

From The Director's Desk . . .



We are pleased to welcome you back from summer vacation to another school year. We know you took the time to connect with friends and family. As a result of these connections, we hope you have returned to this work we all love with renewed vigor and vitality, ready to meet the challenges that may lie ahead.

The Charter Schools Office (CSO) has already initiated a number of academy visitations along with attending board of directors meetings. Ron Rizzo and I have observed an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation, characterized by a flurry of curricular planning, facility preparation, and staff development organizational activities. All of these things indicate your preparedness to address the challenges associated with continuous quality improvement.

The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office staff is excited about assisting you in this important endeavor. The Scantron Achievement and Performance workshops were successfully conducted by Rebecca Shankland. Mindy Britton is finalizing essential details for the October 2, 2009 Shining Star Celebration with its focus on compliance. Plans are already in the works to transition the Shining Star Celebration for compliance to the Ferris State University Recognition Celebration focusing on student achievement and compliance. Final details are also being addressed for the October 23-24, 2009 FSU Board Leadership Conference. CSO field representatives are visiting academies and attending academy board of directors meetings to provide essential support.

On behalf of the children you serve, we look forward to working with you throughout the new school year.

Again, welcome back.



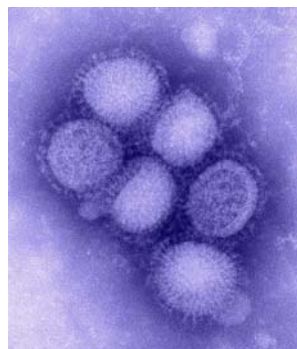
Lawrence V. Wells, Ph.D.
Director

Michigan Department of Community Health Releases New Swine Flu Protocols

In late summer, State Superintendent Michael Flanagan and Janet Olszewski, Director of the Michigan Department of Community Health, released guidance for schools regarding the handling of cases of the swine flu virus (H1N1). Key documents for reporting cases as well as assistance with decision making can be found on the following website:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/. In order to track cases of flu, all schools are being asked to report closures to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) via the web at: www.cdc.gov/FluSchoolsDismissal.

We encourage all school leaders to visit these sites.



New Year-New Opportunities!

The new school year is now in full swing and brings with it new beginnings, promises, and opportunities for all. School staff, regardless of responsibilities, have spent significant time this summer preparing for the reopening of school. Likewise, Boards of Directors have spent time in retreats this summer insuring a productive year for all.

It is appropriate at this time of year to revisit the “**Three R’s**”. No, we’re not talking about readin’, ritin’, and rithmatic. While these subjects are, of course, VERY important, we are talking about something more basic, yet essential to student success: *Relationships, Rigor, and Relevance*.

Relationships. All of us can remember and picture at least one teacher (more if we were lucky) that seemed to take a special interest in us and in their own special way, encouraged us. As a result, we probably still remember much of the subject matter in their classes, or at least the lessons (academic and life) that they taught us. Outstanding school personnel from all aspects of school service will once again concentrate on making those connections.

Rigor. It has been said that “No one ever rose to low expectations”. Outstanding schools do not “hope” to have a great year—they expect it and plan for it. These expectations must be organization-wide for every person who enters the school: learner, parent, staff member, and Board member alike.

Relevance. Charter schools are not just an alternative to the traditional school, they must offer a product that parents and students cannot get elsewhere. The teaching in each school must prepare students not only for the next stage of their education, but for productive citizenship as well.

We thank you in advance for your efforts this year!

Teachers and Administrators Attend "School" At Ferris This Summer

On August 4 and 5th, the CSO held its annual Scantron Performance Series workshop at FLITE on the FSU campus. Over 50 school leaders, curriculum directors, and technology instructors were present to work on their school's reports and receive briefings on new features of the system. Participants had hands-on experience as they learned about new updates to the program, and an advanced Scantron Achievement Series session was held on the 5th for academies offering the companion system at their school.

The Scantron Performance Series is a computer-adaptive diagnostic testing program the CSO offers to each of its 18 academies free of charge. The Achievement Series is a curriculum tool that allows teachers to customize their content for groups and individual students.

