

Cooperative Connection

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Southeast Service Cooperative

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2009 Young Author Young Artist Conference – Spark Your Creative Fire

by Kari Kubicek

Each spring, over 800 students in grades 4-6 from public and private schools across southeast Minnesota descend on the Rochester Community and Technical College campus for an exciting opportunity to learn and work with professional authors, poets, playwrights, composers, lyricists, illustrators, novelists, journalists, book



crafters, and others

Southeast Service Cooperative's Young Authors Young Artists

Conference, promotes student engagement in the areas of written and visual communication, and is often an out of classroom experience that students remember for an entire lifetime. The upcoming conference is scheduled for May 20 and May 21.



Session topics range from character development to extreme sport writing to book arts to watercolor artwork to storytelling. Presenters this year are a mix of individuals who have presented at the conference in the past and individuals who are brand new to the *Young Author Young Artist Conference* continued on page 9

Kasson-Mantorville 8th grader is the Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Champion

by Kirsten Kuehl

The Spelling Bee competitions in southeast Minnesota are sponsored and coordinated by the Southeast Service Cooperative and co sponsored by McNeilus Steel, Inc. and KM Telecom. Laura Galbus, an 8th grader from Kasson Mantorville Public Schools was declared the champion after correctly spelling *ensconce*.



Laura and her first place trophy.

Laura advances to the 82nd annual Scripps National Spelling Bee on May 26-28, 2009. She won an all expense paid trip (for herself and one adult) to Washington, DC (donated by Southeast Service Cooperative, McNeilus Steel, Inc. and KM Telecom). She also

received a first place trophy, Webster's Third New International Dictionary (provided by Scripps National Spelling Bee) and a \$100 Series EE Savings Bond (donated by Jay Sugarman, Chairman

Spelling Bee champ continued on page 10

Tiered Networks – another tool in promoting healthcare consumerism

by Bill Colopoulos



Tiered networks provide consumers with important tools for becoming wiser, more cost and quality conscious healthcare purchasers. Organizations such as Education Minnesota promote tiered networks (such as the PEIP plans) as an alternative to account based healthcare consumer programs such as VEBA funded HRAs and HSAs.

In reality, tiered network programs can supplement these plans with practical ways for consumers to select the most cost and quality efficient providers. Thus, tiered networks provide a basis for enhancing consumer directed health plans. The two concepts are, therefore, not exclusive, but inclusive. The best results are obtained when both concepts are applied.

What are tiered networks?

Tiered provider networks take the concept of network based care a step further, splitting in network providers into cost tiers and providing tiers of premium or benefit incentives for using one tier vs. another. The highest cost tier equates to the typical out of network provider benefit cost schedule. The introduction of tiered provider networks is intended to sensitize employees to the real cost of health care beyond the simpler question of whether or not a provider is in network.

Conceptually similar to tiered pharmacy benefits, tiered provider networks allow patients to make trade offs between provider choice and costs. Tiered networks can lower overall health plan costs by steering patients to lower cost providers, while encouraging hospitals and physicians to improve their efficiency or accept discounted payment rates in exchange for preferred tier placement.

Pros and Cons

The most effective tiered network model uses benefit incentives to drive utilization to its lower cost tiers. This can create competition among providers to lower their fees. Charging patients lower deductibles and co pays can be an effective way to motivate employees to use them.

Tiered networks can produce a lower overall cost effect than the typical, more expansive provider network. Early adopters of tiered network programs saw significant reductions in healthcare trend as their employee utilization shifted to lower cost providers over time.

Tiered networks also provide an important mechanism for price transparency that enhances the practicality of account based consumer directed health plans, such as VEBA and HSA programs. Cost and quality data, when provided by tier, gives consumers the tools they need to be able to shop for their healthcare according to their cost and quality preferences.

However, it is difficult and costly to measure the cost and efficiency of hospital and physician services. It is also difficult to accurately place and then manage them within the proper tier class, both from a procedural and

administrative perspective. Providers can vary widely based on costs, quality and accessibility of care

There is also concern that tiered provider networks could limit lower income patients access to high quality but costly providers. Could patients be herded into different classes of providers based on affordability driven by benefit incentives? Will higher cost tier network deductibles come to be regarded as surcharges?

If the model is accepted by the general population, will tiered networks produce a net result that justifies their extra administrative costs and benefit incentive payments? After higher benefits are paid to entice patients to use lower cost tier providers, will a net cost reduction be produced to cover their costs and produce savings? As the history of tiered network programs has shown, concessions have invariably been made that question such outcomes.

Tiered network designs have proven difficult to maintain over time in the face of market pressure for broad and unrestricted provider choice. Union negotiated plans, such as the State Employees Group Insurance Plan (SEGIP) forced the state to make accommodations for plan participants who lived outside the range of lower cost tier providers

The accommodations they made were considerable: pay the same higher benefit incentives for high cost providers where employees do not have access to lower cost providers. The unions negotiated the pass through of benefit incentives to the use of higher cost tier providers when referred by a lower cost tier provider.

Tiered Networks continued on page 3

Tiered Networks continued from page 2

Since the benefit incentives paid for lower tier utilization are cost justified by lower fees charged by the lower tier providers, paying such incentives when they are not cost justified leads to higher future premiums.

SEGIP's experience shows that larger, less restricted networks are still vastly more popular with patients. Thus, tiered networks are under enormous pressure to look and act like standard, more expansive networks. Tiered savings are expected to be produced by a more benign, voluntary (and coincidental) use of lower tier providers.

