

Carmody Receives MREA Distinguished Service Award

By Shelly Maes, Manager of Member Services

At the November 3-5, 2009, MREA (Minnesota Rural Education Association) Fall Conference, Cliff Carmody was awarded the MREA Distinguished Service Award. Carmody has been Executive Director of the SW/WC Service Cooperative since January 2007, and has served in other administrative positions at the agency for over ten years.

The MREA Distinguished Service Award began in 2003 as a way to recognize persons who have made significant contributions to rural education. Individuals must have demonstrated contributions in one or more of the following areas: development of leadership potential in rural youth and adults, enhanced rural community development, furthered the effectiveness of communications between community agencies, facilitated partnerships

between schools and the private sector, supported legislation to enhance rural schools, promoted rural education, and recognition and support of exemplary practices and individuals.

The Board of Directors of the SW/WC Service Cooperative nominated Carmody for this honor. In the application materials, the Board cited many areas of his work which demonstrate these criteria: his work with



area superintendents to request a flexible learning year application through the Minnesota Department of Education, his activity on the local hospital board and MREA Board of Directors, his membership on the Executive Council of the Association of Educational Service Agencies, his participation in the Blandin Leadership Program, his efforts in the area of speech language telepractice, his legislative work on behalf of rural school districts, his ability to build relationships with others in the region, state and nation, and much more.

Pipestone Area School Superintendent Jim Lentz, in his letter of support for Carmody's application, said "His leadership has been one of the keys to drawing rural superintendents to work together in cooperation and collaboration rather than to work in isolation."

Congratulations Cliff!

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Executive Director's Report

By Cliff Carmody, Executive Director

I recently attended "Leading by Example II: Boomers to Rockstars", an event sponsored by the Southwest Initiative Foundation and Southwest Minnesota Workforce Council. The keynote address was given by author, Daniel Pink.

Pink is currently working on his next book titled *Drive: the Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*, (coming out in January, 2010). Pink asserts that if/then incentives work well when the answer to a problem or issue is clear, obvious or simple. However, in more complex situations, when the problem or issue is not clear, when solutions are not obvious, Pink asserts simple if/then incentives do not work to motivate people. In fact, in more complex situations, these kinds of incentives may act as "de-motivators".

If you think about this for a minute, in our educational reform efforts, we have been hearing about pay-for-performance strategies as one way to improve student achievement. Is it possible a pay-for-performance system that is a simple if/then strategy, i.e. if student achievement improves, then teachers will be paid more, or if staff achieves their goals, then staff will receive a bonus; might be a flawed strategy? If Pink's ideas have validity, we may have to re-think much of the way we are approaching pay-for-performance systems.

Pink suggests something he calls "Motivation 3.0". "Motivation 3.0" is defined as providing people with autonomy, mastery, and purpose in their work and they will surprise you as to how motivated they are and how much more they can accomplish.

Pink defines autonomy as the time, task, team and techniques involved in work; mastery as the high expectation of continuous improvement, the urge to get better and better at what you do; purpose as the innate desire to belong to something bigger than you. So, what if educational reform embraced "Motivation 3.0" and allowed for greater autonomy, an emphasis on mastery, and embraced the purpose inherent in teaching and learning? If educational reform was to "shine the light" not on student achievement as the measurement of success, but on teacher engagement and effectiveness, recognizing and embracing the complexity of the teaching and learning experience, might we see highly motivated staff, working in purposeful classrooms, expecting mastery from themselves and their students?

I am not sure, but if we learn, understand, and embrace some of the newest work being done by social scientists on human motivation, we might find other ways to reform a system that is embedded in if/then motivational strategies that may or may not be working as well as we hope.



Cliff Carmody

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Flexible Pharmacy Benefit Management

By Doug Deragisch, Director of Risk Management

With drug benefits accounting for 25 – 40% of a group's health claims offering a flexible pharmacy benefit management program is one way to help manage costs. Among options through the Service Cooperative are:

- 1) FlexRx formulary – Traditional option
- 2) GenRx formulary – New option (July 1, 2009) focused on optimizing the utilization of generic drugs
- 3) 90 dayRx – Saves money and reduces hassles (available at most retail pharmacies and by mail order)

New GenRx Formulary Option Helps Employers Put the Brakes on Drug Costs

Increasing an employer's generic utilization rate – even if it's already good – can mean big savings for employers and their employees. Each one-percentage-point advance in generic utilization can translate into a one-percentage-point reduction in employers' drug costs.

By implementing GenRx with your plan(s) (GenRx is NOT available for the VEBA or Common Plans) employers can reduce their total health care costs by 1.5 to 2 percent, on average, compared to our broader FlexRx formulary.

For more information on your pharmacy options, contact your BlueCross/BlueShield account manager or Doug Deragisch at doug.deragisch@swsc.org or 507-537-2295.

Proposed Health Care Reform and VEBA updates

By Dan Weir, Risk Management Consultant

Approximately one fourth of all Minnesota Service Cooperative pool members and retirees participate in a VEBA health plan and/or savings account. A recent IRS ruling confirmed that death benefits of a participant will continue to be paid to a surviving spouse and eligible dependents. However, based on this new ruling, if no spouse or dependents are alive, benefits cannot be paid to any other heir or beneficiary. For VEBA account holders, this ruling became effective January 1, 2009. Your VEBA plan sponsors, the Minnesota Service Cooperatives are striving to minimize the potential impact to account holders. Specifically, the Minnesota Service Cooperatives are working with the Minnesota Congressional delegation to pass Federal Legislation to allow pool members to designate an heir or beneficiary (if no spouse or eligible dependents are alive). This IRS ruling impacts other people across the country and we are urging pool members to contact their Senators and Representatives in support of the proposed legislation, the Tax Equity for Health Plan Beneficiaries Act of 2009 introduced as S. 1153 and H.R. 2625 and to be included in the final markup of HR3200. It is important to note that the current IRS ruling does not apply to Health Savings Accounts (HSA) which may be passed to heirs and designated beneficiaries.

Welcome...

The SW/WC Service Cooperative would like to welcome the following:

New School Members:

Community Christian
of Willmar
Cologne Academy

New Risk Management CCOGA Pool Members:

City of Lake Benton
City of DeGraff
City of Victoria

Service Learning At Boulder Estates

By Candace Thomas, Language Arts Teacher, Marshall High School

How do you bring high school students and older adults together in a meaningful way? This is the question Bethany Ahlers, a current senior at Marshall High School, asked last spring. Bethany's positive volunteer experience with residents at Boulder Estates in Marshall led her to explore options with Jaen Weilage at Boulder Estates, Sue Snodgrass, Youth as Resources Coordinator, and Candace Thomas,

a language arts teacher at MHS.

