

March 21, 2019

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From Dr. Michael Hubert, Livingston ESA Superintendent

When is the Last Day of School? The most common question I have received over the past few weeks centers around the last day of the school year. The weather has been either extremely cold or unsafe on many occasions, the result being one of our constituent districts had to cancel school ten times, while the others have cancelled either eight or nine times. Our [staff](#) and [student](#) calendars are impacted differently by the unique calendar each district maintains and the number of times they cancel school.

The State of Michigan allows public schools six inclement weather days in any given year that do not have to be made up to receive full state funding. Additionally, there is a provision that allows districts who schedule 180 days of instruction to request a waiver for up to three days beyond the six previously mentioned. The waiver process applies to the Agency just as it does our constituent districts.

Assuming there are no more inclement weather days this year and also assuming we receive approval of the Agency's waiver request, ***I do not expect we will have to change the last day of school for students in any of our programs*** (GSRP, ECSE, WAY, Pathway). Of all the staff calendars we publish ***I do expect we will have to modify our LIPSA staff calendars in Brighton and Fowlerville***. I do not expect that the other staff calendars as posted to be changed.

We will do our best to keep you informed of any changes in our calendars that may emerge. As always, stay in close contact with your supervisor regarding your work calendar.

Strategic Plan Updates - I have enjoyed my time the past few weeks engaging with and listening to teams - both internal and external - talk from their perspective about the Agency's Strategic Plan. There is still a varied level of awareness and understanding regarding our strategic plan and I am going to try and address that in the coming months. There is also some work we need to engage in regarding Goal #8 on Social Emotional Learning. We have completed the two objectives in the plan but need to identify new objectives so we continue to make progress towards the stated goal. In the next eBrief we will outline plans for getting the new work underway to support goal #8.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Role of a School Social Worker

From Doug Haseley



The National Association of School Social Workers (NASSW) has deemed March as School Social Work month. School Social Workers play a pivotal role in assessment, mental health intervention, crisis management, and linking families to community based supports. They also are an integral link between the school, home, and community in helping students achieve academic success. Within Livingston County, we have Social Workers providing services at all educational levels, spanning from Early On through High School.

The day to day role of a School Social Worker is multifaceted. School Social Workers provide targeted intervention, work within the scope of social emotional learning, run social skill groups, and work with teams to address student behavioral needs.

In keeping with the strategic plan, School Social Workers are also tasked with supporting the social emotional learning needs of students. The strategic plan indicates all students will have access to a social emotional learning strategy.

Of recent, our School Social Workers have engaged in professional learning with [Jessica Minahan](#) on strategies for dealing with student anxiety and the positive behavior support work of [Charlie Appelstein](#) whose motto is, "There is no such thing as a bad kid."

When asked what a LESA Social Worker loved most about this work, one replied, "I love the impact that we can have on students and families through the development of high quality behavior supports and strong relationships." Another Social Worker added, "I love that I have the opportunity to improve the quality of life of not only a student, but the whole family."

Please take a moment to thank a Social Worker today for all of their hard work and dedication to the students and families we serve.

[Go back](#)



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Kindergarten Transitions

From Sean LaRosa

Early childhood is a time full of transitions. For children, transitions range from simple to complex and are all important. Transitions include going from one activity to another, changing preschools, moving from one primary caregiver to another and going from preschool to kindergarten.

Spring is historically the time families of preschool aged children begin thinking about kindergarten registration. Successful transition into kindergarten is much more than attending a single event at a new school, it should include having schools, communities and systems ready to support the children as they transition. Kindergarten transition is now seen as a longer process and an issue of child, family and school readiness where:

- Preschool and elementary educators (teachers and administrators) are active and equal partners and participants.
- Families are fully engaged in the process.
- Communities contribute needed supports and resources.
- Transition activities take place over time spanning preschool into the early months of kindergarten (Pianta, 1999; Kraft-Sayre and Pianta, 2000; Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta, 2000; Volger et al, 2008).

The ease of which children make the move to kindergarten depends to some degree on the amount of discontinuity they have to negotiate (Margetts, 2001). When transitions adequately prepare children for change and reduce disparities, the odds of making a successful adjustment increase. Research and experience continue to show long-term outcomes that can be linked to the quality and effectiveness of children's transitional experiences and begin with supporting these transitions:

- Child to school.
- Family to school.
- Preschool to kindergarten.
- Community to kindergarten

Note: The above was adapted from the Livingston County Kindergarten Transition Toolkit

[Go back](#)

SECONDARY OPTIONS

Scholarships

From Michelle Radcliffe

As students prepare for their future education, the spring is traditionally a busy time for completing scholarship applications. Most high schools have scholarships available and a counselor or administrator can direct students to specific scholarships that will match their chosen field of study.

