

## The Most Precious Gift

Greetings from the lower North country and Happy Holidays. As I turned my calendar to December today, it was shocking to realize that Christmas is a little more than three weeks away—there's so much I still need to do! Being a veteran of more than a few Christmases, however, I've learned to not panic, because history has shown that the holidays will come whether I'm ready or not. So this year I've decided that I'm going to give myself a luxurious little gift, the gift of TIME.

Especially for those who work in the educational field, time is often more valuable than salary or benefits, and there's never enough of it to go around. In our field, the clock and the calendar rule, they tell us what to do, when to do it, and now with a number of new mandates, even HOW to do it. And of course as we add more stuff to do in our day, week, and month, we never seem to take anything away to make more room. It often seems that

we're in a net-loss time mode that sometimes reaches critical proportions. A colleague once commented that he needed a 30 hour day for Christmas. Yet, I can't help but wonder if he wouldn't just wind up filling those extra hours up with more "stuff" to do rather than taking it to relax and enjoy it a little bit.

As we approach the Holiday break, we each have an opportunity for a little time off from the work, from the hustle, and from the multiple demands that come with working with children and their parents. We not only owe it to our ourselves and our families, but we owe it to those with whom we work. Everyone needs to take some time to rest, relax, and rejuvenate once in a while. Some do so by reading, or going to movies, yet for others, traveling or doing physical activities such as skiing or sledding provide the same release. How one chooses to accomplish this is not as important as the fact that they make time to do so.

As we approach the Holidays I hope that each of you will take the opportunity to give yourselves and your family the gift of time as well. There will always be one more chapter to cover, one more test to give, one more paper to grade, one more report to make, and one more phone call to return. But the moments that go by in the process are gone forever.

May each of you relax, rejuvenate, and enjoy the Holiday season and the coming New Year!

-Ron Rizzo



On behalf of all the  
members of the CSO-  
Happy Holidays!

### Special Points Of Interest

- State Board Approves New Health and Wellness Policy
- CSO Performance Grants
- Scantron Update
- Allen Academy Builds New Playground

## State Board of Education Approves Nutrition and Wellness Policy for Schools

On October 12, 2005, the State Board of Education approved a model Nutrition and Wellness Policy. The policies are required by law for school districts participating in the national lunch program. The new law states:

Not later than the first day of school year beginning after June 30, 2006, each Local Education Agency (LEA) participating in a program shall establish a local school wellness policy that minimally includes:

- Goals for nutrition education, physical activity and other school-based activities that are designed to promote student wellness
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods available on the school campus during the day
- Assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations

and issued by the Secretary of Agriculture

- Establishing a plan for measuring the implementation, including the designation of one (1) or more persons, charged with the operational responsibility for ensuring compliance
- Provision for a Coordinated School Health Team comprised of parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, governing board members, school administrators, and community members-at-large

The new law is wide sweeping and affects everything from recess and physical education, to school vending machines and even fundraising. For more information go to the State website at

[www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov)

### CSO Offers Academic Performance Grants

The CSO is once again pleased to offer Academic Performance Grants (APG) to each FSU-authorized academy. Each academy is eligible to apply for a grant of \$25.00 per student, based on fall Count Day info.

"The purpose of the grants is to have an immediate impact on school performance," said Ron Rizzo, Associate Director. "We want to assist our academies in a very targeted way. For that reason, the grant money may not be used to "supplant" existing funds, but must be used as additional resources. While we would like to help with general budgeting, our goal with this grant is specific needs based on performance data. Otherwise, the money would be usurped in to the general

budget and not have the impact we are hoping it will have for students."

Schools must apply for the grant and have all received the grant application. The deadline for applying for an Academic Performance Grant is January 13, 2006. Applications will be reviewed shortly after the deadline with awards announced the week of January 23. If you have any questions, please call or e-mail Ron Rizzo.



### Scantron Performance Series To Be Updated

The Scantron Corporation has recently announced two key enhancements to the Performance Series. Teachers will now be able to view up to 20 Student Learning Objectives in the student and class profile rather than the current 10. The student profile will also include a new "Time To Complete" field that displays how long it took the student to finish the test.

The upgrade will take place the weekend of December 10-11. To achieve this update, the Performance Series website will be taken offline Friday, December 9, 2005, beginning at 3:00 pm. The site will be back online by Monday, December 12.

**PERFORMANCE**  
Series



## Spotlight On Academies



### Community Comes Together To Build School Playground At Allen Academy

On two chilly days in late October, Allen Academy and The Leona Group mustered over 100 volunteers to help build a new playground for the school. The playground was partly funded by a grant from a non-profit foundation called KaBoom in Washington, D.C. KaBoom's goal is to build 1,000 playgrounds in 1,000 days.

According to Barbara Barrett, Regional Vice President for The Leona Group, the application process was extremely vigorous. "We had to provide pictures, site plans, and a soil sample test along with the application," said Barrett. Allen was required to put up \$10,000 of the cost, and was responsible for feeding the volunteers and providing logistical support for all of the volunteers.

The two-day project began with site-preparation day, and tons of sand and mulch were spread to prepare the play site. The second day called "build day," saw volunteers arriving as early as 6:30 am. After a hearty breakfast, the construction began and was not completed until approximately 6:00 that evening. At 3:00 that afternoon, there was a dedication ceremony for the new playground which featured a "board cutting" instead of the traditional ribbon cutting.

Volunteers for the project consisted of staff from Allen Academy, The Leona Group, and staff from sister schools such as Joy Preparatory Academy. The corporate sponsor was Home Depot, and 30 youth volunteers from the Detroit Jobs Corps were present. According to Barrett,

even some neighbors of the school came over to help because they wanted to be part of the project. "These were people who do not even have children attending the school," said Barrett.

In addition, to the playground, the KaBoom foundation has funded a "side project" for Allen Academy. The school surrounds a rather large courtyard which will be transformed into an outside classroom with benches, tables, and a teacher area. The academy expects to begin work on this project in the spring.

Congratulations to Allen Academy and The Leona Group for bringing a community together for the benefit of all!





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Please note that the Charter Schools Office  
will be closed for the semester break from  
December 23 until January 3rd.



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