district has worked hard to reduce the gap in test scores for students in special education programs, those in the free or reduced lunch program and students of color, Broderius said. "What it means is that we've created a focus and we used data to make determinations on what direction we were going to take," she said. Broderius said student proficiencies have increased because the staff watched the "trend lines" of what was working and what wasn't working.

In a news release, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said schools like ACGC are "fulfilling the promise of American education — that all students, no matter their name or zip code, can flourish when schools provide safe, creative, and challenging learning environments." Duncan said the National Blue Ribbon [Continued on page 6](#)

# Update from the Executive Director

By Cliff Carmody, Executive Director, [cliff.carmody@swsc.org](mailto:cliff.carmody@swsc.org)

Welcome to the first edition of the revised version of *The Review*. So, what has changed you wonder? In the past, we used this newsletter to highlight all of the programs and services available to our members. Going forward, it is our intention to focus *The Review* on the students in our region.

As you know, we have a number of great student programs and activities going on in the schools in our region. Along with local school district programs, SW/WC SC provides a number of student activities for our kids as well. Last year, thousands of students participated in the student programs we coordinated on your behalf. In fact, we have so many talented kids doing great things, that we want you to share your stories with us, so that we can share your stories with everyone in our communities.

Of course, this is a transition and this edition has a few “non-student” articles. Going forward, this will continue to evolve and change so that eventually this will be all about kids. Having an impact on the students in our region, through supportive programs and services, is foundational to how we support the work of our school district members. Highlighting your student programs and accomplishments is another way we can support the great work you are doing!

We hope *The “new” Review* will highlight student activities and accomplishments in our region and communicate the great things going on in our schools! Hope you all have a great fall!



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## Executive Leadership Team

**Cliff Carmody**, Executive Director

**Deecy Jesse**, Executive Assistant

**Doug Deragisch**, Sr. Director of Risk Management

**Edna Gossen**, Operations Manager

**Lisa Gregoire**, Sr. Director of Teaching & Learning

**Darin Jensen**, Sr. Director of Administrative Services

**Shelly Maes**, Manager of Member Services

**Annette Miller**, Director of Finance

**Dr. Mary Palmer**, Sr. Director of Special Education

**Melany Wellnitz**, Director of Southwest Prairie Regional Center of Excellence

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# Update from Risk Management

## Health Cost Management Program

By Kari Bailey, Health Cost Management Coordinator, [kari.bailey@swsc.org](mailto:kari.bailey@swsc.org)

The Division of Risk Management held its 7th Annual Health Conference at the Redwood Area Community Center on September 11, 2014. The Health Conference was open to all school and CCOGA groups in the health insurance pool. The focus of the conference was on merging programs with policy, system, and environmental changes to create sustainability.



Susan Bishop, Worksite Wellness Planner for the Minnesota Department of

Health and Katie Wilhelmi, Registered Dietitian for Hy-Vee Food Stores discussed why employers care about their employees’ health; what it will take to make healthy behaviors stick; and what we can do about it in the workplace. All groups brought valuable information on their site-based health cost management programs and provided insight as to what made their programs successful. If your district is interested in learning more about incorporating employee wellness into your culture, please contact Kari Bailey.



# Updates from Special Education

## Project SEARCH -- Moving Into Year 2

By Tish Kalla, Director of Alternative Programs, [tish.kalla@swsc.org](mailto:tish.kalla@swsc.org)

After a successful first year for the Project SEARCH Transition High School, the program is well into its second year. The class of 2015 has students from Marshall, Edgerton, Montevideo, Jackson County Central, Lakeview, and Westbrook-Walnut Grove. Classes continue to be held at our host site, Avera Regional Medical Center. When students are not in the classroom, they are hard at work at one of the 10 possible internship positions in programs like Human Resources, Physical Therapy, Materials Distribution, and Primary Care. Each student has the opportunity to participate in 3 internship rotations throughout the course of the school year.