The CSO wishes to take this opportunity to thank all of the school staff who came to the workshop and for their hard work during the sessions.



Gearing Up for Fall Events

The CSO is in full-swing gearing up for the annual big events in the fall. Invitations to both events will be arriving shortly, but here's a sneak peak of activities:

Shining Star Celebration, October 2, Dearborn Inn. This year marks the 8th annual event recognizing the compliance efforts of all FSU-authorized academies. This will be the last Shining Star event in its current form, next year's event will be called the **Ferris State University Charter School Recognition Celebration** and besides compliance, will focus heavily on student achievement accomplishments.

Fall Board Leadership Conference, October 23-24, DoubleTree Hotel, Dearborn.

This is the 4th annual conference, and among several offerings will feature Marci-Marci Cornell-Feist, nationally recognized expert on charter school governance. More information to follow.

Welcome New Academy Board Members

It is our pleasure to introduce and welcome the following individuals who are either re-appointees or new Board members who have been appointed to various academy boards by the Ferris State University Board of Trustees.

Bridge Academy
Ghassan Shihad

Creative Technologies Academy
Terry King
Christine Mabie

Francis Reh Public School Academy
Stanley Krajkowski

New City Academy
Latisha Heath-Carter

Northridge Academy
James Shelley

Pierre Toussaint Academy
Alicia Black

Ferris Facts Contest

This fall marks the 125th Anniversary (the Quasiquicentennial) of the founding of Ferris State University by Woodbridge and Helen Ferris. The first class (pictured below) in September 1884 consisted of 15 students.

The FSU community will be celebrating this milestone anniversary all year long, and the CSO invites you to participate. Each version of the newsletter will feature the **Ferris Facts Contest**. Participation in the contest is easy and best of all, there are prizes involved!

- Each issue of the 2009-2010 newsletter will pose a question regarding the founding of Ferris State University. The answer to the question is avail-

able on the Ferris website: www.ferris.edu. Click on the 125th Anniversary button. The answer is relatively easy to find.

- The first three people to respond to the question correctly will win a beautiful FSU "hoodie" style sweatshirt in their size. All responses should be sent to:
rizzor@ferris.edu.
- Winners will be contacted via e-mail and names published in the next issue of the newsletter.
- FSU employees and their families are not eligible for the contest.

Here is this issue's question:

Ferris State University had a different name when founded in 1884. What was the name?



The Top Ten Indicators of A GREAT Academy

Reprint from a Guest Article by Lee Robinson



Lee Robinson served as a CSO Field Representative from 2002 to 2007, and now serves as Director of Public School Academy Operations for Lake Superior State University. We have reprinted Lee's article from October 2005 because it perfectly captures the challenges we all face in the public education sector, and it seemed appropriate at the beginning of the school year to reiterate what we should be about:

As I enter my 35th year working in public education, I thought it might be interesting to share with you my personal opinion of the **TOP TEN INDICATORS OF A GREAT ACADEMY.**

#10 In a GREAT Academy, "The Business of the Business" is always centered on children, curriculum, instruction and achievement. In a GREAT Academy, the school "buzz" is consistently about teaching and learning.

#9 In a GREAT Academy, the Board of Directors and all employees understand the

importance of modeling. In a GREAT academy, the board and staff model the 3 P's: Professionalism, Preparedness, and Problem Solving.

#8 In a GREAT Academy, assessment and research drive teaching and re-teaching. In a GREAT Academy, staff development is a very high priority.

#7 In a GREAT Academy, the board and staff constantly identify gaps in achievement, facilities, curriculum, and instruction. In a GREAT Academy, the board and staff have identified where they are and where they want to be. (Conducted a "gap analysis" and have identified strategies).

#6 In a GREAT Academy, the School Improvement Plan is a "living," useful document that is part of the academy's Strategic Plan. In a GREAT Academy, the board and staff know where they are going, and they have created a "roadmap" to get there.

#5 In a GREAT Academy, the facility is safe, clean, bright, and conducive to teaching and learning. In a GREAT Academy, the board and staff do not accept inadequate facilities.