After much brainstorming, Bethany and Mrs. Thomas decided to create a service learning project



embedded into the curriculum for an upper-level language arts class that Mrs. Thomas was developing. The project would involve high school students being paired with residents at Boulder Estates in order to interview the adults and collect material for a memoir project.

This fall the project came to life. Fourteen students in the class, along with Bethany, Mrs. Thomas, and Mrs. Correen Bakke, a paraprofessional at MHS, were matched

with residents at Boulder Estates. Students interviewed residents and engaged in social time with them. In class, students read

several short stories, memoirs, and non-fiction articles related to the importance of keeping memories and to views on becoming older in our society. Students also engaged in several reflective writing activities essential to the service learning experience.

Bethany will be supervising the publication of the memoirs compiled by the student authors. Her plan is for this project to continue even after she has graduated. Mrs. Thomas will be taking a new group of students to Boulder Estates in term 2. She plans to continue this effort or similar service learning experiences with this class because such community engagement gives students an authentic purpose for their writing and allows them to synthesize experience with traditional readings that are typically part of any secondary literature class. Special thanks go to Bethany for her vision and to Boulder Estates staff members and residents for their willingness to partner with Marshall High School in this learning opportunity.



Conferences and Carnivals

Written by Paul Olson, Principal, Westbrook/Walnut Grove Schools

Photos Courtesy of The Sentinel Tribune, Westbrook

Parent/Teacher Conferences at Westbrook Walnut Grove Elementary School turned into a fun filled night for the entire family. The night began with families attending parent/teacher conferences. Everyone then had a chance to

eat a whopper meal in our lunchroom. Next, everyone was invited to play a variety of games and activities at our fall carnival. Our fifth and sixth grade students hosted the



games in our gymnasium, which included mini golf, a duck

pond, tennis ball toss, ring toss, a fishpond, plinko, balloon animals and more. Families purchased tickets to play the games, in order to win vouchers, which could be turned in at the awards booth for pop, candy, and prizes. The proceeds help to purchase new computers or other technology for our building each year.

Volunteers served popcorn and soft serve ice cream with the soft serve ice cream machine donated by The Redwood County Dairy Association. Students, parents and staff wore their holiday costumes at the carnival.



Who Says Change is Hard?

By Rick Gossen, Principal, Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa Elementary

Whether it is the private sector or the world of education, change is historically a tough thing for many to deal with. I think the questions that get asked more often than any others are, "What is wrong with the way we are doing it now?" or "If it's not broken, why are you trying to fix it?" My experience with change from the standpoint of a public school administrator has not been much different, but I am happy to report that at Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa Elementary change is "IN"!

At Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa Elementary School there are some changes that are causing quite a stir for 2009-2010. The first big change at BBE this year is the addition of guided reading to our curriculum. The road traveled included

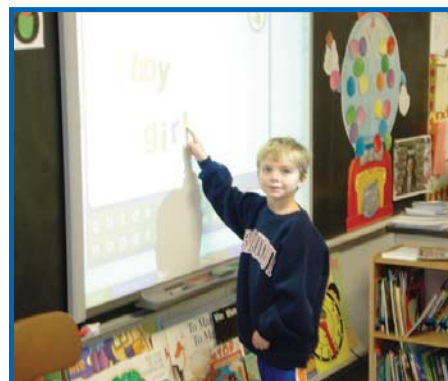
visits to both the Lakeview Elementary School in Cottonwood and the Minnesota Elementary School.

Both these schools already had guided reading in place and opened their doors to my staff in an effort to show us the positives associated with the program. A special thanks to them for assisting us on our journey. Ultimately, our staff at BBE Elementary was sold on the idea of keeping our basal series as a tool for providing whole group instruction while adding guided reading to meet the needs of all the different levels present in our school. Students need to feel success and it is our goal to make sure every student in our school has the opportunity to read something at their individual level allowing them to feel that success.

The other big change at BBE Elementary has to do with the twelve new SMART Boards that are hanging in our classrooms. Technology is ever changing and we are doing our best to stay with the times. Our journey with interactive whiteboards began during the 2007-2008 school year when we had the first one installed. Two more followed in 2008-2009 and now we have a total of fifteen in our building.

The teamwork that I've witnessed early in the year is absolutely fantastic. The staff members that have had the past couple years to learn are sharing their knowledge and the staff that have little or no experience are moving forward with an enthusiastic attitude. I should mention that our students are ecstatic about the new technology.

I wouldn't say that my experience with change has been easy, but I would hesitate to call it hard either. I think it's a combination of both with rough times peeking through the surface at any time during the trip. Every school district experiences rough times when the process of changing something is in full swing, but teamwork and common goals are essential components necessary for survival. Thankfully common goals and the concept of teamwork are shared by everyone at BBE Elementary.



MDE Leaders in Marshall to Discuss Race to the Top Effort

By Shelly Maes, Manager of Member Services

Over 40 people gathered in Marshall and via ITV on October 27th to talk with MDE officials and provide input on Minnesota's application for federal Race to the Top funding. The Race to the Top Fund is part of the American

Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and provides competitive grants to states that are engaged in education innovation and reform.



A Bright and Colorful New Start at RCW

By Shelby Lindrud, Staff Writer, Renville County Register, Reprinted with permission from the Renville County Register

The outside of the Renville School might look the same as it did last year, but visitors are in for quite a surprise when they enter the new RCW K-12 building. Replacing the white walls and mix matched murals from years past are bright colors, gorgeous murals and a new start for the school, district and its students.

"To give it a fresh new look," RCW Art Teacher Tammy Isfeld said about the reason behind the drastic change inside the building.



Most of the old murals have been painted over, but pictures were taken to preserve them for posterity. Some of the old sports murals in the new gym hall, which is also where the high school office is now located, were kept and given a face lift. Isfeld and her crew of student workers have also begun painting new murals, including ones for football, wrestling and dance. The hall isn't done yet; Isfeld plans to add more murals of other school and community programs and a 3-D effect.

"It is broader sense of what RCW is," explained Isfeld. Both the first floor and the second floor of the main



building were given an abstract landscape design, in colors to mimic nature, tans and blues downstairs, greens and reds up.

