

From The Director's Desk . . .



Larry Wells,
CSO Director

There are many things that typify a successful school program. Assessment, achievement, compliance and governance are among these things. Assessment provides data necessary to drive curriculum and instructional decision-making which are essential to facilitate student achievement. As educators, student achievement is our "reason to be." It is why we are what we are and why we do what we do. It also enables charter schools to meet the contractual requirements laid out by their authorizers. Governance sets the operational parameters within which school personnel must operate.

Ferris State University Charter Schools Office (FSU/CSO) provides no cost opportunities for academies chartered by the FSU Board of Trustees to maximize the benefit of these components. The majority of FSU/CSO charter schools have embraced these opportunities with enthusiasm. Your involvement in Scrantron Achievement and Performance Series assessment programs, AOIS program implementation, "Shining Star Awards Celebration" participation, and the increase in registration for our Fall Board Leadership conference is reassuring. These are exciting times for the charter school movement. The demonstrated dedication and involvement of many of the FSU chartered academy's board members, building leaders, instructional staff, support staff along with parental commitment fuels the excitement within the FSU Charter School Community. Taken as a whole, it is safe to predict that through the sustained momentum of our efforts the future is bright for the children.



Ferris Charter Schools Office Highlighted in U.S. Department of Education Publication



It is our pleasure to announce that the FSU Charter Schools Office has been highlighted in a recent U.S. Department of Education publication on charter school authorizing. Titled *Supporting Charter School Excellence*

Though Quality Authorizing: Innovations In Education, the document highlights eight authorizers from around the county and compares their practices, policies, and procedures.

Two years ago, the Department of Education sent an e-mail requesting authorizers to nominate those offices they felt met the criteria. Then CSO Director Jimmie Rodgers filled out an application. "When I read the specifications required for nomination, it was clear to me that the FSU CSO easily qualified so I replied with the requested information", said Rodgers.

In her comments in the forward of the publication, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings stated that "*The No Child Left Behind Act* recognizes the value and vitality of charter schools, and their important role in helping us reach our goal of every child reading and doing math at grade level by 2014."

"The CSO recognizes that our success is directly related to the success of the academies the university authorizes" stated Associate Director Ronald Rizzo. "Without the dedication of all the people who work daily with the students who attend these schools, we would not have received this honor."

Shining Star Celebration 2007

The Charter Schools Office was pleased to host the 6th Annual Shining Star Celebration held October 5 at the Romulus Crowne Plaza Hotel. Over 150 Board members, school leaders, Educational Service Providers, and guests of FSU attended the event.

Each year, the CSO honors those academies who maintain a high level of compliance percentage. Schools have an opportunity to earn up to \$5,000 for maintaining perfect compliance. This year, only schools with a percentage of 90% or higher were awarded checks and these schools received a percentage of the \$5,000 award. Awardees this year were:

100% Compliance

Bridge Academy, Conner Creek Academy East, Creative Technologies Academy, George Crockett Academy, Hope of Detroit

Academy, Huron Academy, and Voyager Academy

99-95% Compliance

Allen Academy, Francis Reh Academy, Marshall Academy, New Bedford Academy, New City Academy, Pierre Toussaint Academy

94-90% Compliance

Joy Preparatory Academy, Northridge Academy

In addition, the CSO awarded the first recipient of the **Esther Simpson Award of Excellence to George Crockett Academy** with the award's namesake making the presentation.

Thanks to all who attended the event. Your attendance made it a special evening. We look forward to seeing you next year!



Tragedy Strikes Allen Academy

On October 4th two sisters who attend Allen Academy in Detroit were tragically struck by an SUV as they were crossing the street to board a bus for school. Faith Adams died as a result of her injuries and her sister Lillie was hospitalized in serious condition. Events such as this remind us all of how precious life is and how quickly events can change many lives. Our sincere condolences go out to the Adams-Clemmon family. A special fund has been set up for the family and contributions may be sent to:

The Faith Adams-Clemmon Fund
 Detroit Commerce Bank
 645 Griswald
 Detroit, Michigan 48226

Charter Schools Scholarships Available

The CSO is pleased to announce that scholarships are available for graduating seniors from FSU-authorized academies. The CSO Scholarship Fund is available for any senior planning to attend Ferris State University in fall, 2008. There are a few basic requirements of the scholarship:

1. Awards will be made to full-time undergraduate students who graduate from FSU authorized academies
2. A minimum of 2.5 GPA at the time of application is required
3. Preference shall be given those students who demonstrate financial need as determined by the Office of Financial Aid

Academies with high schools will receive more information soon on the program!



School Improvement Corner

By Suzanne Finney
 Academic Assessment Specialist

Assessment – Powerful Tool or Weapon?

When I think of the phrase “Assessment *for* Learning” the name Rick Stiggins comes to mind closely followed by the descriptor *passionate*. Why oh why would anyone be *passionate* about assessment? Perhaps it is because of its great power to either motivate a student toward more learning or destroy a student’s hope of learning. This great power has often been used as a weapon to defend our work as educators and in the process has wounded many a student on their learning journey, some of whom have never recovered from their wounds. I cringe remembering the times that I resorted to using assessment as a means of self-defense.

So how do we shift gears and look at assessment as a means of not only informing our instruction, but also motivating our students to further effort in their learning? Our first step is to recognize that each student is the primary user of each assessment, in addition to

those adults who use assessment to inform instruction and determine accountability.

For the student to be the center of the learning process they need to have learning goals in terms that they understand; ongoing descriptive feedback with specific insights on how to improve; adjusted instruction based on the results of each assessment; opportunities to communicate with teachers and their families around their achievement status; and an understanding of how the achievement targets will relate to life now and after their K-12 education is complete. (Chappuis, S., Stiggins, R.J., Arter, J., & Chappuis, J. (2005). *Assessment FOR Learning, an Action Guide for School Leaders*, 2nd ed. Portland, OR: Educational Testing Service, 34).

I can only imagine the dynamic impact for learning when we refocus our efforts to ensure that each student we serve is at the center of the assessment process. It rekindles my passion for assessment!

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Charter Schools Spelling Bee Scheduled

The Charter Schools Spelling Bee will be held on February 28, 2008 at Trillium Academy in Taylor. The bee is presented and sponsored by The Romine Group.

The schedule is as follows:

8:30 Registration/Check-In
9:00-11:30 3rd-5th Grade Division
Awards
11:30-1:00 Lunch
1:00-3:00 6th-8th Division
Awards



Does your school have something special to share with other academies? We want to hear from you! Please forward articles and pictures for inclusion in the CSO newsletter to

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Mark your calendars now and look for more information to follow.

FSU Mission

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