#4 In a GREAT Academy, the board of directors has created and adopted district wide policies. In a GREAT Academy, administrators create, publish, and use administrative guidelines and procedures.

#3 In a GREAT Academy, the board of directors and staff embrace accountability. In addition, every staff member, including the educational service provider, is evaluated on a regular basis.

#2 In a GREAT Academy, the board and staff do not make, nor accept, excuses. In a GREAT Academy, the board and staff identify gaps (versus making an excuse) and use a district-wide problem solving model to close the identified gaps.

And, the #1 Indicator of A GREAT Academy: All staff and the board understand that the Academy exists for the children. In a GREAT Academy, the board and staff make what is best for children the #1 priority—without exception.



By: Rebecca Shankland
Academic/Assessment Specialist

School Improvement Corner

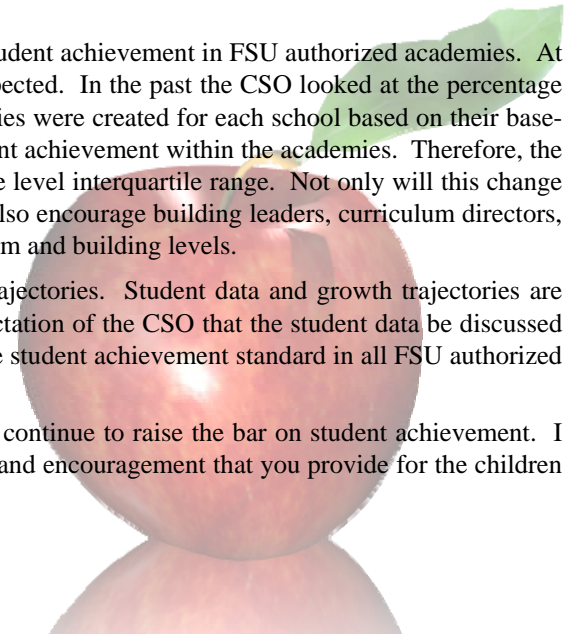
It's hard to believe that schools are already bustling with classrooms full of children eager to learn and teachers re-energized and ready to take on the many challenges of a new school year! As we move into a new school year, the Charter Schools Office (CSO) is also moving forward with an emphasis on student achievement.

Over the summer the CSO began rethinking the way we look at and evaluate student achievement in FSU authorized academies. At this time I would like to briefly discuss the changes we have made and what can be expected. In the past the CSO looked at the percentage of students making one year gain in one year's time and individualized growth trajectories were created for each school based on their baseline data. Unfortunately, this method did not always paint a clear picture of actual student achievement within the academies. Therefore, the CSO will now be looking at the percentage of students achieving within/above the grade level interquartile range. Not only will this change allow us to more effectively evaluate student achievement in the academies, but it will also encourage building leaders, curriculum directors, and teachers alike to move toward data-driven instructional planning at both the classroom and building levels.

Currently the CSO is in the process of creating new individualized growth trajectories. Student data and growth trajectories are being delivered to academy boards by Dr. Wells and Mr. Rizzo this fall. It is the expectation of the CSO that the student data be discussed and shared with staff so that collaborative efforts can be made to raise awareness and the student achievement standard in all FSU authorized academies.

The CSO looks forward to working with all FSU authorized academies as we continue to raise the bar on student achievement. I wish everyone a great start to a great year and thank you for your never ending support and encouragement that you provide for the children we serve.

Educationally yours,
Rebecca Shankland





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CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

Upcoming Events

- **Shining Star Celebration**, October 2, 2009 at the Dearborn Inn. Invitations have been mailed. Please RSVP no later than September 23.
- **Board Leadership Conference**, October 23-24. Special guest and Keynote Speaker: Marci Cornell-Feist. Invitations to be mailed soon.

FSU Mission

Ferris State University prepares students for successful careers, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning. Through its many partnerships and its career-oriented, broad based education, Ferris serves our rapidly changing global economy and society.

CSO Mission

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