Project SEARCH serves students who are 18 years of age and have met the academic requirements for graduation, but still have transition needs according to their IEPs. The class of 2014 served students from RTR, Ivanhoe, Marshall, Montevideo, and Ellsworth.

We will be having another informational night in November. Please feel free to share this with your special education case managers, parents, and any other interested parties.

If you would like more information about Project SEARCH Transition High School, please contact Tish Kalla at 507-215-1593 or attend our informational night!



**Project SEARCH**

**November 12, 2014**

Avera Marshall (3rd Floor)  
5:30-6:30 p.m. in Classrooms A & B  
300 S. Bruce Street, Marshall, MN

**Who Should Attend This Meeting?**

- High School Students with Disabilities
- Special Education Teachers
- Parents
- School Administrators
- Business Owners
- Organizations that Serve Youth

**\*Project SEARCH**

- Assists youth with disabilities to develop skills & gain competitive community employment.
- Is an international program with 200+ sites.
- Serves high school students 18-21 years old that have a current Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Will provide job training through internships at Avera Marshall Regional Medical Center.

**No Registration Required. Attend this Informational Meeting & Learn More About Project SEARCH!**

For More Information:  
507-215-1593 or [tish.kalla@swsc.org](mailto:tish.kalla@swsc.org)  
Website: [www.hscsc.edu](http://www.hscsc.edu)  
Programs & Services (then) Project Search

**Avera**

# What's New in SPED

By Dr. Mary Palmer, Senior Director of Special Education Services, mary.palmer@swsc.org

It is an exciting time of year! The start of a new school year brings new opportunities to help our member districts ensure that all students are provided quality educational programming and are prepared for what awaits them when they leave our educational systems. We are honored to be able to work with great administrators and staff from our member districts who are committed to providing excellence in education for all students.

This year we will be investigating and furthering our knowledge about what is sometimes referred to as "Implementation Science." It is based on the premise that students cannot benefit from services they do not receive and that we must promote the full and effective use of evidence-based programs and evidence-informed innovations so that student outcomes are improved. It attempts to understand barriers and those things that facilitate successful implementation of effective evidence-based practices.

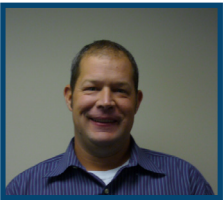
Special education due process and fiscal monitoring continues this year. SW/WC SC staff members will continue to assist your districts in the monitoring process. Some of the specific activities we are currently assisting local district staff members with include developing corrective action plans and correcting any remaining citations that need to be remedied. In addition, we are doing general training in all the districts to assist them for the full MDE due process and fiscal monitoring reviews next year. The SW/WC SC will be hosting professional development activities in these areas to gear up for the MDE monitoring: Evaluation Report Writing Workshop, IEP Writing Workshop, Fiscal Monitoring Training, and Updates on the New Special Education Funding System.

We are also happy to report that several of the districts received a "No Findings" in record review or a 100% compliance rating for those student records that were reviewed this past year. This was part of the self review districts undertake as part of the comprehensive system of monitoring that MDE requires. Congratulations! Those districts include:

BBE	MACCRAY
Comfrey	Milroy
Eden Valley-Watkins	New London-Spicer
Hendricks	Prinsburg
Jackson County Central	Red Rock Central
Lester Prairie	Wabasso

A new initiative we are excited about this year is the addition of a Professional Development Facilitator who will work with districts in the northern area of the SW/WC SC in helping them to implement evidence-based practices in the early childhood special education field. We are currently looking for a Professional Development Facilitator to work with the districts in the southern area of our region. However, at this time have not been able to secure a qualified individual to assist in this initiative. I am hopeful we will be able to secure a professional in the near future to fill this need.