Tiered provider networks can also produce interesting, but different reactions among providers when they negotiate their network fees:

1. Higher cost providers who fear they may lose business to lower cost providers may want to qualify as lower cost providers

and will lower their fees. Most tiered network plans rely heavily on this reaction among higher cost providers.

2. Other providers may react in the opposite way. They may view being in the higher cost tier as an indication that they are a high quality provider and may use that to differentiate themselves from lower cost providers. In some cases providers are able to link the perception of high quality equating to higher costs. Thus, many consumers will not be dissuaded by higher out of pocket costs and will actively seek out the higher cost providers

In southeast Minnesota, it is not surprising that one of our larger, most popular healthcare providers is firmly ensconced in the latter category. Most of the accommodations made by the unions for the employees in the SEGIP program were motivated by this fact. Thus, the cost model for a tiered

network program in southeastern Minnesota is seriously compromised

Essentially, in far too many cases, low cost tier benefits are being paid, even when high cost tier healthcare costs are being incurred.

The only way tiered network plans can be effective is if they truly provide consumers with incentives to make choices based on cost and quality and that consumers will make choices on that basis. To the extent tiered networks make accommodations or simply enable patients to seek out higher cost care, the potential savings effects of the tiered network will not be realized.

For more information, please contact Bill Colopoulos at bcolopoulos@ssc.coop.

For more on health insurance news, see page 4.

Rochester students honored at Future City Competition

by Nicole LaChapelle

Students from Rochester's St. Francis of Assisi School were delighted when they won the Best Industrial Engineering and Student Choice awards at the Future City Minnesota Regional Competition. Six of teacher Dennis Schreiber's middle school students traveled to the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul on January 24 for the Competition.

The mission of the National Engineers Week Future City Competition is to provide a fun and exciting educational engineering program for seventh and eighth grade students that combines a stimulating engineering challenge with a "hands on" application to present their vision of a city of the future.

Students are responsible for not only designing and then building a model of their city, which they named *Tersus Oceania*, but also for coming up with ideas on how their city would actually be run if it were built. Focusing on green theme, the team came up with many clever ideas including steam showers, composting toilets and power that comes from waves the floating city sits upon.

Teacher Dennis Schrieber likes the Future city Competition as it teaches kids what they need to know to compete with countries like China and India. Kids also learn how to work well as a team, and use many different ways of thinking. Schrieber also likes the fact that it encourages girls to get involved with math and science, which can sometimes be a challenge.



The winning future city pictured with its designers and builders.

The team was very dedicated to *Tersus Oceania*, spending many hours in an unfinished basement creating it. They even spent snow days toiling away on their project.

The best part of the Future City competition, said Schrieber, who has been at St. Francis of Assisi since 1976, is that, Students are at the center of their learning.

Two SSC Health Pool School Districts health insurance group score savings

Service Cooperative pool produces \$80,000 bonus

One of the best kept secrets in the turbulent health insurance market is the good job Minnesota's Service Cooperatives are doing managing public employee health insurance pools for the 150,000 Minnesotans who presently depend upon them to help stabilize insurance costs.

Southeast Service Cooperative recently announced a total claims margin return of over \$85,000 to two participating districts in its school health insurance pool—Stewartville and Mabel Canton Public Schools. Suzanne Riley, SSC Executive Director, said, "These savings resulted specifically from the efforts of the School Districts and their employees. Both groups have instituted practical consumer driven plan design. Stewartville has also developed a worksite wellness that is led by a committee of employees. The

We use diverse strategies to help improve and maintain good health and well being of our employees, which is really what our healthcare efforts are all about,

Dr. David Thompson
Stewartville Superintendent

employees are active in personal fitness and healthcare programs.

We use diverse strategies to help improve and maintain good health and well being of our employees, which is really what our healthcare efforts are all about," said Stewartville Superintendent, Dr. David Thompson.

Superintendent Marcia Love added, "It's nice to be able to see a positive return on our efforts at a time when money is so tight for us all."

The groups in the Southeast Service Cooperative Health Insurance Pools (one for schools and another for local government groups) are able to take advantage of the Minnesota Service Cooperatives' negotiating power with large numbers and self-funded pooling techniques. In recent years, the southeast Minnesota school and government groups have experienced below market trend increases, administrative fees that are less than half of other programs and, in some cases, partial premium refunds.

It's nice to be able to see a positive return on our efforts at a time when money is so tight for us all.

Marcia Love
Mabel Canton Superintendent

Bill Colopoulos, SSC's health benefits director, said, "We are gratified to see such a good result rewarding local group efforts. The advantage of our self-funded pool means that savings belong to the member managed pool—not the insurance company—and we can pass this savings back to our groups."

Unlike vague promises of savings made by proponents of other pool designs, Minnesota's Service Cooperatives are actually running statewide pools successfully and producing real savings results for their participating members.

For more information about the Service Cooperative pool plans contact Bill Colopoulos, (507) 281-6690, bcolopoulos@ssc.coop. **For more on health insurance news, see page 2.**

SSC Health Pool members take advantage of health promotion program funding

by Kari Kubicek

Several SSC health pool member organizations have qualified for and benefitted from health promotion program funding available through SSC's Employee Health Support Program. Currently, nine organizations have received funding for a total amount of \$9,598.40.

Funding proposals have included various health promotion activities including a Healthy Eating Campaign designed to promote healthy snack choices, a Get Moving exercise campaign that encourages at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day, a flu shot clinic, a health fair offering biometric testing and health assessment, a stress reduction workshop, a walking challenge, a Get

Me Through the Holidays program, a mental health speaker, CPR training, and more!

