

## State of the MOISD 2009

The “Good to Great” model penned by Jim Collins recommends to approach change with a plan: 1) look at the “brutal facts” of the situation; 2) hire the right people and put them in the proper seat on the bus to make the best fit; 3) find the best direction to head; and 4) never consider yourself “arrived,” but keep striving to stay focused on the mission of becoming the greatest in your field of influence (the first five years of the Good to Great model has seen these four steps take place). Our outstanding staff has discovered where they fit best in our service model and are continually striving to make a difference for our local districts as we “Help Schools Help Students.”

The race to January 2011 will surpass the speed of the 2010 journey as more regulations, recommendations, assessments, and expectations pour in from the state and federal government. This is a historic time in the state of Michigan as it leads the nation in unemployment and struggles the hardest of all states to get out of its downward spiral. Educational reform will be on the top of the list next year as the Department of Education doesn’t want to waste a “good crisis” to bring about reforms across the nation.

Following contributions from every staff member at last year’s opening day workshops, the following definition was penned: ***"We define GREAT service as our passion for working in partnership with our local school districts and providing personalized, value-added services that support local schools in their effort to maximize student learning."*** The MOISD staff is acting upon this conviction and continues to demonstrate passion for making the MOISD the greatest ISD in the state. The 2009 calendar year has not seen a lapse in this conviction to serve the local districts, each other, the state, and students who attend ISD programming. The purpose of this document is to be a reminder of our conviction of service while recounting some of the 2009 accomplishments.

### Service to ISD Staff

The Whole Child concept kicked off our 2009-2010 opening day exercise and provided a backdrop of why we exist as a support institution – student learning. As the admin team worked to effectively design professional development around this concept, they were reminded of the significance of

each student and the importance of relationships: Educators are natural helpers, and the MOISD staff continues to have a difficult time balancing both worlds: advocating for the student while serving the interest of the local district - often these desires are in opposition to each other. As resources dwindle, this dilemma will only increase; hence this year was labeled “the year of negotiation” on opening day. In the end, we are the “grandparents” of the student and must yield to the interest of the “parent,” the local district. The addition of 20 to 40 new ISD staff members each year adds difficulty to keep words and actions consistent with our mission of service, especially since our local districts continue to request more and more services each year. Many new faces to the ISD have been hired through Title 1 resources and help support teachers along the U.S. 10 corridor.

The very design of the MOISD model challenges the ability to develop quality relationships within the ISD: there is no MOISD “teacher’s lounge.” Communication continues to be a natural hindrance to progress, and our best solutions have come through sharing ideas via e-mail or sharing departmental minutes to keep each group informed of our progress. Along the same lines, the specialty nature of our employees makes it difficult to provide specific professional development that reaches everyone. Each year, the opening day professional development activities improve and this year was no exception. The MOISD staff also attends various development activities throughout the year. Meeting the individual needs of MOISD staff members is a continuous challenge.

Construction and maintenance of the MOISD facilities improves the teaching, safety, and learning spaces throughout our two counties. Improvements were made to the Career Center, Transition Center, and Education Center this past year, with more coming in 2010. The Board of Education approved nearly \$2.8 million of additions to the Career Center in October of 2009 with much of the planning detail taking place in 2009. The Career Center additions are scheduled to be completed for the start of the school year in 2010 barring any major construction problems.

The Board of Education approved three goals for themselves for the 2009-2010 school year, with one of the goals specifically aimed to increase contact and support of ISD staff at functions, award ceremonies, classrooms, etc. The other two goals were designed to support the local boards of education. The administrative team made a purposeful effort in 2009 to visit more MOISD classrooms and will continue to make a focused effort in 2010

to make contact with all of the rooms throughout the two counties. Technology continues to be the most effective method of tying MOISD staff together.

### Service to the State, Region, & Community

The MOISD is a major factor in development of vocational curriculum, state policies, and lobbying efforts for the improvement of education in Michigan. Local districts depend on our efforts to influence the stakeholders throughout the state. Memberships on state and regional committees in the organizations for administrators such as MASSP, MSBO, MASA, MASIA, MAASE, and CEPD, SEAC, and MI Works! help keep the concerns of our local districts at the forefront of policy making. The formation and implementation of the LEAD FORWARD educational platform document used today by S.O.S (Save our State, School, & Students) group was formed with MOISD input. Many MOISD staff members also provide expertise to state and regional policy makers.

The Career Center completed its TRAC audit this past year, and many of the in-house practices and policies were “borrowed” for other ISDs to emulate. Our Early Childhood program elements from Crossroads and Morley Stanwood and Homeless templates are being copied throughout the state. As mentioned in previous State of the MOISD addresses, our staff continues to be very involved with local churches, clubs, and service organizations for the betterment of children in our area. One of the most important functions the MOISD administration and staff do for our local districts, communities, and the improvement of the state of Michigan is providing pertinent information, content expertise and positive solutions to difficult problems. This can only be accomplished through a consistent track record of support and quality relationships. The MOISD is one of the top ISDs when local, regional, or state solutions are needed.