We also have some new administrators providing leadership at the SW/WC SC Alternative Programs. Lori Dierks (pictured at left below) is the new Assistant Director of Alternative Programs for the North Central Learning Center and Belview Learning Center. Shawn Huntley (pictured at right) is the new Assistant Director of Alternative Programs for the Cosmos Learning Center. Serving as the Principal of Alternative Education Programs this year is Ann Wendorff (pictured lower right). Welcome to Lori, Shawn and Ann. They will be assisting Tish Kalla, Director of Alternative Programs, in helping to ensure that the SW/WC SC continues to provide quality alternative programming for those students who require such services.



It is a busy start to a new school year, but we welcome the opportunities and challenges that await us in making sure another productive and successful school year is afforded to all students in our member districts. Do not hesitate to contact me should you or your staff need assistance. My phone number is 320-905-4493 or you can email me at mary.palmer@swsc.org. Have a great year!



# Every Move Counts ... One You Won't Want to Miss!

By Chris Kuehl, Physical and Health Disabilities Consultant, chris.kuehl@swsc.org

Attention all developmental delay teachers, speech language pathologists, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, physical therapists, vision therapists, and occupational therapists. Mark your calendars to attend the, "Every Move Counts, Clicks and Chats," workshop that will be held at the Redwood Falls Community Center (RACC), on November 13 and 14th, 2014. This two-day workshop will present non-traditional assessment and intervention strategies appropriate for the development of communication in individuals having severe multiple differences, developmental differences, and autism. Participants will learn how students with multiple disabilities will make an effort to communicate when communication is consistently recognized and reinforced. Other objectives include: learning to recognize and assess abilities rather than disabilities through a process oriented assessment approach, designing an effective individualized communication program that builds on the abilities identified through the Every Moves Counts assessment package, effectively integrating communication training into daily activities by providing appropriate choice making opportunities, and learning how to progress through a hierarchy of alternative and augmentative communication systems in order to identify and provide the system that best meets an individual's needs and abilities. The workshop will include formal presentation, discussion, videotape and live demonstration.



"Every Move Counts" (EMC) is a product of a 33 month Innovative Research Grant Awarded by the National Institutes of Health and funded through the National Institutes for the Neurologically and Communicatively Disordered. Authors of the "Every Move Counts" manual include Jane E. Korsten, MS/SLP, Terry Vernon Foss, M.Ed., and Lisa Mayor Barry, MOTR/L. When describing how EMC evolved, Jane states: "It was really about ability focus. I don't care what somebody can't do, it really doesn't matter. It was about identifying the abilities and interests because that's what takes all of us forward." To learn more about the workshop go to: [www.everymovecounts.net](http://www.everymovecounts.net). Please spread the word and plan to participate in a workshop you don't want to miss! Register at [www.swsc.org/workshops](http://www.swsc.org/workshops).

# Special Education Staff Receive Awards

By Diane McCarron, Director of Special Education, diane.mccarron@swsc.org

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Division of Compliance and Assistance presented awards to twelve of the districts served by the SW/WC SC. The twelve districts were awarded Certificate of Achievement plaques and a letter from Education Commissioner Dr. Brenda Cassellius for ensuring individual student due process records meet or exceed requirements as defined by MDE and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The award recognizes districts demonstrating compliance with the requirements of the act and related Minnesota statutes and rules as noted during the special education due process compliance review last year. The letter from Commissioner Cassellius went on to state, "This achievement reflects the dedication of the administration, school staff and community."



All of the districts served by the SW/WC SC spent many hours working with the SW/WC SC staff to complete the highly-involved monitoring process. The districts receiving the awards include:

- Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa • Comfrey
- Hendricks (Dr. Mary Palmer pictured above right with Superintendent Bruce Houck)
- Jackson County Central • MACCRAY • Eden Valley-Watkins • Milroy
- New London-Spicer (Teresa Ostlie pictured at left with Superintendent Paul Carlson)
- Prinsburg • Red Rock Central • Wabasso

Congratulations to all the individuals involved in this process!

## ACGC Award, continued from cover page

Schools are “models of consistent excellence and a resource for other schools and districts.”

“These schools and districts are using data and intensive staff training to create an environment where kids succeed,” said Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. “This is an incredible achievement that would not be possible without dedicated teachers and students.”