SSC continues to offer this funding to assist its health pool members in their health promotion programming through the Employee Health Support

Health promotion program funding continued on page 6

St. Francis of Assisi staff named distinguished teacher of the year



Monica Steinmetz, a sixth grade teacher at St. Francis of Assisi School in Rochester has been named a Distinguished Teacher of the Year by the National Catholic Educational Association.

She will receive the Sister Miriam Joseph Farrell Distinguished Teacher Award March 25 at the NCEA

convention in Indianapolis. NCEA honors 12 teachers across the country each year. Steinmetz received the award for Region VIII. She was selected for her commitment, passion and demonstrated success at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School.

Areas considered in her selection involved volunteerism, integration of technology, involvement in professional activities and committees, as well as an understanding of the ministry of a teacher in a Catholic School.

Dave Dody, Director of the Rochester Catholic Schools praised Steinmetz

for her accomplishment. I am extremely proud to have one of our Rochester Catholic Schools teachers honored in this way. Mrs. Steinmetz is a truly extraordinary teacher, Dody said. What makes RCS such an exciting school system is that we have quite a number of Teachers of the Year caliber educators in the ranks, and many teachers (who are) putting forth great efforts to make the jump from very good teachers to exceptional ones! Dody and Barb Plenge, principal of St. Francis of Assisi School, will travel with Steinmetz to see her receive the award.

Q Comp Info Forum Tuesday April 7 at 9:30 AM at SSC

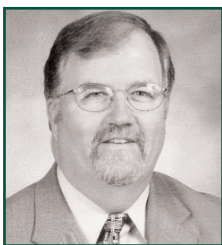
Quality Compensation (Q Comp) for Teachers

Southeast Service Cooperative is hosting an information forum and invites participation by superintendents, principals, board members, collective bargaining representatives, and other individuals in your district who might consider with you the development of a Q Comp program for your school district.

The Q Comp program allows local school districts and charter school to design a plan based on five components. Pat King, MDE's Director of School Improvement Division, will review the five components, focusing on integrated professional development to increase student learning and teacher quality. A panel of staff from implementing districts will be on hand to talk about implementation answer your specific questions regarding the Q Comp program.

The information forum is scheduled for Tuesday, April 7 from 9:30 11:30 AM at the Southeast Service Cooperative. There is no fee to participate, but to help us plan seating, refreshments, and materials preparation, please **RSVP by Thursday, April 2** to Dick Riley at register@ssc.coop and provide the names of the people who will be attending with you.

Triton's Bob Kelly wins prestigious award from his peers



Superintendent of Triton Schools, Bob Kelly, has been awarded the MASA Region 1 Administrator of Excellence award. In his ninth year of serving as Triton's superintendent, Kelly stated he was surprised and

speechless when MASA committee members called him to give him the good news that he had won.

Kelly, who has been in education for 34 years, is the father of three, and grandfather of two. He and his wife are recent empty nesters. In his free time Kelly enjoys high school and college sports, reading, and golfing. He shared, It is always an honor to be recognized by your colleagues, it makes any award even more special.

The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) established the Administrator of Excellence award for its members in February, 1985. Its purpose is to honor an administrator yearly from each of the nine MASA regions. The person selected is representative of the leadership excellence found in MASA members, exhibits a willingness to risk, possesses strong communications skills, is a progressive change agent, and has high expectations for self and others.

Health promotion programming for all generations

by Kari Kubicek



Through its Employee Health Promotion Support program, SSC hosted a Generations at Work and Wellness Programming forum in mid February. The forum provided attendees the opportunity to learn about Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota's (BCBSM's) Whole Person Health Support Program and SSC's Employee Health Promotion Support program. Following a presentation on the four different generations in today's workforce by Dawn Baker, Director of Learning and Development at Medica, the participants worked together to brainstorm different health promotion strategies to appeal to each generation.

Wayne Woxland, Senior Account Manager of BCBSM, presented the Whole Person Health Support Program (WPHS) to the group, outlining the services and opportunities available through this program including an online health assessment, access to health and nurse guides, stop smoking support, fitness discounts, preventive health strategy tools and more.

SSC staff members Kari Kubicek and Nicole LaChapelle provided information related to SSC's Employee Health Promotion Support Program, demonstrated where to find the BCBSM online health assessment, provided a brief overview of it and answered questions posed by members of the group concerning the SSC's various health promotion services.

Baker summarized the different traits, beliefs, work ethics, values and views toward authority, work hierarchy and education, etc. of each of the four generations in the workplace. These generations include Traditionalists

(born between 1900-1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964), Generations Xers (born between 1965-1980) and the Millennials (born between 1981-2000).

Baker went over other factors pertaining to the different generational views towards health and wellness and the history of society's views towards health and fitness and how they have changed.

General comments about the session described the discussion related to health issues in the different generations as helpful and that learning the viewpoints of the different generations at work was beneficial.

SSC plans to continue hosting forums related to health promotion and wellness programming. If you have suggestions for topics or issues that you would like to see addressed, please contact Kari Kubicek, kkubicek@ssc.coop or Nicole LaChapelle, nlachapelle@ssc.coop.

Health promotion program funding continued from page 4

Program. Although the funding is not available to non pool members, this program provides numerous health promotion services and opportunities to all SSC member organizations. This program is free to pool members and offered to non pool members for an annual fee of \$400.

SSC is currently offering this funding through June 30, 2009. Funding proposals for the remainder of the funding year must be submitted by March 31, 2009.

