

From The Director's Desk . . .



It may seem like summer just recently started and yet all too soon the summer season is over and the end of Labor Day marks the start of a new school year. It is with this in mind the Ferris State University Charter

Schools Office (FSU/CSO) Staff welcomes all Academy Boards of Directors, Educational Services Providers, along with returning and new staff to a new school year. We trust you are well rested and have enjoyed the time with your family, loved ones and friends. We know that you are returning to this work that we love with renewed energy and vigor and are prepared for the challenges ahead.

Although the new school year always starts at a hectic pace, requiring much planning and implementation, it should also be a time of reflection and celebration. Reflection is necessary to fully understand and appreciate the success you achieved and that achieved by your students during the previous year. Success by any measure is a reason for celebration. Reflection is also a means through which you may identify the starting point for continued success during the current year as a gateway to continuous quality improvement.

The CSO has implemented a variety of changes and activities focused on improved services to FSU Authorized Academies. As you know, Rebecca Shankland has joined our staff as the Academic Assessment Specialist. She brings a wealth of experience to the position as a classroom teacher and is well versed in summative and formative assessment. Our office has developed and implemented a new formalized reauthorization application procedure, reinforced oversight procedures, and enhanced communications as a means for continuous quality improvement. We are currently scheduling visitations for reauthorizations and 36-month reviews, and have already started visiting Academies and attending Board of Directors meetings. Additionally, we have revised and updated our Mission and Vision statements. By the time you receive this newsletter we will have conducted the 2008 Fall Board Leadership conference.

We are excited by the possibilities a new school year offers and look forward to working with you to facilitate your efforts on behalf of the students you serve. Welcome back! Let's work together to make this year the best year ever.



Welcome Back !

By Ron Rizzo, Associate Director

As we gather for yet another opening of a new school year, many of us have asked the question: "Where did the summer go?" It's a fair question, it's not as if the days of summer had any less than the regular 24 hours to them, or that the calendar somehow short changed us a couple of weeks. The fact is most successful schools and educators don't get the summer off, far from it. We may get some "downtime" as compared to the rigors of the regular school year, but summer education programs, professional development requirements, workshops, etc. all seem to cut into our time. The fact is that some of this work can only be accomplished when our students are not "in session."

Yet, I have not met a school leader, teacher, secretary, or paraprofessional who is not energized and excited about the prospect of a new school year. Perhaps the start of a new academic year is like a new sports season. The new season offers us the promise and the sense that we get the chance to 'start over' once again, a new beginning if you will. The sports analogy ends there, however, because unlike athletes, educators cannot have a down season. If we do, ours is not a season of disappointment, but a year in the educational life of a child, one which they can never get back. This is an awesome responsibility, and so are the rewards and the sense of accomplishment that go with it when we do our jobs well.

Truly successful schools are those that manage to keep this sense of excitement throughout the school year, and this is no easy task. The demands of the field can sometimes drain us. What keeps us on track is the vision and the planning we have put in place during the time staff have to spend in development and in training. In these schools there is a vision which has been discussed, analyzed, and most importantly, has been adopted by all staff.

I won't wish you luck on the start of the school year, luck will play a small role in your overall success. I will wish you success and growth, and all the best from each of us at the Charter Schools Office.



Welcome Lighthouse Academy



Lighthouse Academy in its final stages of construction in late August

The CSO is pleased to welcome Lighthouse Academy to the FSU charter school family. Opening in their brand new building this fall as a Strict Discipline Academy, Lighthouse has over 120 students enrolled. The Academy is located on the grounds of Wedgwood Christian Services on 36th Street in Grand Rapids.

According to Heidi Cate, Lighthouse Academy Superintendent and Principal, the building was designed to be a non-traditional structure to accommodate the special needs of the students attending the Academy. "We really want to establish the family atmosphere rather than the large institutional school," said Cate.

Of particular interest is the fact that Lighthouse Academy is a "green building". Special emphasis on the environment and the long-term costs for the school were considered in the design phase. Lighthouse had to meet special criteria in the areas of sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and innovation and design. While the initial costs are higher in the building process, over the long-term life the Academy will save money on heating and cooling as well as help the environment through controlled water efficiency.