"You think in more abstract terms as you get older," said Isfeld, for the reasoning behind the more modern look with traditional arts and crafts colors. The biggest changes took place in the cafeteria and the new elementary wing.

"Without a doubt we had to make sure the cafeteria had a complete transformation," said Isfeld.

When planning for the merger of the two schools, many parents had expressed concerns about the basement lunch room, with its old, dungeon like feel. The white walls and grey floor have been replaced by a beautiful river bottom mural on the west wall and columns and a new tan floor. Isfeld decided to create a mural depicting the beauty



of nature in Renville County, to hopefully have students appreciate the area they live in.

"It is beautiful here," said Isfeld. Just up the short flight of stairs from the lunch room is the elementary wing, which

New Start at RCW continues on page 7

New Start at RCW *(Continued from page 6)*

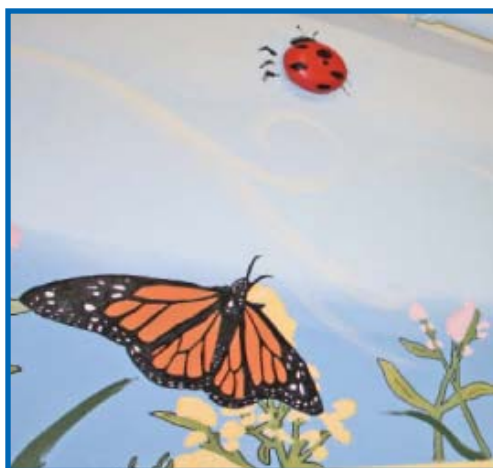
has sprung up with flowers, butterflies and other wildlife, all painted with bright, kid-friendly colors.

The hallway was designed around a theme of growth.

"We wanted to have it feel like walking through a story book," said

Isfeld, who created base drawings for the hallway, but let the students put their own spin on the art.

"It's their project," explained Isfeld. Students had a



say in how the project would look and what colors would be used. Isfeld wanted her students to take ownership of the painting, and of their school. She didn't want it to be entirely about her vision.

Painting began immediately after school recessed for summer break. The project grew as time went on. What started out as just a few murals turned in a major undertaking, with ceilings, lockers and the new pipe from the new sprinkler system.

"There's been a lot of projects," admitted Isfeld.

Thanks to the stimulus package, RCW was given a grant to pay for student labor over the summer. Nearly 20 students deemed at-risk spent the summer

painting, working with the janitors or getting the bus garage ready for the new school year. Isfeld supervised about a dozen students a day as they transformed the school.

"It's been good for them," said Isfeld.

The work at the school not only gave the students a preview of what life after school would be like, with an eight hour work day and working with others, but it also showed any students who might be interested in an art career what type of work they could do.

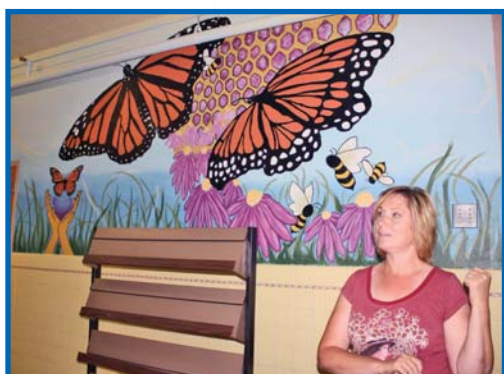
Valspar donated 82 gallons of paint and Wilshire Paint Co. donated 300 paint brushes, helping the district make the changes it felt was needed.

"Our goal is to make an old building feel valuable," said Isfeld.

K-12 Principal Jeff Wilson had a hard time putting into words what he felt about the project.

"It's amazing," said Wilson. "She (Isfeld) did an excellent job."

"I was glad to do it," said Isfeld. While she lives in



Granite Falls, Isfeld sees RCW as home, and she wanted to do something for her school and students.

In the end Isfeld hopes the new murals and paint on the wall will show RCW isn't just a school, but part of all the communities that make up the district.

"We want this to feel like this is for all of our kids and communities. We are in this together," said Isfeld.

Ivanhoe School Gets a Facelift

By Dwayne Strand, Superintendent, Ivanhoe Public School

In February of 2008, the residents of the Lincoln HI – Ivanhoe School District approved a \$9.95 million bond referendum to fund improvements to our district's high school facility. Our original structure was built in 1923, with two additions in 1957. The building today serves students in grades 7-12 from both the Ivanhoe and Hendricks School Districts.

The successful referendum brought to conclusion a lengthy building study which was first undertaken in 2004. The end result of years of study and community sup-

port is a fully renovated and state of the art high school. While the shell of the building, a few interior walls and the amount of available square footage has remained the same, very little else of the original structure remains the same. Renovation started in the spring, with completion shortly after Thanksgiving—a span of 10 months.

Our renovation project included the replacement of our mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems. Literally every wire, pipe, motor and switch has been replaced. A ground source well system connected to the mechanical system now heats and cools the building. General classrooms spaces were increased in size and are enhanced by natural lighting from energy efficient windows. A new, modernized science suite includes two labs and state of the art equipment. In addition, a new “arts” suite houses our art, band and choir pro-

grams. State of the art technology enhances not only our instructional programs but also provides increased building security. Construction also boasts a new media center, commons area, a new kitchen, renovated locker rooms and a new fitness center. The District is looking forward to increased utilization of these spaces by both students and community members.

It has been an amazing project that certainly could not have been completed without the time, energy and support of our students, the staff and community members alike. As the school year ended early

last spring, we removed all the contents of the building and then brought it all back in during the first part of September. In the end, we have created an environment that has been designed to support and enhance the learning of our students. And, we have done it by preserving rather than destroying the building shell that has enhanced our community for decades.



Willmar's Mandarin Chinese Program Experiences Phenomenal Growth

By Rob Anderson, Principal, Willmar High School

The Mandarin Chinese program was started at Willmar High School mid-year during the 2006-2007 school year. Funding for the first three years was secured through a Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP) grant to launch the program.

Todd Lynum was hired part time as the program's first teacher. We started Chinese I with 41 students in January 2007. Todd moved to full time in 2007-2008 as we added Chinese II and served 90 students that year. We continued growth in 2008-2009 as we added Chinese III to our offerings and served 122 students in the program.