There are several other services available through the Employee Health Support Program including the following:

- Local Employee Health Promotion Coordination Training
- Health Fair Consulting
- Biometric Testing
- Incentive Items at cost
- Two to three topical forums
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota's Whole Person Support Program *

**items followed by an asterisk are services either not available to Non Pool members or available at an additional cost.*

The funding available to pool members may be used for costs to start a local Employee Wellness Committee, stipends for committee members (up to 50% of funds), policy development, incentives and prizes,



materials, biometric testing supplies, stipends and substitute costs for participants in wellness training and forums, presenters, and other costs directly related to providing a healthy working environment and health promotion for employees.

Visit www.ssc.coop or contact SSC staff member Kari Kubicek or Nicole LaChapelle (contact information listed above) to obtain the application for health promotion program funding.

Over 325 students test their knowledge at Knowledge Bowl Sub-Regionals

by Kirsten Kuehl

Fifty six teams from 20 school districts in southeast Minnesota vied for trophies and top honors on January 28 and 29 at the Southeast Service Cooperative. The all day events culminated with the top twelve teams in each tier reaching Regionals.

The Minnesota Service Cooperative Knowledge Bowl competitions are interdisciplinary academic contests for students. The Junior High Knowledge Bowl is for students in grades 7-9. During the contest, teams of students compete in written and oral rounds by answering questions related to all areas of learning, typical of secondary educational programs. Questions test students recall, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. Teams consist of six students (6 competing in the written round and 5 competing in four oral rounds).

Teams from the following districts participated in the 2008-09 Knowledge Bowl season: Caledonia, Chatfield, Dover Eyota, Fillmore Central, Glenville Emmons, Goodhue, Grand Meadow, Houston, Kasson Mantorville, Kenyon Wanamingo, Kingsland, Lanesboro, Mabel Canton, Pine Island, Plainview Elgin Millville, Red Wing, Rushford Peterson, Southland, Spring Grove and Winona.



The following teams placed on top at Regionals.

Tier A



1st Chatfield 1



2nd Houston 2



3rd Grand Meadow



4th Houston 1



5th Lanesboro 1

Tier AA



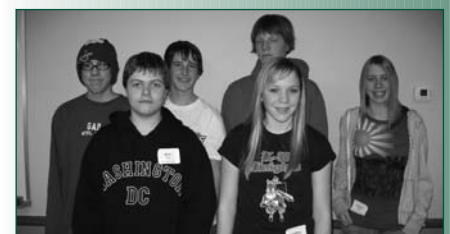
1st Pine Island 1



2nd Dover Eyota 3



3rd Red Wing 2



4th Kenyon Wanamingo White



5th Winona 1

MNTAAB: More important than ever

by DeeDee Kahring

Governor Tim Pawlenty's most recent budget plan proposes an aid shift for Minnesota School Districts. This shift in aid will mean that school districts will have less monthly cash coming in to pay bills and fund payroll. A bill has also been introduced to mandate that school districts implement shared services and pool their purchasing power. The Minnesota Tax and Aid Anticipation Borrowing (MNTAAB) cash flow borrowing pool provides school districts with a proven method for cash flow borrowing to meet these two proposed requirements.

In 1993 the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA), in cooperation with the regional service cooperatives, created the MNTAAB statewide cash flow borrowing pool. The idea was to provide a cost effective and administrative friendly alternative to stand alone cash flow borrowing. The program was designed to create economies of scale for school districts and result in lower net borrowing costs for the vast majority of districts. For over 15 years, MNTAAB has been successful in this regard by keeping upfront costs reasonable and by selling competitively in the bond market with a large, pooled issue resulting in low interest rates.

MSBA and the Service Cooperatives are proud of their sponsorship of MNTAAB, which clearly has benefited Minnesota school districts. The pool has demonstrated over time that most school districts have been able to borrow less to achieve their net cash flow target, pay lower interest costs on the debt, realize a lower net cost per day for cash flow borrowing, and process the transaction with less administrative time. In addition, the



Springsted

MNTAAB pool provides a convenient Guaranteed Investment Contract (GIC) option, which is 100% collateralized, convenient and safe. When you are planning for cash flow borrowing in 2009, remember that focusing on issuance costs alone tells only part of the story.

Client representatives from Springsted are prepared to assist school clients to execute pooled and individual cash flow borrowing transactions.

For more information about the MNTAAB statewide cash flow borrowing pool or other cash flow borrowing needs, please contact one of the following client representatives at Springsted

DeeDee Kahring, 651 223 3099
dkahring@springsted.com

Don Lifto, 651 223 3067
dlifto@springsted.com

Jim Schmitt, 651 223 3028
jschmitt@springsted.com

Benefits of MNTAAB Pool Versus Stand Alone

Borrowing costs for participating school districts are reduced since expenses of issuance are shared. Reinvestment options are also enhanced through the pool versus borrowing individually. Due to the streamlined process, school boards need only take a single action. Nearly all the necessary documentation is available for signature at that time, eliminating the need to track down signatures during popular summer vacation months. MSBA and the Regional Service Cooperatives, sponsors of the MNTAAB pool program, benefit as well by your participation.

- Lower borrowing costs
- Ease of administration
- Aid Anticipation Certificates are bid together, yielding a better rate on the bonds
- Sponsored by Service Cooperatives & MSBA
- School district participation in the pool benefits the service cooperatives

Educators share expertise and resources at SSC literacy and math networks

by Diane Schwinghammer

In February a group of literacy teachers met to discuss the possibility of forming a Literacy Network in Southeast Minnesota. They concluded that there would be a need and high interest for K-12 literacy teachers to share expertise and resources, thus organized the first **Literacy Night Out for Thursday, March 19th, 4:30 - 6:30 PM**. The purpose of the network is to form connections with people passionate about literacy and provide a time to learn from each other.