Conner Creek Academy East Opens New Michigan Collegiate High School/Middle School

Michigan Collegiate High School/Middle School in Warren opened the doors of its new school for the first time this fall. The 61,000 square foot structure will serve as the second campus for Conner Creek Academy East, housing both the middle and high school. While the schools share a common office, cafeteria and gym, the building has been constructed to house each grade level separately. The middle school has a current enrollment of 150 stu-

dents, and the high school currently numbers 300. CCAE Superintendent Chuck Meredith stated that "The project has been a lot of hard work but well worth the effort." Meredith related the reaction of one teacher who saw the building for the first time, "This is fabulous-this is so much more than I expected." CCAE will hold an Open House and Ribbon Cutting on September 28 from 2-5 pm.



Conner Creek Academy East's new High School/Middle School in Warren has been named Michigan Collegiate and opened this fall



CCAЕ Students and Principal Mrs. Karen Kliever at Groundbreaking in December 2007

CSO Refocuses Mission



CSO Staff Bob Hamet and Jim Ridders served as facilitators for the CSO Strategic Planning Sessions

This summer the CSO undertook strategic planning to refocus our mission, vision, and core values. We were fortunate to have the services of two of our Field Representatives, Jim Ridders and Dr. Robert Hamet to serve as facilitators. Bob and Jim have worked with Boards across the State in strategic planning as staff for the Michigan Association of School Boards.

Mission

The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office recommends authorization of Public School Academies and provides oversight focused on continuous quality improvement.

Vision

Ferris State University will be recognized as an exemplary authorizer of Public School Academies. This will be evidenced by the performance of our Public School Academies as follows:

- Meeting or exceeding State requirements including AYP
- Meeting or exceeding the standard of the Value Added student achievement section on the rubric
- Meeting or exceeding an overall Meeting Standards score on the Charter Schools Office Assessment Rubrics
- Achieving 100% compliance on all reporting requirements (AOIS)
- Meeting all contractual obligations and the requirements of law.

Core Values

- We value a collaborative and supportive working environment.
- We value providing opportunities to those who don't have many.
- We value continuous improvement.
- We value integrity and trust.



School Improvement Corner

By Rebecca Shankland
Academic Assessment Specialist

Welcome Back!

It's hard to believe summer has come and gone and classrooms everywhere are once again filled with children eager and ready to learn. As educators we must always remember the excitement the first day of school brings and strive to carry this excitement with us throughout the school year; for if we are not excited about what we are doing, how can we expect our students to experience the excitement of learning.

As we dive into the new school year we will find the MEAP quickly approaching. MEAP preparation is not to be taken lightly; however, it is important to keep our focus on doing what is best for the children. During this preparation time we need to provide our students with the necessary supports and test taking strategies, as well as encourage them to do their best. Throughout the MEAP testing period it is important for the school day and atmosphere to remain as normal as possible to provide students with the best testing environment possible. Remember, all students can and will succeed when given the opportunity!

MEAP Schedule October 2008				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	14 Math	15	16 ELA Part 1	17
20 Make-up Math	21 ELA Part 2	22 Make-up ELA Part 1	23 Science or Social Studies	24
27 Make-up ELA Part 2	28 Make-up Science or Social Studies	29 Make-up any subject, as needed	30 Make-up any subject, as needed but NO TESTING AFTER TODAY!	31



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AOIS Upgrades

Several upgrades to AOIS include:

- A new Document Submission Tool to electronically submit required documents directly through AOIS. The FSU-CSO will be providing a scanner to those schools who currently do not have one. Many of you are already using this. All schools will be required to submit their documents electronically by December 31, 2008.
- A new look to the AOIS pages for ease of use, quick use of AOIS reports, and at-a-glance compliance status (coming this fall)
- An AOIS resource guide on the FSU-CSO website, with links to required documents, applicable laws, instructions, etc. (coming this fall)

Compliance % Requirement for 2008-2009

As a reminder, the minimum compliance percentage for 2008-2009 in order to receive Shining Star Dollars is **94%**.

Shining Star Celebration

Friday, October 3, 2008, Dearborn Inn, Dearborn, MI Invitations have been mailed.

Please RSVP by September 24, 2008

FSU Mission

Ferris State University prepares students for successful careers, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning. Through its many partnerships and its career-oriented,