The National Blue Ribbon Schools award was started 32 years ago. Another area school, Brooten-Belgrade-Elrosa, received the award in 2007.

Meanwhile, ACGC is looking forward to the release of the state Education Department’s Multiple Measurement Ratings that show change in student test scores at schools that receive Title I funding. The district is expecting that its fifth- and sixth-graders, who are housed at the Junior/Senior High School in Grove City, and the kindergarten through fourth-graders at the elementary school in Atwater, will once again be named “reward” schools, which is the highest performance ranking.



## Message from ACGC Superintendent, Sherri Broderius

Our work with the SW/WC SC on data with Lisa Gregoire has been pivotal in our efforts. The data determines a great deal -- not only our instruction, but PLCs of course -- and curriculum selection, and even finance planning and hiring needs. We know that the SW/WC SC has always been available to support us in any capacity we have needed along the road to not only a Blue Ribbon School, but to being a 3 time REWARD school in all of our Title One schools in the district.

## Updates from Teaching & Learning

### What is the “The North Collaborative”?

By Lisa Gregoire, Senior Director of Teaching and Learning, [lisa.gregoire@swsc.org](mailto:lisa.gregoire@swsc.org)

The North Collaborative was formed in August of 2012, with the idea that districts with similar student enrollment, demographics, and within reasonable geographical distance from each other could benefit from coordinated staff development and resources. The foundational components of establishing this Collaborative were active leadership involvement, analyzing data to determine common needs, researching and sharing best practices, and eventually establishing PLCs to support this work. This work has been coordinated by a School Improvement Specialist from SW/WC SC, along with the collaborative efforts and support from each of the districts. In two years, this group has been able to have multiple common staff development days, principals meeting on a regular basis, ongoing data analysis, and content area groups meeting to share best practices, align standards, and network. Districts currently participating in North Collaborative are: ACGC, BBE, BOLD, BLHS, Cedar Mountain, KMS, Lester Prairie, and MACCRAY.

\*\*\* Based on the recently released MMR ratings, 5 out of the 16 regional Reward Schools belong to the North Collaborative, as well as 1 Blue Ribbon School and 1 Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School.

## News from PBIS

**School-Wide Information System (SWIS) Training:** November 21st, 9:30am - 12pm. SWIS is a web-based information system used to improve the behavior support in elementary, middle, and high schools by providing accurate, timely and practical information for making decisions about discipline systems. This training is available to all Cohort 9 and 10 schools who are using SWIS as their discipline referral system.

**SW-PBIS Information Session:** December 5th, 9:30am - 12pm. Thinking about implementing PBIS? Come to this session to learn more and review the application process for Cohort 11. Register at [www.swsc.org/workshops](http://www.swsc.org/workshops)

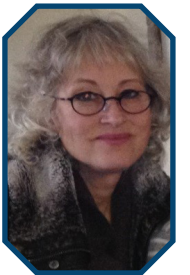
## Meet an Author or Illustrator

By Andrea Anderson, Student Activities Coordinator, [andrea.anderson@swsc.org](mailto:andrea.anderson@swsc.org)



Encourage your school to meet and greet a true author and/or illustrator during the 2015 Author & Illustrator Program!

The SW/WC SC’s Student Activities Department has lined up three great presenters: Carrie Harman (top left), Beth Peck (right) and Blake Hoena (lower left). Presenters will walk through their journey of how to create ideas for books and illustrations, explain what it takes to be an author or an illustrator, and show the end result -- all of which get kids excited about writing. Register your school to give K-6 elementary students an opportunity to use their imaginations to start creating their own book. The program is available for a half day, full day or multiple day residencies. **Days will fill up fast, so get your registration in by November 4.** Go to [www.swsc.org/studentactivities](http://www.swsc.org/studentactivities) for the full brochure and registration form.