Everyone is welcome to attend Literacy Night Out and share ideas, resources, websites and teaching strategies. The two presentations, **Think Aloud model** and **Carousel Brainstorming** are strategies for all teachers to use. The main focus of this initial meeting is for grade K-3 teachers, Title I and Special Education teachers, paraprofessional and curriculum coordinators, however, everyone interested in literacy is encouraged to attend and participate in the discussion of future literacy network activities.

The vision of expanding the network activity is to develop a discussion board for literacy teachers, host a nationally known author, and share teaching strategies of teaching literacy in the content areas.

Please go to www.ssc.coop and register. There is no fee to attend, but for planning purposes, registration is encouraged.

First meeting of Secondary School Math Network a success

Nineteen secondary school math educators gathered on March 10 to discuss topics of interest, support each other and discuss the possibility of organizing a Math Network. The discussion topics included preparation for the MCA II exam, 8th to 9th grade transition, math interventions, parent communication and involvement, application of Lee Jenkins from LtoL Key Concepts practice and sharing of resources, ideas, and contacts.

Participants shared teaching strategies, curriculum, schedule arrangements, and interventions that

are working for students to be successful. Resources, such as Study Island, Renaissance Learning and Education City were discussed.

Suggested discussion topics for June's meeting (no date set yet) include: Students who did not meet the GRAD requirements? What are you going to do to support the students who did not meet the requirements? What did you do so that students were successful? Grade alike conversations; How to prep for MCA's all year long; What were the barriers/roadblocks to success, Parent communication and support.

The greatest interest is in establishing a list serve/discussion board so teachers can communicate with ideas, suggestions, requests, and offer support to each other. This is being explored at the Southeast Service Cooperative as to how this could be accomplished.

Watch for future Secondary School Math Network activities through announcements sent directly to your school. If you would like to be on a Math Network contact list, please contact Diane Schwinghammer at dschwinghammer@ssc.coop.

Young Authors/Young Artists continued from page 1

conference. We welcome back from past conference years Linda Back McKay, Amy Christie, Terri DeGezelle, Daved Driscoll, Dianne Gray, Blake Hoena, Sandy Humphrey, Margie Kiefer, Sage Lewis, Mary McGrath, Katie McKy, Rick Ponzio, Jim Postier, James Schattauer, Kevin Strauss and Gwenth Swain.

We also look forward to getting to know our new presenters, including

Stephenie Hovland, Holly Magner from Minnesota Book Arts, SSC staff member Shelley Rinkel and Pat Ryan.

The Book Shelf in Winona will once again be organizing our book sale for the third year in a row. They will have a wide selection of reading material for students to purchase, including books published by our distinguished presenters.

All schools in southeast Minnesota are invited to bring a group of 4-6th graders to the conference for an experience unlike any other. To download a copy of the 2009 Conference brochure, please visit the SSC website at www.ssc.coop. To request a hard copy of the brochure or with any questions, please contact Kari Kubicek at 507 281 6668 or via email at kkubicek@ssc.coop.

Lesson study offers MSTA cohorts high quality professional development

by Heidi Knepper

Southeast Service Cooperative hosted the final module of the Math & Science Teacher Academy, a program made possible through collaboration between Southeast Service Cooperative, Winona State University and the Minnesota Department of Education, in Rochester on March 4-5, 2009.

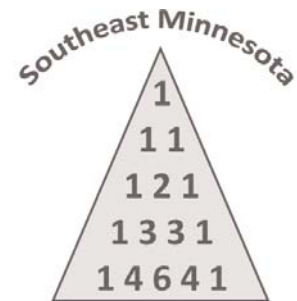
At the conclusion of this cohort, each participant in the academy will have experienced two Research Lessons, utilizing the Lesson Study process. This process includes a group of instructors preparing a single lesson collaboratively, which is then observed in the classroom by the Lesson Study group and other practitioners, and analyzed during the group's debriefing session.

Through the research lesson teachers become more observant and attentive to the process by which lessons unfold in their class, and they gather data from the actual teaching based on the lesson plan that the group has prepared. Widely viewed as the foremost professional development program, lesson study is credited with dramatic success in

improving classroom practices. By utilizing the Lesson Study process with the MSTA cohort, we hope to provide the participants with job embedded, high quality professional development that they can continue far beyond the conclusion of the grant.

The conclusion of this learning experience included time for all participants to share their experiences with the Lesson Study Process and the experience of meeting as PLC's, which was new to some and a continuation of current practice for others. This session also included mini modules on topics such as; fractions, geometry, probability and statistics in relation to algebra instruction, developed by our Instructional Team. The Instructional Team for the Southeast Math and Science Teacher Academy is also creating a Training Module for 9-12 grade educators based on the Data Statistics and Probability Standards. We hope to

A particularly noticeable accomplishment in the past 20 years of lesson study has been the transformation from teacher directed instruction to student centered instruction in mathematics and science (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998; Takahashi, 2000; Yoshida, 1999). The success of lesson study can be found in two primary aspects: improvements in teacher practice and the promotion of collaboration among teachers.



Math and Science Teacher Academy
PASCaL Cohort

move forward with this module in 2009-2010 based on grant funding.

If you would like more information, please contact Heidi Knepper at hknepper@ssc.coop.

Spelling Bee champ continued from page 1

and CEO of iStar Financial in honor of his father, Samuel Louis Sugarman).