The Agency also maintains a list of scholarships which can be found at <https://lccan.org/road-rally/>

Many scholarships require students to complete the FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid form. <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>

Even if you think you may not qualify for financial aid, you should still complete the FAFSA, as several scholarships require you to complete the FAFSA to have access to the scholarship.

The Livingston Career and College Access Network is sponsoring a **Road Rally** to raise monies for students pursuing careers considered in the [Hot 50 careers](#) through 2026. These careers range from a certificate to 4 year+ degree programs.

Last year the Road Rally raised over \$12,000 for scholarships. This [promotional video](#) gives an overview of the event. **Please also consider participating in the event on April 25th**, as your \$20 participation fee supports additional monies for scholarships. Several local area businesses have already signed up for sponsorships including: Hartland Insurance, Ann Arbor Spark, all clues and puzzles are created by Brighton's own Puzzled Escape and various other local businesses have contributed to the event. The event begins at 5:30 p.m. and ends with a finish line party at Crystal Gardens.



Road Rally scholarship applications are due by 4/12/2019. The applications are simple and we want to support students in these growing career paths, so please encourage students to apply.

[Go back](#)



COLLABORATION

Talk Saves Lives

From Alice Johnson

Suicide is a health issue. 800,000 people die by suicide each year, in fact someone dies by suicide every 40 seconds and it is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States. Mental health is an important ingredient for preventing suicide.

During the month of February our specialized transportation bus driver, Stephanie Harris, presented to all of our Transportation Departments in Livingston County the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (“AFSP”) program called “Talk Saves Lives”.

Because bus drivers and assistants start and end the student’s day, it was very appropriate to offer this type of training. The goal is to create a culture that’s smart about mental health and suicide prevention. This presentation has provided insight into the scope of the problem, what the research shows, prevention and what one can do to help.

Stephanie has shared from her personal experience a presentation that was heartfelt, inspiring, informative, interesting, hopeful, and enlightening.

On May 11, 2019, there will be a community-wide campus walk sponsored by the AFSP starting at Howell High School with registration starting at 9:00 a.m.

When you walk in the “Out of the Darkness Walk” you join the effort with hundreds of thousands of people to raise awareness and funds that allow AFSP to invest in new research, create educational programs, advocate for public policy, and support survivors of suicide loss.

To learn more, contact afsp.org/chapters.

[Go back](#)



PARENTS & COMMUNITY

School Mental Health and Support Services Grant

From Doug Haseley

The Michigan legislature recently approved the School Mental Health and Support Services grant which will provide funds to Educational Service Agencies for school mental health and support services, behavioral health team pilot programs, and funds to administer the programs. The intent of these initiatives is to build capacity within the public school system, while forging strong partnerships with community based agencies such as Community Mental Health and Department of Health and Human Services.

The Agency has applied for all categories of this grant opportunity.

In order to support the students and families that we serve, the Agency is currently exploring how to build connections with our local districts and community mental health partners in order to develop an implementation plan and to articulate how the resources will be best utilized to have the greatest impact on the mental health needs of our school communities.

Ironically, one of our local high schools, Howell High School, recently engaged in a partnership with Community Mental Health and the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a collaborative initiative to support the needs of general education and/or at-risk students struggling with mental health needs. This collaborative approach was designed to identify those at-risk and to provide targeted intervention.

In this particular model, a CMH Social Worker works with building staff, including the Special Education School Social Worker, to provide mental health intervention to students. This partnership is unique and has the potential to provide valuable insight into how we might better partner with our school communities to support all students.

[Go back](#)



LEADERSHIP - LOCAL DISTRICT

What is Special about Special Education?

By Doug Haseley

Have you ever heard someone utter the phrase, “What is special about special education?” Although the answer may appear to be simple on the surface, it is actually a concept that deserves a well thought out response. The answer to the question can be found within the definition of Specially Designed Instruction. Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) is defined as instruction that is intended to close the academic gap between a student with a disability and peers. The design and delivery of SDI is the core of special education. SDI can be considered the vehicle that ensures students with disabilities receive high-quality instruction and services that will result in progress toward academic and functional standards, graduation, and meaningful postsecondary outcomes. SDI also is a core component of the LESA Strategic Plan. The plan prioritizes that ALL agency special education teachers will receive the requisite training and support to enable them to provide specially designed instruction in core curriculum areas to address the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities. Over the course of this school year, administrators and teachers have engaged with this work with staff through book studies as well as an intentional focus on High Leverage Practices tied to Specially Designed Instruction.

One High Leverage Practice:

Check out the amazing [Anita Archer](#) (many of our staff have had the opportunity to see and train in Archer’s work with explicit instruction) who is known for saying, “How well you teach = how well they learn.” As educators, we can design a perfect lesson or session plan, but if the plan is delivered in a way that does not involve student engagement, student learning will be impacted and we will not see the student outcomes we are striving to achieve.

[Go back](#)