Now, what to do about funding to sustain the program when the grant expires? Answer: get a new grant, if possible, during times of budget cuts. For 2010-2014 we have secured a five year grant to sustain and expand the program through the Confucius Institute at the University of Minnesota. We now have a base of funding support through the 2014 school year. We also have a full time teacher from Harbin, China fully funded this year through American Councils for International Education, Washington, D.C. The program is called Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP). Willmar High School is one of only ten high schools in the nation to get a high school teacher from China under TCLP.

Our teacher from China is Bai Jinguo. Jinguo has six years teaching experience in China teaching English to Chinese students. Jinguo is now in Willmar teaching Mandarin Chinese to Willmar High School students. We have plans to form a partnership with Jinguo's high school back in China, Harbin No. 1 High School. That partnership will evolve over the next few years. If we are very fortunate, we will take students to Harbin and other sites in China in 2012 or 2014.

During the current school year, we have the following enrollments in our three levels of Mandarin Chinese: Chinese I (109), Chinese II (49), and Chinese III (26). We will discuss plans this fall to possibly add Chinese IV to our offerings for 2010-2011. It has been a true joy this fall to observe Willmar students successfully communicate in Chinese with a native teacher from China. We just thought you might be interested.



2nd Graders Attend Whistle Stop Tour

By Karen Fox, 2nd Grade Teacher, Cedar Mountain Elementary

Cedar Mountain 2nd Graders attended the Whistle Stop Tour on Wednesday, September 30th at the railroad tracks at Franklin. This event was held to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the railroad. They learned about railroad safety and how the train helps our area economy and the different products that are transported on the rail. A brief history of the railroad was presented by Gene Short who was dressed as James J. Hill, the father of the railroads in Minnesota. The 95 mile Whistle Stop Tour took place over three days, stopping at sixteen cities that are served by the railroad.



Yellow Medicine Integration Collaborative

By Helen Blue-Redner, Yellow Medicine East Schools

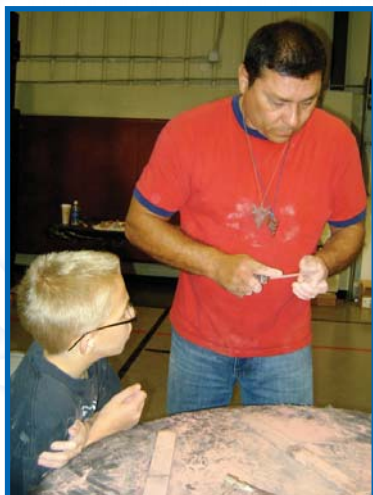
The recent creation of the Yellow Medicine Integration Collaborative has meant not only a change in the mindset of administrators at Yellow Medicine East, but also some truly innovative programming that is designed



to educate students and staff alike about the beauty of cultural diversity. While YME's commitment to multicultural programming has been in evidence in past years, the 2009-2010 school year brings programming dollars from the State of Minnesota as a consequence of YME's designation as a so-called racially isolated school district—meaning YME's ethnic student population is much larger than adjoining school districts.

Examples of new programming include a major unit on American Indian history—in particular, regional Dakota history. Brandon Raymo, YME eighth grade history/social teacher, wanted to ask his kids to dig deeper in their understanding of Dakota treaty history and the story of the 1862 War, as well as Federal Indian policy and contemporary issues. Toward that end, the YME American Indian Liaison coordinated a field trip to the battle sites, as well as several speakers from both the Upper Sioux and Lower Sioux Communities.

Other significant learning experiences for YME students included a fifth grade trip to the Pipestone National Monument, where students learned about the history and cultural importance of pipestone to the Dakota



and other Indian groups. Following the field trip, the kids enjoyed a hands-on experience with pipestone carver Tim Blue, who is a member of the Upper Sioux Community, working with fifth graders in the district.

The Yellow Medicine Integration Collaborative is comprised of three school districts under the auspices of Yellow Medicine East, including Dawson-Boyd, Lakeview, and Canby.



SW/WC Service Cooperative's Division of
Teaching and Learning Presents...

26th Annual Special Education

Day of Excellence

Monday, March 8, 2010

8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Southwest Minnesota State University

Keynote Speaker: Kit R. Welchlin

Keynote information: Kit is a high-energy speaker who utilizes a variety of proven approaches and techniques that turly motivate listeners. He teaches audiences how to apply practical strategies to enhance their personal and professional lives.

For more information please contact:

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Balaton School Building Provides New Home

By Tom Hoff, Career and Technical Project Coordinator

In May of 2009, the Balaton School District voted to consolidate with the Tracy Public Schools, which left the building's classrooms unoccupied. Even though classes will no longer be held in Balaton, the building is in excellent condition and is able to serve businesses or service organizations in the region. Read on to see what programs of the SW/WC Service Cooperative have moved!

Sharyce Baartman, Au.D., Audiologist, CCC/A; FAAA and Ed Van Der Heiden, MS, Audiologist, CCC/A; FAAA



work with school districts to provide audiology services, including hearing evaluations to over 1,000 students each year at sites in Worthington, Glencoe, Montevideo, Spicer, and now Balaton. The Balaton audiology site is prepared to serve children birth through graduation. The hear-

ing test room is equipped with an audiology sound suite, similar to those found in clinical audiology sites, along with equipment that can check hearing and middle ear function in children of any age. Thanks to the generous donations from several early intervention teams in the region, Otoacoustic Emission equipment has been purchased that makes it possible to screen for hearing loss in difficult to test children (e.g., those under 3 years of age and others with severe cognitive delays). The current scheduling process allows staff to see any child in SW/WC Minnesota if there is a concern or a need to check hearing status. The numbers to schedule an appointment are: BALATON-(507) 537-2249, WORTHINGTON-(507) 537-2249, SPICER-(320) 231-5184, MONTEVIDEO-(320) 269-9243, and GLENCOE-(320) 234-2654.