Melissa Brown, a 7th grader from Rochester Public Schools (John Adams Middle School), was the 2nd place winner. She received a trophy and a Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition (courtesy of Merriam Webster).

Radhika Edpunganti, a 6th grader from LaCrescent Hokah Public

Schools, was the 3rd place winner. She received a trophy and a one year subscription to Britannica Online Student Edition (donated by Encyclopedia Britannica).

Seventy students from 41 schools throughout the region advanced from their respective District Spelling Bees to the Regional Spelling Bees.

Twelve spellers (six from each Regional Spelling Bee on February 17, 2009) competed in the final Spelling Bee on Tuesday, March 3, at 9:00 a.m. at the Southeast Service Cooperative.

TAH Cohort members continue their journey through Minnesota's past

by Kari Kubicek



Southeast (SE) and Southwest (SW) cohort members belonging to SSC's Teaching American History grant project, *Blufflands and Prairies: Southern Minnesota's Place in the Fabric of America's Story*, converged on the Twin Cities and participated in two very full days of project activities March 3 and 4. The SE and SW cohort groups are comprised of 32 teachers from both the southwest and southeast regions of the state.

The first day of activities began at the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) where a member of the MHS Educational Outreach program, Kate Stower, led the group through an outline of the upcoming year's activities and expectations for the cohort members. Next, the teachers were led through a behind-the-scenes tour of MHS's object collections.

Following time to visit the museum's exhibits and lunch, the teachers reconvened in the library to participate in a scavenger hunt to re-familiarize themselves with the

collections in the MHS reference library. Teachers spent the remaining few hours of the daytime activities working in small groups and researching the reference library for sources to use for the development of their lesson plans (a component of the cohort member expectations). The group enjoyed a family style



Cohort teacher Earl Orvik enjoying Swedish dancing.

Italian dinner that evening and then traveled to the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis that included a guided tour of the Turnblad Mansion and the opportunity to learn Swedish folk dancing. Ross Sutter, an area musician who provides fresh interpretations of Irish, Scottish, Scandinavian and Northern European songs, led the teachers through the folk dancing lesson with his impressive talents of singing and playing an array of instruments including a dulcimer and button accordion.

The next morning, the teachers rose bright and early to start their day at MHS working on their lesson plans and participating in small group

discussions with the grant project evaluator, Sean Beggin.

Following a quick lunch on the bus, an actor portraying Lester Baby Face Nelson, led the teachers on a gangster tour of sites of nightclubs, kidnapping, and gun battles associated with the 1930's St. Paul gangsters like John Dillinger, Ma Barker and Baby Face Nelson himself. Teachers saw sights where the gangsters lived it up as they planned and executed some of the most notorious crimes ever perpetrated in the upper Midwest. The tour led the group past the most infamous gangster hideouts and famous nightclubs where many gangsters spent time socializing with the public.

The cohort members spent the rest of the afternoon at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) touring the MIA collections that focused on American works of art and exploring MIA's online resources for educators and students. The cohort group buses headed back to their respective regions with an exhausted, yet gracious group.

Several cohort members thanked MHS and SSC staff for the two day experience, emphasizing its usefulness and entertainment. The cohort groups will meet again in June for a half day session to complete the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum.

Ecologist, author and cancer survivor to speak in Rochester on April 9

SSC is proud to be one of the sponsors of author Sandra Steingraber's visit to Rochester on Thursday, April 9 at 7:00 PM. She will speak at University Center Rochester's Hill Theater. Ecologist, author, and cancer survivor, Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D., is an internationally recognized expert on the environmental links to cancer and human health. Steingraber's book, *Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment* presents cancer as a human rights issue and has won praise from international media.



Local students advance to Southeast Minnesota Final Spelling Bee



by Kirsten Kuehl

Two Regional Spelling Bees were held on Tuesday, February 17 at the Southeast Service Cooperative in Rochester. Seventy students participated in the two Regional Spelling Bees. Students from forty one schools throughout southeast Minnesota advanced from their district Spelling Bees to compete in the Regional competitions



coordinated by the Southeast Service Cooperative.

The top four places received trophies for themselves and their schools. The second place finishers also received a \$100 U.S. Savings Bond and the first place finishers received a \$200 U.S. Savings Bond. All students received a small trophy for their participation in the Regional Spelling Bee.

The top twelve spellers (six from each Spelling Bee) advanced to the final Spelling Bee on Tuesday, March 3, at Southeast Service Cooperative. Co sponsors are



McNeilus Steel, Inc. and KM Telecom.

Judges at Regionals were: Mimi Abell Lanesboro, Katie Sue Cunningham SSC, Claudia Dreyer Stewartville, Laura Gudmundson Kingsland, Sheila McNeill Rochester, Margot Peters Rochester, and Amy Sieve Northfield. Larry Stacy from Stewartville served as pronouncer for both Regional Spelling Bees.

Place winners from the morning and afternoon sessions are pictured here:



1st place
Radhika Edpunganti
LaCrescent Hokah



2nd place
Kyle Lewis
Owatonna



3rd place
Casey Olson
Mabel Canton



4th place
Laura Galbus
Kasson Mantorville



1st place
Melissa Brown
Rochester



2nd place
Megan Klotz
Zumbrota Mazeppa



3rd place
Rachel Cohrs
Rochester



4th place
Josh Meyers
Pine Island

Water is Life scholarship contest finals at SSC on April 29



The Freshwater Society and Southeast Service Cooperative are once again collaborating to bring the Water is Life Scholarship Art Contest to the region's 9th-12th grade students. This is the fifth year the organizations have sponsored this contest in southeast Minnesota resulting in exciting, educational and rewarding experiences for many Minnesota high school students.