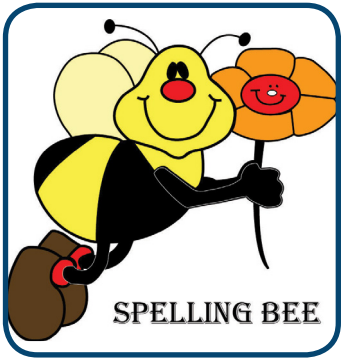


## Start Practicing Your Spelling Words!

By Andrea Anderson, Student Activities Coordinator, [andrea.anderson@swsc.org](mailto:andrea.anderson@swsc.org)

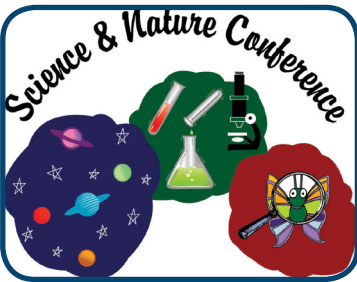
One of the most exciting way to compete as an elementary or middle school student is in a spelling bee. Spelling bees help to promote literacy by providing children with a positive goal to work toward and an opportunity to display their hard work. It also does more than that -- in addition to improving spelling, the bees aid children in learning concepts, improving comprehension, and developing study skills.

Register your school today to give your students in grades 5-8 a challenge on spelling words they never thought they would. **Enroll with Scripps by October 15 AND with SW/WC SC by November 4.** Please see [www.swsc.org/studentactivities](http://www.swsc.org/studentactivities) and go to Spelling Bee for more information.



## Make Plans to Attend!

By Andrea Anderson, Student Activities Coordinator, [andrea.anderson@swsc.org](mailto:andrea.anderson@swsc.org)



The Science & Nature Conference date is set for May 13, 2015, so mark your calendar. This year’s conference features Grant Smith, (pictured at right) a meteorologist from KELOLAND Television. The conference is for students in grades K-8 to inspire the love of science during three hands-on science related topics such as rocket building, geocaching, minerals, stars, animals, the ultra-cold and much more. More information will be available after the New Year, so keep checking our S&N Conference webpage: [www.swsc.org/scienceandnature](http://www.swsc.org/scienceandnature)



## Student Activities Contact Information

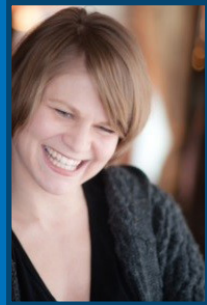
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Laurie Fales, Office Assistant, [laurie.fales@swsc.org](mailto:laurie.fales@swsc.org); 507-537-2270

Scan the code at left to go directly to the Student Activities webpage.



## Encourage the Love of Writing

By Andrea Anderson, Student Activities Coordinator, [andrea.anderson@swsc.org](mailto:andrea.anderson@swsc.org)



Do you know any students who are talented story tellers or love to read books? Get them involved in the 11th Annual Creative Writing Contest. This contest is open to students in grades 3-12. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to use their imaginations to generate creative fiction and nonfiction stories and poems. Use this as a classroom project or encourage students to enter on their own.

Contest rules and guidelines must be followed for a chance to be one of the top three place winners. **The submission deadline is January 16**, so students will have plenty of time over holiday breaks to use their imagination to create incredible writings.



Christine Stewart-Nunez (pictured at left), a Brookings SD author of 5 books, will be our guest speaker at the Awards Ceremony scheduled for April 26, 2015. Winning students are encouraged to bring their parents, grandparents, siblings and teacher to share in the recognition of their talented work.

## Write! Write! Write!

By Andrea Anderson, Student Activities Coordinator, [andrea.anderson@swsc.org](mailto:andrea.anderson@swsc.org)

Encourage students to write. Write about fiction, fantasy, truth, personal adventures, poetry, or build a character and write about it. There is more to writing than just a piece of paper and a pen. Come and learn inspiring ways to write about monsters, dragons, write like a cowboy, how to hook your audience, write like a reporter and much more. See the brochure, sessions and registration form at [www.swsc.org/studentactivities](http://www.swsc.org/studentactivities)--click on the Young Writers page.