### Service to Students

As mentioned previously, one of the most difficult dilemmas an ISD employee will run into is the choice to achieve the correct balance of student support versus student advocacy. As we “Help Schools Help Students,” it is natural to want to usurp the local district’s role and advocate for the “Whole Child,” which may create problems for the local district. One of the best ways to avoid this trap is to excel with our part, and allow the local school

district to do their job: cooperation will be the best solution for every student, every time. When there are disagreements with direction for a student, the MOISD strives to work with the local administration and staff on finding alternative solutions in a discrete and professional manner.

The MOISD provides competition and leadership opportunities through the Career Center, Math/Science/Technology Center, and U.S. 10 programming to assist students in reaching their full potential. Many of the Career Center programs have consistently placed well at the local, regional, state, and national competitions. We work in concert with the Cadillac News and the Pioneer News Group to shape public opinion about these programs and promote student and staff achievement. New campus signage and school logos have been included to help students and community members understand how the campus is arranged and where they can get assistance. The completion of the 2010 renovations and additions will play a key role in supporting student learning into the future.

### Service to Local Districts

As resources dwindle, cooperation must increase. The MOISD strives to be at the epicenter of the effort to work together. “Service” is the one-word mission of our system. This cannot be achieved without great people who have a servant’s heart. As similar to past years, retirements, job and program changes, and system adaptations due to enrollment have infused new faces at the MOISD. Over the last five years, half of the system has turned over with new personnel. This is a common trend in education and provides its own set of challenges. The biggest hurdle is to bring all of these employees up to speed as quickly as possible on the mission of the MOISD. A whole new special education leadership team and a new Assistant Superintendent have risen to this challenge and continue to be extremely effective at supporting and challenging our staff as they serve our local districts. There are four areas where the MOISD spends much of its time, effort, and/or resources supporting the districts: 1) instruction; 2) cooperation; 3) enrichment; and 4) cost savings and efficiency.

Providing support for the instruction taking place in the local classroom is an effective role for an ISD. As data becomes a bigger player in shaping American education, the MOISD districts have been correctly positioned to make these necessary decisions. We are currently at the center of a Regional Data Initiative with multiple ISDs throughout the state and helped to secure

a \$100,000 grant to support our Pearson Data Project for our local districts. This project has spawned several initiatives where districts are working on common assessments. We have diversified our data project by adding a data manager to work in concert with our data coach. Effective and useful data will continue to be a cornerstone of curricular decisions in the immediate future.

Many of the MOISD programs enrich the local district programs. All gifted, special, and vocational programs could classify as enrichment for the local districts as they are not programs the locals can run independently because of size or scale. This past year, the MOISD Board of Education responded to a local board request and set up school board classes and meetings for presidents to get together to talk about common issues. There is an assumption from the local districts that similar services will continue into 2010. We also worked diligently towards improving the Parent Advisory Council process for the future which will continue to enrich student programming with the special needs population.

As the Michigan legislature pushes the consolidation of services through the local ISD, the MOISD is in perfect position to be a state leader in this area. Through creative cooperation, local district board members meet once every two months under the Personnel Cooperative umbrella to work on more positions and programs that can be coordinated to save dollars, increase expertise, and manage resources. Many groups throughout the state continue to request more information about the Mecosta Osceola Personnel Cooperative and how the concepts may be adapted to their districts.

By consolidating support services as a group, local districts save significant dollars, increase efficiencies, and promote cooperation in other areas. The mere organization of our system into a corporate group allows other systems to provide support resources to the districts through the ISD. Many donations came into the ISD during 2009 to support student and classroom activities with the largest being \$193,000 donation of reading books which were distributed to students throughout the two counties.

The local districts worked with the ISD to meet Race to the Top, Consolidation of Services, and ARRA deadlines enforced by the state and national governments. This year also saw another cooperative purchase of common software, SDS, to help reinforce cooperative efforts in the area of business services. The local districts are currently working with the ISD on

the cooperative wind turbine project to generate enough electrical power to sustain the entire ISD and local programs. A project of this magnitude takes patience, time and resources and wouldn't be accomplished without cooperation and a common interest of saving dollars for the classroom. As done previously, the MOISD forwarded \$270,000 Medicaid dollars to the local districts to fulfill the promise of meeting a full millage for 2008-2009. When the MOISD makes a promise, we keep it.

The calendar year 2009 was another riveting page to an exciting book on service to our local districts. As the current MOISD staff continues the on-going tradition of quality service to our customers, we still want to improve our service model. Hence, in early 2010 the Board of Education and administrative team will be soliciting our service customers (local and ISD staff, administrators, and board members) through an on-line survey on how we can serve them better. From this feedback, we will form a five-year improvement plan for the MOISD. It is an exciting time to be an ISD and located in Mecosta and Osceola counties where great needs are apparent. We believe our mission of "Helping Schools, Help Students" is one of great importance, and the MOISD staff stands ready to meet the impending challenges of 2010.

Curtis Finch, PhD

MOISD Superintendent