Artwork by SSC regional students has been displayed at the State Capitol and at many art galleries and other venues throughout the state. We are thrilled to bring this contest to your area once again and look forward to participation from your students.

The 2009 Water is Life Art Contest also offers a new category of SHORT VIDEO!

The Freshwater Society is providing six \$500 scholarships to students who find an artistic and creative way to express the theme "water is life." Three semi-finalists from the southeast region will be announced at a reception on April 29, 2009 at the Southeast Service Cooperative. Together with the other regions, 24 semi-finalists will then have the honor of participating in the final art competition to be held on May 6, 2009 at the Gray Freshwater Center

on Lake Minnetonka. Parents, art instructors and noted dignitaries are invited to attend this art exhibit and reception that will honor all of the semi-finalists and announce the six scholarship winners.

The instructions for submitting art are can be found at:

www.freshwater.org

Please note: *All artwork and accompanying entry form and artist statement are due to Southeast Service Cooperative by March 20th, 2009.*

All short videos must be downloaded to:

www.youtube.com/user/FreshwaterSociety and accompanying entry form and artist statement must be received by the Southeast Service Cooperative by March 20th, 2009.

SSC staff member writes grant; Spring Grove receives \$5000

by Nicole LaChapelle

Through the thoughtfulness and resourcefulness of SSC's Trainer Shelley Rinkel, Spring Grove public school has been awarded a \$5000 grant from Lowe's.

Spring Grove booked Rinkel to lead seminars at all their 2008-2009 staff development days. She led the first session in October, and was so impressed with how efficiently the staff made do with their limited technology and resources, and knowing how fully they were taking advantage of SSC's training services, she became inspired to make a difference.

Rinkel got to work researching grants

and found one from Lowe's that would be a perfect fit. She applied on behalf of Spring Grove and was awarded the \$5000 grant in January. It will be used to renovate 2 classrooms in their 104 year old building.

The grant will also supply them with two SMART Boards and projectors. Installation and advanced training by Rinkel were also written into the grant, which was the largest she had ever been awarded.

Rinkel shared, "Spring Grove was doing everything right. I was so impressed what they were doing with their limited resources. This is what inspired me to write this grant."

She added, "I was so thrilled they were awarded the grant, and I'm looking forward to making them all SMART Board experts!"



Spring Grove principal
Nancy Gulbranson.

Results of interview with Nancy goes here.....

Recent Board meeting actions and information

December 2008

Adopted a resolution to participate with other Service Cooperatives in a request for proposals for carrier contract for the City/County Health Insurance Pool beginning January 2010.

Approved termination of the EmbodyHealth program agreement with Mayo Clinic Health Management Resources effective January 31, 2009 and implementation of the BCBSM health assessment as SSC's preferred online health assessment tool for members.

Reviewed the summary of the Executive Director's performance review and the Board's self assessment.

Accepted the report of the Canvassing Committee for Board elections for terms starting January 2009. Individuals elected to three Education (Category 1) terms are: Don Andring (4 year term), Wayne Hahn (4 year term), Betty Lechtenberg (remaining 1 year of term).

Elected to a new Government Unit (Category 2) four year term is Allan Cordes.

Appointed Mark Packard for one year effective January 1, 2009 to fill the position that he would otherwise vacate upon retirement from his local board.

Congratulated and thanked Elizabeth Lawson on eight years and Michael Hammes on four years of service on the SSC Board of Directors. Chairman Lentz presented them with recognition awards.

Adjusted the SSC mileage reimbursement rate to 55 cents per mile effective January 1, 2009, consistent with previous SSC Board action to align with IRS recommended rates.

Adopted the 2007-2008 Annual Participation Study Report.

Received a report on SSC's organizational needs assessment evaluation process.

Note: Completed SSC Board of Directors meeting minutes are available at the SSC website at www.ssc.coop

Received a progress report on re-development of SSC's data management system and evaluation of the Cedarwood data management program.

Authorized staff to initiate an online job board program with General ASP using AppliTrack.

Accepted a grant contract with the Minnesota Department of Education for Year 3 (October 1, 2008 - September 30, 2009) of the AYP School Improvement Technical Assistance Program.

Waived the rental fee for the Mobile Science Lab during the grant year of the project; maintain the \$100 per day late fee charge; and direct staff to develop a sliding scale fee based on district size for implementation in the 2009-2010 year.

January 2009

Designated the Southeast Service Cooperative newsletter and the SSC website as the official newspaper posting for Southeast Service Cooperative members; directed staff to publish legal notices in the Rochester Post Bulletin. The Board encourages member organizations to publish Southeast Service Cooperative Board actions as a part of their individual Board minutes.

The Board meeting schedule for 2009 was set and is listed below.

Elected Officers for 2009:

Chairperson: Mitch Lentz

Clerk: Don Andring

Vice Chair: Al Cordes

Treasurer: Tom Heise

Chair Mitch Lentz made the following committee appointments:

Finance Committee: Treasurer Tom Heise, Chair Mitch Lentz, Vice Chair Al Cordes, Don Andring, Mark Packard.

Personnel Committee: Chair Mitch Lentz, AAC Representative Superintendent Gary Kuphal, Mark Packard, Sue Phillips.

Policies Committee: Wayne Hahn, Carol Cravath, Bettie Lechtenberg, Mark Packard.

By Laws Committee: Carol Cravath, Bettie Lechtenberg, Sue Phillips, Marcia Ward.