Project Discovery has been providing career assessment and hands-on career exploration services to students with disabilities for nearly 25 years. Previously offered at sites in Tyler, Glencoe, and Marshall, Project Discovery

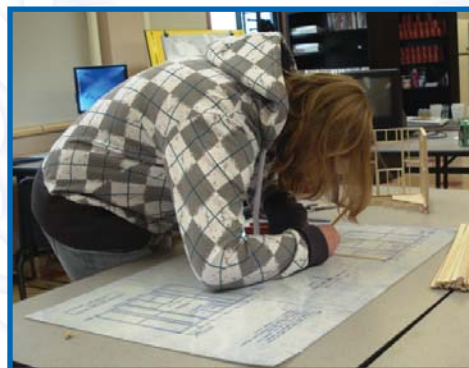
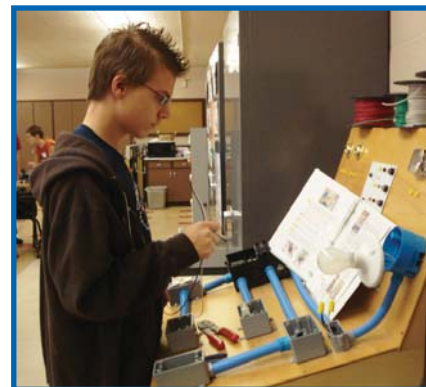
recently relocated to the Balaton School building and will serve approximately 150 to 200 students each year. Fay

Prairie, Career Accommodation Specialist, and Jan Scherbart, Career Assessment Assistant, work with the students that come to Project Discovery to help them determine their career interests, learning and

working styles, and their work-skills. The facility in Balaton allows Project Discovery to expand its services and become a regional center to conduct independent living skills assessments for high school students. High school students, referred by their teacher or case manager, first complete a career interest and learning/working styles inventory prior to coming to Balaton. Once that is completed, the students come to Project Discovery in groups of 5 and spend a full day completing hands-on career simulations. There are approximately 40 careers that students can explore, such as Desktop Publishing, Accounting, Law Enforcement, Electrician, Accounting, Residential Construction, Medical Emergency Services to name a few. Project Discovery staff provide graduated assistance to students as they complete

the work tasks, and observe the quality of their work and the work related skills and behaviors that will be critical to their success on the job. An individualized report which summarizes each student's experience

is written by Project Discovery staff and later shared with the students, their families, and teachers back at the student's home school district. For more information on Project Discovery contact Fay or Jan at 507-537-2254.



What's New and Old in Teaching & Learning

By Bob Braun, Director of Teaching and Learning Services

After being involved in Special Education for 23 years, I am gradually transitioning to the Regular Education Arena. My goal, as the Director of Teaching & Learning, is to bring Special ED and Regular ED together to address the needs of the student named ED. As I move towards this goal, I am in the process of learning more and more about the initiatives under School Improvement in the Division of Teaching & Learning. Along with these new initiatives, I am learning the acronyms that are associated with these. I would like to share with you what I have learned these acronyms to mean over the past year.

SW-PBIS – School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support: Lake Benton and Glencoe Silver Lake Elementary (Lakeside and Helen Baker) Schools were selected to be a part of cohort 5, SW-PBIS Initiative of the Minnesota Department of Education. Last spring, SW/WC Service Cooperative, Southeast Service Cooperative and South Central Service Cooperative applied for a grant through MDE to provide training in the Southern half of the state in the area of PBIS.

PBIS focuses on:

- Improving classroom and school climate
- Decreasing reactive management, integrating academic and behavior initiatives
- Improving support for students with behavior problems
- Maximizing academic achievement

PBIS integrates four elements to accomplish these goals:

1. Operationally defined and valued outcomes
2. Behavioral and biomedical science
3. Research-validated practices, and
4. Systems change to both enhance the broad quality with which all students are living/learning and reduce problem behaviors

Together these four elements provide schools with the opportunity to efficiently organize scarce resources and support the adoption of effective practices.

For more information: contact Bob Braun, Director of Teaching & Learning Services at bob.braun@swsc.org or 507-537-2252.

Shared Services: Six school districts have come together to participate in the Shared Service initiative. The participating schools are the following:

- Edgerton
- Lake Benton
- Luverne
- Lynd
- Minneota
- Pipestone

Areas being addressed are: curriculum development, curriculum mapping and facilitation of staff development, data analysis, and assisting in state reporting.

For additional information, contact Jen Mahan-Deitte at jen.mahan-deitte@swsc.org or 507-537-2291.

Sleepy Eye Public Schools is not a part of the Shared Services Initiative, but is in the process of reviewing their current curriculum and aligning it to meet the graduation standards.

For additional information contact, Mary Overlie at mary.overlie@swsc.org or 507-537-2288.

MSTA – Math & Science Teacher Academy: This initiative is to train teams on how to effectively prepare students for the new math standards. It is a partnership between SW/WC Service Cooperative, SW Minnesota State University and the MN River Valley Education District. Currently eleven school districts and sixty-five grades 3-8 math teachers are participating.

Areas being covered are:

- Data Mines – looking for strengths and concerns
- Setting Smart Goals based on data mines and school needs
- Lesson Study
- Professional Learning Communities
- Accelerating Algebra Readiness

For additional information, contact Christy Hemp at christy.hemp@swsc.org or 507-537-2293.

NWEA – Northwest Evaluation Association: This initiative gives school districts the ability to measure student achievement and academic growth, independent of grades, by comparing data from a wide variety of classes and schools across the country. NWEA uses the insight of MAP (measurement of academic progress) to accomplish these results.

Formative Assessment in Year 1 at SW/WC SC

By Lisa Gregoire, School Improvement Specialist and Christy Hemp, Math and School Improvement Specialist

A Formative Assessment Cohort for schools in AYP is currently taking place at SW/WC Service Cooperative. Some of the research of the cohort is based on the works of Black, Wiliam, Popham, Heritage, Stiggins, and Chappuis. The cohort began in September 2009, and will conclude in May 2010. It consists of four face-to-face meetings, one featuring Margaret Biggerstaff (Evaluation Specialist, School Improvement, MDE), four online meetings, and concludes with a portfolio due in May 2010. It is being facilitated by Christy Hemp (Math and School Improvement Specialist) and Lisa Gregoire (School Improvement Specialist).

There are a lot of varying definitions and practices of Formative Assessment, as well as commercial products claiming to be Formative Assessment.

So, exactly what is it? According to The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2006), Formative Assessment is defined as “a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides

feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students’ achievement of intended instructional outcomes.”

The five main effective attributes of formative assessment, as stated by The CCSSO, are:

- 1) Learning Progressions
- 2) Learning Goals and Criteria for Success
- 3) Descriptive Feedback
- 4) Self and Peer Assessment
- 5) Collaboration

These attributes can act independently of each other, but in order to successfully implement formative assessments with your students all need to be present.

Formative Assessment is considered a key ingredient for schools trying to solve the achievement puzzle. “If assessments are to support improvements in student learning, their results must inform students how to do better the next time” (Stiggins, 2006).