The Southwest MN Arts Council is the title sponsor of the 23rd Annual Conference for Young Writers. Geoff Herbach, an author of Young Adult novels, will provide an inspiring keynote presentation to students in grades 3-8 on January 7, 2015, at SMSU (snow date January 8). Students will also take part in three hands-on writing sessions. **The registration deadline is November 18 -- with a final deadline on November 25.** Students and chaperones must be registered in order to attend this conference, so get signed up before sessions fill up.

## 2014 Career Expo - Largest & Most Interactive Ever!

By Tom Hoff, Career and Technical Project Coordinator, [tom.hoff@swsc.org](mailto:tom.hoff@swsc.org)

The 2014 Southwest Minnesota Workforce Council Career Expo was held on September 23rd and 24th at the college campuses of Minnesota West-Worthington and Southwest Minnesota State University-Marshall. The event provided valuable career and education information to high school students, while highlighting regional businesses and the type of jobs they provide in our communities. During the two expo events, we served 1,713 students from 32 schools, which involved the cooperation of over 250 volunteers from the following partners:

- Minnesota West Carl Perkins Consortium • Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council
- Minnesota West Community & Technical College • Southwest Minnesota State University
- SW/WC Service Cooperative • Job Service • Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce
- Marshall Area Chamber of Commerce • Marshall, Montevideo & Worthington Workforce Centers • Department of Employment and Economic Development • Regional businesses and service agencies



In 2014, we had 104 total exhibitors (which is an all-time high) and many of the teachers, students and exhibitors thought it was more interactive than any other year. Please check out the event page to see the full exhibitor list (which can be filtered by site, career field, scholarship availability, etc.), a special welcome from DEED Commissioner Katie Clark Sieben entitled "Success in the New Economy" video, and links to Facebook and Shutterfly pictures. Go to: <http://www.swsc.org/Page/274>



## Updates from School Districts

### MCC First Grade Receives \$10,000 Monsanto Grant

By MCC 1st Grade Team: Bridget Kluis, Nancy Boerboom, Krista Gillette, and Heather Meyer

On August 4th, we received word that the MCC First Grade team was the recipient of the \$10,000 America's Farmers Grow Rural Education Grant, sponsored by the Monsanto Fund. The Monsanto Fund helps farmers positively impact their communities by supporting rural school districts across the country. This program gives eligible farmers the opportunity to nominate a public school district in their community to compete for a merit-based grant. Overall, Monsanto will be donating \$2.3 million to local school districts in 1,271 counties across 39 states. In Minnesota, Murray County Central was one of nine school districts to receive the grant. This was the second year in a row that Murray County Central Schools was awarded the grant. Last year, the High School Science Department was awarded the \$10,000.



According to the Monsanto Fund website, they have a committed belief in rural America and are committed to helping farmers strengthen their communities. "We know the importance of education, and that it's the cornerstone of any successful community. But most importantly, farmers have told us nothing is more vital than the next generation." This is why they introduced America's Farmers Grow Rural Education in 2012 and have continued the program currently. They also stated that "This program gives us the opportunity to help improve education in rural America, therefore helping to grow the next generation."

The process started in January of this year with a nomination of MCC by several local farmers. These eligible farmers filled out a short nomination form at [GrowRuralEducation.com](http://GrowRuralEducation.com). Once the school was nominated, we were notified by the Monsanto Fund that we had until April 30, 2014, to submit the grant application to Monsanto. The grant application took several weeks to write and the focus was to implement a guided Math program using technology to enhance learning. Most of the budget will go towards the purchase of twenty-five touch screen laptop computers that will be used in the classrooms by the students.

Once the grant application was submitted, we were in competition against other school districts in the state who applied. The grant applications were judged based upon merit, need, and community support. The America's Farmers Grow Rural Education Advisory Council, a group of 30 farmers from across the country, selected the winning grant applications.