Received reports on AYP School Improvement, Health and Benefits, and the SSC organizational review process.

Approved purchase of the Cedarwood database management system and annual maintenance/updating service.

Appointed Marcia Ward to serve as a substitute on the MSC Board until the next MSC Board appointment is made.

Received report on SSC's plans for videoconferencing connectivity and participation with SEMNET in a pilot of professional development and meeting facilitation using videoconferencing. SEMNET is providing half of the cost for a four month pilot up to \$3,500.

The Board offered their appreciation to SEMNET for investing in this joint endeavor.

Board Meeting Calendar

SSC Board Meetings:

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Wednesday, March 25

Wednesday, April 22

Wednesday, May 27

Wednesday, June 24

Wednesday, July 29 (fifth Wednesday)

Wednesday, August 26

Wednesday, September 23 (Alternate date is Wednesday, Sept. 30 (fifth Wednesday of the month) due to a potential meeting conflict.)

Wednesday, October 28

Monday, November 30 (fifth Monday)

Wednesday, December 23

Wednesday, January 27, 2010

Calendar

March

Monday, March 16

4:30 6:30 PM

Basic Smart Board Training

Tuesday, March 17

4:30 6:30 PM

Online Learning Informational Meeting

Thursday, March 19

12:30 3:30 PM

MCA Constructed Response Question Seminar Reading

Thursday, March 19

4:30 6:30 PM

Literacy Night Out

Thursday, March 19

4:30 6:30 PM

SMART Board Beyond the Basics Training

Tuesday Thursday, March 24 26

8:30 AM 2:30 PM

K Bowl Senior High Regionals Tier A

Tuesday, March 24

4:30 7:00 PM

Moodle Training Series

Wednesday, March 25

4:00 PM

Computer Terms Simplified Webinar

Wednesday, March 25

5:00 8:00 PM

SSC Board Meeting

Monday, March 30

11:00 AM 2:30 PM

MASA Region I Member Meeting

Tuesday, March 31

4:30 7:00 PM

Moodle Training Series

April

Monday, April 6

9:00 AM 4:00 PM

SMART Board for the Science Classroom

Tuesday, April 7

9:30 11:30 AM

Q Comp Informational Forum

Wednesday, April 8

4:00 7:00 PM

Power Point Games for the Classroom

Thursday, April 9

8:00 AM 4:00 PM

Insurance Workshop

Tuesday, April 14

4:00 5:30 PM

Computer Terms in Plain English

Thursday, April 16

4:00 7:00 PM

Digital Story Telling

Tuesday, April 21

4:30 7:00 PM

Senteo 2 Clicker Training

Wednesday, April 22

5:00 8:00 PM

SSC Board Meeting

Thursday, April 23

4:00 7:00 PM

Moodle Training Series

Monday, April 27

4:30 7:00 PM

SMART Board Basic and Airliner Training

Wednesday, April 29

4:30 7:00 PM

SMART Board Beyond the Basics and Airliner Training

Wednesday, April 29

Freshwater Art Regional Reception

Thursday, April 30

4:00 7:00 PM

Moodle Training Series

May

Tuesday, May 5

9:00 AM 12:00 PM

School Pool 2009 Renewal Meeting

Wednesday, May 6

4:00 6:00 PM

Word 2007 Webinar

Tuesday, May 5

9:00 AM 12:00 PM

School Pool 2009 Renewal Meeting

Tuesday, May 12

4:00 7:00 PM

Power Point 2007 Webinar

Wednesday, May 13

4:00 6:00 PM

Outlook 2007 Webinar

Wednesday, May 20

11:00 AM 2:30 PM

MASA Region I Member Meeting

Wednesday, May 20

All day event

Young Authors, Young Artists Conference

Thursday, May 21

All day event

Young Authors, Young Artists Conference

Wednesday, May 27

5:00 8:00 PM

SSC Board Meeting

Middle Level Essentials conference in Las Vegas April 23 & 24

The National Middle School Association is sponsoring its annual Middle Level Essentials conference at the Red Rock Resort in Las Vegas April 23 and 24 of this year. Last year's Middle Level Essentials conference in Minneapolis broke all attendance records, and our evaluations from Minnesota principals and teachers were stellar. This year's focus has been expanded, and the title of the conference is Middle Level Essentials and 9th Grade Academy Conference. For more information on the conference, go to www.nmsa.org.

Register now for technology trainings at SSC!

Tuesday, March 24

Moodle Training Series

Wednesday, March 25

Computer Terms Simplified Webinar

Tuesday, March 31

Moodle Training Series

Monday, April 6

SMART Board for the Science Classroom

Wednesday, April 8

Power Point Games for the Classroom

Tuesday, April 14

Computer Terms in Plain English

Thursday, April 16

Digital Story Telling

Tuesday, April 21

Senteo 2 Clicker Training

Monday, April 27

SMART Board Basic and Airliner Training

Wednesday, April 29

SMART Board Beyond the Basics and Airliner Training

Thursday, April 30

Moodle Training Series

Go to www.ssc.coop to register.



SSC is a 2008 Recipient of the Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility.

Cooperative Connection is a publication of the Southeast Service Cooperative, published four times per year for members, associates, and the general public.

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- 4 . . .EHSM
- 5 . . .Student Academics & Conferences

We want to be there when you call, so try dialing us directly at the numbers below. Our voice mail system allows you to leave a detailed message if the person you're calling isn't able to answer right away. If you don't know who you need to talk with, dial (507) 288-1282 and one of our staff or our auto-attendant will direct you from there.
To send a fax dial (507) 288-7663.

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