

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education. -Martin Luther King, Jr.

From The Director's Desk . . .



New Beginnings, Looking Ahead

Larry Wells,
CSO Director

It seems hardly possible that we are halfway through the school year. The end of the first semester marks the beginning of the second semester and the new calendar year. Much has been accomplished during this period. The Charter Schools Office (CSO) has completed a significant number of academy 36-month reviews and reauthorizations. This provided opportunities for dialogue that centered on continuous quality improvement on various aspects of school, including facility, programs and services particular to specific academies. The reviews provided opportunity for renewed beginnings, in a variety of ways, for those children traditionally served by Ferris State University (FSU) authorized Public School Academies (PSA).

The CSO is also looking ahead to expand opportunities for children beyond those traditionally served by FSU-authorized academies. Clara B. Ford, a Strict Discipline Academy (SDA) located on the campus of Vista Maria, in Dearborn, Michigan had a successful opening and is continuing to thrive. The CSO recently conducted an application workshop and opened an application window for submission of applications for consideration for another SDA. The outcome of this process is that the CSO has accepted an application to be submitted to the FSU Board of Trustees for their consideration to authorize a new SDA.

These are exciting times for charter schools. Ferris State University Charter Schools Office staff is looking ahead to facilitate the efforts of all of our academies to provide programs and services to address the needs of diverse students in the 21st Century.



Lawrence V. Wells, Ph.D.

Board Appreciation Month

January was Board appreciation month, and it was our pleasure to have been able to provide tokens of our appreciation to all those who serve on FSU-appointed charter school Boards. There is no real financial reward for your work, but many of you stay term after term for the satisfaction of community service, helping young people, and the concept of "giving back".

Schools are complex organizations these days and Board members need to have a strong grasp of a number of issues. We know that many of you put in many hours of additional time in study and reading prior to the Board meeting. Many boards have been holding strategic planning retreats, and have attended events such as the CSO Fall Board Leadership Retreat.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank ALL of the members of Boards of Directors who serve the FSU-authorized academies. Without you, the charter movement and the progress that many of the schools are making would not be possible. We truly appreciate and respect your service! We look forward to our continued work together on behalf of the 7,250 students who attend FSU-authorized academies.

**THANK YOU
BOARD
MEMBERS
FOR YOUR
SERVICE!**

Highlights From CSO 2006-2007 Annual Report

The 2006-2007 CSO Annual Report titled, *"Celebrating a World of Diversity"*, will be released in early February. All School Leaders and Board members will receive a copy, but we wanted to share some highlights with you.

Enrollment

- Demographics of the FSU academies reveal that 72% of total enrollment are minorities, much higher than the State average of 26%.
- For the first time, enrollment at FSU academies topped the 7,000 mark, with 7,035 students enrolled.
- Ferris academies had the second highest rate of free and reduced lunch in the State with 65.3% of total students receiving the benefit.

Oversight

- The CSO gave back 32% of its total oversight revenues to its academies in the form of academic support, grants, programs, and services.
- The CSO finalized the comprehensive overhaul of its school review procedures with the implementation of the Review Rubric. All 36-month and re-authorization reviews now follow this format.

New Strict Discipline

Academy

- The FSU Board of Trustees gave approval for the authorization of the Clara B. Ford Academy in Dearborn Heights. The academy is operating on the campus of the Vista Maria Women's Rehabilitation Center.

Professional

Development

- In an effort to elevate the governance ability of charter boards, the CSO established the 1st Annual Fall Board Leadership Conference and held sessions in Lansing and Dearborn.
- The CSO sponsored and facilitated the development of charter school Professional Learning Communities. Geared toward improving instruction and assessment practices, the four sessions are tailored to curriculum directors, assessment personnel, and school leaders. Attendance grew at each session.

Scholarship Program

Established

- The CSO collaborated with the Office of Grants and Scholarships to successfully establish a scholarship program for students of FSU-authorized academies who choose to attend Ferris State University.

Academic

Performance Grants

- Hope of Detroit Academy and New City Academy were recipients of academic performance grants each totaling \$200,000 over the next three years. The two winners were identified by a competitive application process among FSU academies.

CSO Recognized by U.S. Department of Education

- The CSO was one of only two university authorizers in the country to be profiled in the U.S. Department of Education publication titled, *"Supporting Charter School Excellence Through Quality Authorizing."*

Most of all, we are proud to report that as a whole, FSU-authorized academies continue to make improvements in the quality of their instruction, and students are progressing academically. The credit for this achievement goes to each member of the staffs who work tirelessly for their students each and every day.

The report can also be reviewed in its entirety on the CSO website: www.ferris.edu/charterschools. Click on reports.



Michigan Council Of Charter School Authorizers (MCCSA) to Sponsor Spring Events

2008 Essay Contest

In celebration of National Charter School Week (May 5-9), MCCSA is sponsoring an essay contest exclusively for students attending charter public schools. Two categories of prizes are available: one for students in grades 6-8, and one for students in grades 9-12. The author of the winning essay in each category will receive a \$500 US Savings Bond, along with a matching \$500 grant to buy supplies and equipment for his or her schools. Prizes will be announced on May 8, 2008.

The deadline for submission is March 28, 2008. For more information on entry requirements and format, contact MCCSA at (517) 487-4848 or info@mccsa.us.

Charter School Board Leadership Summit 2008

MCCSA will be holding its first Board Leadership Summit at the Lansing Center on May 8, 2008. Titled, "*Blazing New Paths To Excellence*," the conference will focus on finding solutions for issues of concern to charter school leaders in particular as they relate to overall school performance and improvement. Michael Abrashoff, Former Navy Commander and successful author of the popular book, *It's Your Ship*, will deliver a keynote address.

According to MCCSA Director Stephanie Van Koevering, the Summit will focus on practical dialogue and applications that board members can take back to their boards for the improvement of their charter schools. More information will follow soon from the CSO.



School Improvement Corner

By Suzanne Finney
Academic Assessment Specialist

School Improvement: Becoming A Successful School

What is a successful school? For our purposes here let's define a successful school as one that achieves significant results in student learning. High school educators are now in the arena of "expectations" that their K-8 counterparts have been in for several years. It is a different environment from former practice because the expected results are different. The ALL in "all students will" . . . is a hurdle that each school improvement team will need to wrestle with, especially at the high school level. So how do the successful schools get significant results?

Larry Ainsworth recommends this process:

- **Identify** Essential Standards. These become the Power or Priority Standards.
- **Analyze** State Test Data.; revise selections as needed.
- **"Unwrap"** those standards to identify concepts and skills students need to know and be able to do; determine big ideas and essential questions.
- **Select** Effective Teaching Strategies to meet diverse student learning needs.
- **Teach** those "unwrapped" concepts and skills through performance assessments guided by essential questions.
- **Evaluate** student work with rubrics or scoring guides to assess proficiency.
- **Give** common assessments to see improvements within grade, department, school, and district.
- **Analyze** data and repeat instructional cycle.

Many of you are already implementing the process through your professional learning communities. Be encouraged to keep on keeping on . . . the results will come.

Until Next Time . . .



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Board Survey Coming Soon

Early in February all Board members will receive a brief survey asking about what YOU want to see at the Board Leadership Conference III. Please take a moment and fill it out and return it so we can plan the best Board Leadership Conference yet!

Save The Date!

The CSO will hold its 6th Annual Spring Briefing on **May 1, 2008** at the Doubletree Hotel in Dearborn. Invitations and more information will follow soon. Please mark your calendars!



FSU Mission

Ferris State University will be a national leader in providing opportunities for innovative teaching in career oriented, technological and professional education.