We were very excited to get the great news. This grant is going to provide students with the opportunity to use the latest technology while providing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of each individual learner. We also hope to provide a much better learning environment for our students in the classroom setting. The MCC First Grade Team would like to thank all of the local farmers for their nominations and for the support of the program.

### Glencoe-Silver Lake's Opening Workshop

By Chris Sonju, Superintendent, Glencoe-Silver Lake Schools

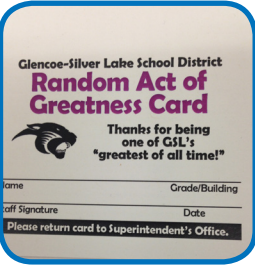
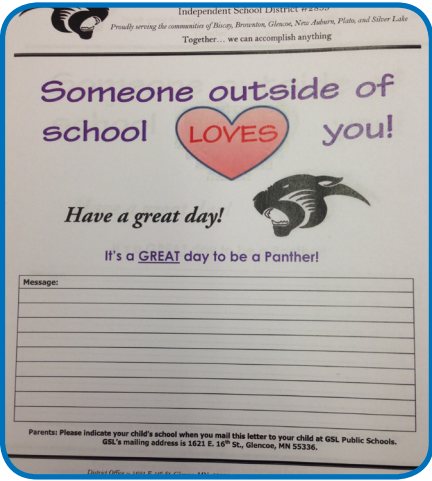
On the final day of our opening workshop, the entire teaching staff at Glencoe-Silver Lake spent the day at Sand Creek Adventures in Jordan, MN. The day was designed to build teamwork, togetherness, and to build upon our Professional Learning Community Teams, all with the goal of helping our students learn more. By continuing to build our army of staff members through working, planning, and laughing together, our students will have a better place to learn. A great day was had by all.



# Random Acts of Greatness at GSL Schools

By Chris Sonju, Superintendent, Glencoe-Silver Lake Schools

At GSL we call our students the “Greatest of all Time!” Going along with this theme, we have our Random Act of Greatness Cards. The concept is simple, but it has proven to be meaningful to our students and families. If and when a staff member “catches” or sees a student doing “great” things, they simply write a short note on our “Random Act of Greatness Card.” The staff member then sends that card to, me, the superintendent. I write a letter to this student reminding them of the act, tell the student who caught them doing great things, thank the child for their “greatness,” and wish them all the best as we continue on in the school year. This letter is mailed home for the child and parent to read.



We have also started and encouraged our parents to write letters to their child and mail them to school. It is our hope that GSL parents will write positive messages to their child to reinforce the “greatness” we expect at GSL. And who doesn’t like to receive a letter!

At GSL we emphasis the “little things” that make such a huge difference. These things include helping other students with school work or with their locker, picking up a piece of garbage, or holding the door open for other students and/or staff members. Our staff is on the lookout for greatness and this small, simple way of recognizing them has been a great success at GSL!

# Technology Upgrades at Lester Prairie Contribute to 21st Century Learning in the Classroom

By Jocelynn Buckentin, Lester Prairie Schools

Considering the popularity of digital devices, educators today must consider how best to connect class content to the aptitude many students show when dealing with technology. Digital learning through applications and websites can promote higher order thinking and problem solving skills while promoting enthusiastic exploration of key curricular concepts. This is a concept that has been embraced by the Lester Prairie Public School District this year.

The students and staff of Lester Prairie returned to school this fall to new devices being utilized school-wide. Over the summer, the district purchased an additional 20 chromebooks to supplement the 45 currently in rotation at the middle and high school levels, which collectively form two carts for classroom checkout. Students have become proficient in the use of Google Apps and have developed greater responsibility regarding technology use as a result.

At the elementary level, students in grades K-5 have greater opportunities to use iPads this year than ever before following the purchase of 30 new iPads. The elementary staff have chosen to divide them in order to ensure equitable access for students across all grade levels, with 10 iPads shared among classes in each area from grades K-1, 2-3, and 4-5. Another addition includes an iPad and mirroring program called Reflector for every teacher. The Reflector program allows teachers to project the screen of their device for easier classroom sharing and demonstrations. Overall, the student to technology ratio has increased exponentially at both the elementary and middle or high school levels this school year.