For more information, contact: Christy Hemp, 507-537-2293 or christy.hemp@swsc.org, or Lisa Gregoire, 507-537-2294 or lisa.gregoire@swsc.org.

Teaching and Learning *(Continued from page 12)*

For more information regarding NWEA, contact Michael Koranda at michael.koranda@swsc.org or 507-537-2245.

SIOP - Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol: SIOP is a means of making content comprehensible for ELL students while at the same time developing English skills and making content concepts and information understandable so that ELL students can participate in grade level classes.

For more information, contact Jen Mahan-Deitte at jen.mahan-deitte@swsc.org or 507-537-2291 or Michael Koranda at michael.koranda@swsc.org or 507-537-2245.

AYP - Adequate Yearly Progress: The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 aims to bring all students up to the proficient level on state tests by the 2013-2014 school year, and to hold states and schools more accountable for results. NCLB requires all districts and schools receiving Title I funds to meet state “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) goals for their total student populations and for specified demo-

graphic subgroups, including major ethnic/racial groups, economically disadvantaged students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, and students with disabilities. If these schools fail to meet AYP goals for two or more years, they are classified as schools “in need of improvement” and face consequences.

New Teaching & Learning Staff

Mary Overlie, AYP Coordinator,
mary.overlie@swsc.org, 507-537-2288

Lisa Gregoire, AYP Coordinator,
lisa.gregoire@swsc.org, 507-537-2294

Chris Kuehl, Regional Severely and Multiply Impaired Specialist,
chris.kuehl@swsc.org, 507-760-0078

Scholarship Opportunity

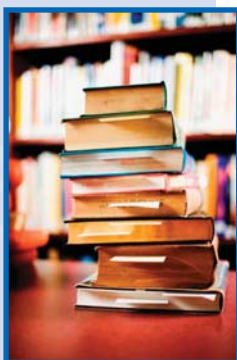
Freshwater Society and SW/WC Service Cooperative would like to invite your students to participate in the 6th Annual Water is Life Scholarship Contest

Six \$500 scholarships will be awarded!

Deadline for intent to participate:
March 15, 2010

Deadline for entries: March 25,
2010

For more information and contest entry material please visit:
www.freshwater.org
or
www.swsc.org/studentactivities



A Special Summer Experience

By Bonnie Rauk, Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Each summer at the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) Summer Program, students attend fun academic settings/classes during the day. The students also have evening activities off campus as a group, doing something fun in the area each evening. Many students from MSAD, located in Faribault, attend the summer program. MSAD also opens this program up for Deaf/Hard of Hearing students from around the state. The cost is a \$100 activity fee.

I was fortunate to have one of my students take part in this experience. For students like mine, this was a first—an opportunity to interact with all deaf/hard of hearing students for 2 whole weeks. All students stay in the dorm, have a roommate, and are surrounded by people who speak sign language, sometimes for the first time in their life. My student's parents have reported a change in his confidence at home. He is signing TO his parents, something he never did much of before. This is one of many changes they see, but can't always put into words. He is very proud of his diary, photos of his new friends, and the family hopes this is just the first of many years of attending this summer program.

As we were filling out the application paperwork, we found out the Worthington Lions Club would pay the activity fee, and help cover transportation costs for the family. The student, his mother, and I attended the September Lions Club meeting and talked about this great experience.

Educational Resource Library

By Mary Weber, Educational Resource Library Coordinator

The van is up and running again with Devin Aslesen on Mondays. He takes items for those of you south of Marshall to be picked up by Plum Creek Library delivery again this year. Their driver picks up our materials in Marshall on Tuesday afternoons for delivery to your local public libraries on Wednesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays. Your school office will be called when you have materials to be picked up at your local library. It is the most cost effective way for us to get materials to you weekly. The media videos/DVDs now have a checkout time limit of two weeks. SEIMC (special education) materials still have a four week checkout time. We are open to alternate suggestions. If you have thoughts on this matter, please call, email, or drop a line in the mail.

This year my contract is 160 days instead of 185. I will work Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays for the most part; and add some Wednesdays also. My helper, Cheryl Brabender, works on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It would help us get ready for van delivery on Monday if you would have your requests in to our office by noon on Thursdays. Thanks for your cooperation! We will return messages as soon as we are back in the office.

I have been ordering some items to support the RtI initiative from the SW/WC Service Cooperative. As materials arrive and are processed, they are added to our library listings on the SW/WC Service Cooperative website under Programs and Services, Educational Resource Library.

Area Teachers Attend Welding Refresher

By Gail Polojewski, Career Development Coordinator, MN West

Twenty-one Ag. instructors from throughout the region attended a welding refresher course at Lakeview High School on June 24, 2009. The day's activities included tours of SMI & Hydraulics in Porter and Hydroswing in Cottonwood where attendees had the opportunity to see first-hand the exciting changes within the welding industry and hear about career opportunities for their students. The remainder of the day included learning basic blueprint reading, learning how to troubleshoot equipment, and hands on demonstrations.

The annual Technical Skills Challenge will have an additional competition thanks to the generosity of SMI & Hydraulics who have agreed to supply any interested school with the materials to build a utility trailer. Teams of students who complete the project will compete against each other and have the opportunity to win a cash prize courtesy of SMI.



From the Desk of Administrative Services

By Darin Jensen, Director of Administrative Services

There is an Old Face in a New Position in the Administrative Services Division at the SW/WC Service Cooperative. Darin Jensen began his duties as Director of Administrative Services on July 1, 2009. Darin has worked with School District Finance for nearly 20 years. He was Business Manager/Technology Coordinator at Benson



Public Schools for 11 years. Darin decided to bring his experience to a regional level and spent 8 years as UFARS/Finance Specialist for the SW/WC Service Cooperative. Darin has now moved into his current position as Director of Administrative Services which involves programs such as Cooperative Purchasing, Health and Safety Management, Technology Services and ESV Region IV. Darin has served on various statewide committees geared toward

assisting/streamlining business office functions. They include: UFARS Advisory Committee, Data Reporting Sub-Group and SMART Systems development. Darin can be reached at (507)537-2280 or by email at darin.jensen@swsc.org.

Also new to the Division of Administrative Services are Summer O'Neill and Jim Lilleberg. Summer was hired as a Shared Accountant/UFARS Specialist. Summer came to us after working for several years as BOLD's Business Manager. Jim has been hired on as a LAN/PC Specialist. Jim came to us from Schwans. You can reach Summer at summer.oneill@swsc.org and Jim can be reached at Jim.Lilleberg@swsc.org.



Attention Teachers: Save The Date

You are invited to attend the 2010 Southwest Minnesota State University Master's Conference.

Saturday, April 24, 2010

SMSU Conference Center in Marshall

Registration fee not yet determined

The day will included:

- Keynote speaker
- Presentations of Graduate Students' Action Research Projects
- Lunch
- A meaningful opportunity to earn 8 continuing education clock hours

Watch future SW/WC SC monthly Member E-Newsletters for more information

2nd Annual SMART Board User Conference

By Courtney Smith, Technology Integration Specialist

SW/WC Service Cooperative teamed with SMART Technologies and Tierney Brothers, Inc. for the 2nd Annual SMART Board User Conference on October 15th, 2009 at Marshall High School. Over 100 people turned out for this year's conference

which offered participants 21 different sessions to choose from throughout the day concluding with user group sessions so participants could collaborate with other teachers in their curricular area. SMART Technologies provided our keynote speaker, Brady Phillips, who addressed the needs of "Professional Development and Technology Integration Going Forward". Participants came from as far as Sturgis, SD to attend the day's events! The goal of the SMART Board User Conference is to provide a variety of content specific sessions to help teachers better utilize their



SMART Boards as well as to collaborate with other teachers in our region for lesson sharing and ideas they can implement into their classroom. New this year, we also held two pre-conference sessions the night prior to the conference for both beginner and advanced users who wanted to maximize their SMART Board User Conference experience.

All participants received a



1GB flash drive from Tierney Brothers and we had other door prizes offered such as an Epson color printer from Tierney Brothers, Inc., a Lumens document camera from Lumens Integration, Inc., and an HP PhotoSmart printer from SW/WC Service Cooperative's Cooperative Purchasing Department.

SW/WC Service Cooperative has established an Online SMART Board User Group for teachers to continue sharing resources with one another beyond the conference. This online user group isn't just limited to those who attended the conference - it is an excellent resource for any SMART teacher and can be accessed by going to www.swsc.org/SMART.

Be sure to save the date for next year's SMART Board User Conference which will be held on October 21st, 2010!



RRR ALC Continues to Grow, Meet Area Students Needs

By Dave Fjeld, Staff Writer, Cottonwood County Citizen, Windom; Reprinted with permission from the Cottonwood County Citizen

Area schools are well into the 2009-10 school year and while most are recognizing declining enrollments at least one local school is showing an increase in its number of students.

Red Rock Ridge Alternative Learning Center, located in the former Highland Elementary building in Windom, has grown to 52 students in grades 9 through 12, the most students the school has ever started a year with. Sponsored by Southwest/West Central Service Cooperative, the ALC is in its eighth year in Windom and Principal Ann Wendorff is excited about this year's start.

"This year is the best start we've had in our ALC in years," Wendorff says. "We have an incredible group of kids this year that 'get it.' They 'get' what our expectations are here. This is the least restrictive environment they can be in as far as education in a high school. If they can't follow our rules up here, they go back to their high school. But we haven't experienced that."

But they are not the only students receiving instruction at the school in east Windom. The school also serves 21 students in grades 1 through 12 in its day treatment program and seven behavioral students in grades 6-12.

"Day treatment is a collaborative effort with the county and the school," Wendorff explains. "These are kids who have mental health disabilities. So, they get mental health help and they get education at the same time."

"The behavioral room is for kids who need help getting their behavior under control."

"Our goal with the day treatment and behavioral kids is to get them back into their regular schools. Sometimes it takes a little longer than others."

And all 80 students in the building come from 12 area schools: Windom Area, Jackson County Central, Mt. Lake Public, Butterfield-Odin, Comfrey, Springfield, Redwood Valley, Red Rock Central, Westbrook-Walnut Grove, Murray County Central, Fulda and Worthington.

Like its student enrollment, teaching and paraprofes-

sional staff has also grown — to 25, including Wendorff. The newest additions to the staff include Social Studies teacher Steve Kuntz, special education teacher Anne Bruns and high school day treatment paraprofessional Marcie Anderson.

When the school added a high school day treatment program two years ago, the school added a new teacher, Wendy Denison; and two new therapists, Carrie Myers and Pam Kubesh.

Is this your typical school setting? No. But the school is meeting the needs of the students that attend it, says Wendorff.

"What the kids find up here at the ALC are people who care about them, who take care of their needs — from social service needs to public health needs to clothing and food. We deal with all those kinds of things and we help kids prepare for adulthood," Wendorff says.

Wendorff points out that the ALC is a credit recovery program and students must qualify to get into the program. They must be referred to the school by their home district and they must be behind in credits, pregnant, coming back from rehabilitation or, in some cases, homeless.

Consequently, an increase in students at the school is both a good and not-so-good thing. But Wendorff prefers to accentuate the positive.

"It's good for us because it tells us we're doing a good job," Wendorff contends. "Kids feel safe, counted and valued and that's because our numbers are small."

There are teen parents attending the ALC and the school brings in public health nurses and educators to help them learn to be the best parents possible for their children.

"And what we try to get through to them is that this is going to be the most important job they're ever going to have in their life — to be a good mom or dad," Wendorff says.

Typically, when a student steps into the ALC they



RRR ALC continues on page 18

RRR ALC *(Continued from page 17)*

remain at the school until they graduate, whether they enter as a freshman, sophomore, junior or sometimes a senior.

They are held to the same standards as any other high school in Minnesota. They, too, must take and pass the same state tests that students in public schools must pass to graduate.

The school must maintain the state-required 90% attendance rate among students. RRRALC is at 91.5% and the school's graduation rate is 73%.

"That's huge for at-risk kids," Wendorff says.

A big reason for that is the expectations that are not only communicated from teacher to student, but upper-classmen to underclassmen. For instance, concerns about students using profanity toward teachers? It doesn't happen at RRRALC.

"We don't have that problem here. It's not acceptable to use that kind of language. And our walls and our halls are clean because the kids put their art up," Wendorff says. "They take ownership of this building.

"We make it clear at the beginning of the year: 'You either follow the rules, or you're gone.' I can't have 52 kids who cause trouble and who think they can abide by their own rules, or even their old school rules. We're different."

Make no mistake, students at ALC are not perfect angels and, again, they are in the least restrictive school environment available. Yes, they smoke on breaks, but they also learn to clean up after themselves or lose privileges.