# Big Connections in Big History

By Sarah Wojciechowski, Lester Prairie Schools

This year Lester Prairie is piloting a course called Big History. It is, what might be called, a sweeping interdisciplinary course. It takes students on an epic journey through the 13.8 billion year history of the universe -- from the big bang up to modern day -- then it asks them to look into the future.

The students partaking in this course deal with scientific and historical material, combining this knowledge with the reading and communication skills taught in a language arts class. The driving force behind this course is that knowledge cannot exist in a vacuum, that it takes many minds and many different approaches to solve a puzzle, and that the students in the course can be part of that process in the real world.

The students will take part in a variety of activities that push them to think critically, challenge current scientific beliefs, and express their thoughts in both speech and writing. One example of such an activity would be the “Competitive Museum Exhibit”. It is a living breathing debate. Students will research an assigned ancient civilization, create a museum exhibit showcasing its contributions to modern life, and have community members and fellow students vote on the winning civilization.

The course material, and an abundance of teacher resources, are available for free online at school. bighistoryproject.com. If you are interested in learning more about the course feel free to check it out, or contact Sarah Wojciechowski at LP Schools.



# IRIS the Wonderstudio

By Bill Richards, Westbrook-Walnut Grove Schools

Westbrook-Walnut Grove High School, in partnership with the Perpich Center for Arts Education, is working to stream both live and recorded theatrical performances for a broader audience for the performing arts. Working with authors, composers and publishing companies, WWG has made arrangements to broadcast live performances on the web and place recorded shows online for later viewing.



To date, WWG has streamed three productions including the One Act Play HOW TO KISS A GIRL, a junior high musical ALICE@WONDERLAND, and a high school production of MISS BETH. These are loaded directly into LIVESTREAM.COM for a month. WWG also recorded the 40th Reunion of the Little House Stars at Walnut Grove this summer. Selections from ALICE and The LITTLE HOUSE REUNION are also on Youtube. To see examples, go to:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FE85twjHCZ8>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbCYNJdaogs>

The original purpose of the effort was to record and broadcast the Regional One Act Play Competition. The MSHSL believes there are too many obstacles to allow this to move forward. WWG will continue to refine our efforts to be able to demonstrate how to legally record and distribute high school theater events to a broader public. There are some challenges regarding permissions and use of music, but they are not insurmountable. The web is packed with high school athletics and school activities. The fine arts need to step up their game to share the excellent work of students in the fine arts with a wider community.



Technically, we have a four-camera setup with a Newtek Tricaster switcher and 16-channel audio. We hold workshops to demonstrate and to train others how to use the equipment and how to create a broadcast that is both legal and of high quality. Contact richards@wwgschools.org for more information.

Upcoming workshops under the WWG-PCAE sponsorship for the year include:  
Wednesday, December 3rd, 2014, from 9am - 2pm: PLC BOOSTER WORKSHOTS TWO: Revisiting the Evaluation of School Programs in the Arts  
Wednesday, February 11th, 2015, from 9am - 2pm: PLC BOOSTER WORKSHOTS THREE: Reflecting on Good Teaching  
Wednesday, April 1st, 2015, from 9am -2pm: PLC BOOSTER WORKSHOTS FOUR: Dialogue with Students and Instructors in Higher Ed



## Upcoming Student Events



January 7, 2015  
(snow date – January 8)



March 31, 2015



April 24, 2015



May 13, 2015



Find Junior High and Senior High  
Knowledge Bowl event dates at  
[www.swsc.org/KB](http://www.swsc.org/KB)

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The Review is published three times per year. If you have suggestions, comments, or items for submission, please contact Shelly Maes at [shelly.maes@swsc.org](mailto:shelly.maes@swsc.org).