"We want them to be good citizens when they leave our building so they can contribute," Wendorff says.

And they're already doing that. In past years, students have helped pack care supplies for truck shipment to hurricane-ravaged areas and have raked the yards of the school's neighbors. The school always has its own Toys-for-Tots drive and Wendorff is amazed each year what students donate to the drive.

On the other hand, some kids never fit into the program here and either return to their home school or simply drop out.

But they are a small minority, Wendorff says.



What about reports of officers being called to the school?

"Very, very rarely are the police called for the ALC," Wendorff maintains. "It's often in our behavioral program where kids are out of control and it's because of their mental health disability.

"Nine-point-nine times out of 10 it's down at the other end of the school (behavioral program) and it's because of the

nature of their disability."

One of the signature classes at RRRALC is its art program. The school annually holds an end-of-the-year art show and several students have been voted winners in the Cottonwood County Student Art Show at the Remick Gallery.

Moreover, the art program is mostly funded by the Remick Foundation.

"They have a great deal of respect for what we do up here and they come up and visit us often," Wendorff says of the Foundation members. "They bought us Smart Boards and all of our art supplies.

"Items in our Living Skills room came through private donations and from the Remick Foundation."

The Living Skills class teaches students — most older, but some younger — to make themselves a meal, iron their clothes, clean the house and do laundry.

And homework?

"We don't require a lot of homework. Our work in the ALC is done in the class with guidance from the teacher," Wendorff explains.

The school also receives strong support from the county judicial system and social services. It's not uncommon to see judges, attorneys and social workers attending RRRALC's May graduation ceremony at the school.

"We measure our successes differently up here. If we have a kid come to us with 35 absences in a school year and we get them to come to school, that's a success," Wendorff says. "Generally, kids that come to this school are very bright. It's removing those obstacles so they can show and shine. When they feel valued and feel like they count, in the smaller setting we provide, most of them shine."

Student Activities

By Sue Gorecki, Student Activities Coordinator

Encourage Students to Start Writing

Students in grades 3-12 are encouraged to start working on their entries for the 6th Annual Creating Spaces Writing Contest. They can enter the contest through a classroom assignment or on their own. Categories include fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. The submission deadline is January 26, 2010 with no entries accepted after the deadline.



The contest was established as a partnership between SMSU's English Department and the SW/WC Service Cooperative to encourage love of language and writing for all students and a way to recognize the talented young writers in this region. Visit: www.swsc.org/studentactivities, click on Creating Spaces for the brochure and registration form.

Finalists will be invited to an Awards Ceremony on April 18, 2010 at SMSU in Marshall.

Students Attend a Variety of Hands-On Classes

Peter Bloedel, a guitar-picking, juggling professor of theatre at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato was the keynote speaker at the 16th Annual Conference for Young Artists on October 23 in Marshall. Bloedel discussed

the importance of asking the impractical questions and how to use those questions as creative stepping stones. He concluded his presentation with an eye-catching, earsplitting juggling demonstration using a running chainsaw, a short garden rake and an eight ball!

Over 700 students, teachers and parents from twenty-eight area school districts attended the conference. Students gave their creative spirit free rein at the hands-on classes which reflected related primarily to arts: pottery, drawing,

bookmaking, clowning, juggling, fiber art, stamping, rewarding to hear the student's enthusiastic comments in what they had done in their class. Their excitement response to "most memorable thing you learned" was adult comment on the evaluation was "excellent teacher had a good day, glad we came!"

For more pictures from the conference, visit: <http://studentactivitiesphotogallery.shutterfly.com/> and click on the album for Young Artists.

Practice Your Moves

Students in grades K-12 with prior chess playing experience are invited to a Regional Chess Tournament on Saturday, February 6 at the SW/WC Service Cooperative's office in Marshall. This event is an opportunity to improve analytical thinking skills while having fun competing with students from other districts. Numerous studies indicate that children who play chess regularly see improvements in reading and math scores. Chess teaches critical thinking and problem solving skills. Students will be guaranteed at least four match games. Medals and certificates will be awarded.

Check out our website: www.swsc.org/studentactivities, click on Regional Chess Tournament for the brochure, registration form and instructions on how to start a scholastic chess club.



a wide variety of topics the visual and performing ing, watercolor, printmaking, scrapbooking, etc. It was to other students in discussion was contagious! A student "always be creative." An ers, great keynote speaker,

Student Activities

Junior and Senior High Knowledge Bowl

There are three pages devoted to Knowledge Bowl:

- KB Coaches' Info - information for both Jr. & Sr. High programs
- Jr. High KB - information pertaining specifically to the Jr. High program
- Sr. High KB - information pertaining specifically to the Sr. High program

Check the website frequently as additional information is added or updated.



Check out our website: www.swsc.org/studentactivities for registration forms. If you have any questions about any of the Student Activities please contact Sue Gorecki at 507-537-2258 or sue.gorecki@swsc.org or Andrea Anderson at 507-537-2257 or andrea.anderson@swsc.org.

Upcoming Professional Development

To register for any of these workshops, please visit our website at www.swsc.org, click on Workshops, find the workshop you are interested in, and complete the registration information. If you have any questions about the registration process, please contact Dawn Christensen at dawn.christensen@swsc.org or 507-537-2278.

December 2009

12/15	Information Processing
12/21	Strategies for Increased Reading Achievement
12/21	SMARTBoard Level I Training
12/22	SMARTBoard Level II Training

January 2010

1/5	Podcasting/Vodcasting
1/5	Young Writer's Conference
1/8	Principals Leadership Series #2
1/12	SMARTBoard Level I Training
1/13	Advanced PowerPoint 2007 for Educ.-Webinar
1/19	SMART Response System Training
1/26	SMARTBoard Level II Training
1/28	Technology Coordinator Workshop

February 2010

2/2	SMARTBoard Level I Training
2/3	Digital Storytelling-Webinar
2/4	Superintendent's Workshop #3
2/10	Using Video with your SMARTBoard-Webinar
2/16	Moodle 101
2/18	Principals Leadership Series #3
2/22	SMARTBoard Level I Training

March 2010

3/2	SMARTBoard Level II Training
3/4	Annual Law Seminar
3/8	Day of Excellence Conference - 26th Annual
3/10	School Business Conference
3/11	Technology Conference
3/16	SMARTBoard Level I Training
3/23	SMART Response System Training
3/30	Podcasting/Vodcasting