

Cooperative Connection

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Southeast Service Cooperative

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Author Adrienne Gear is coming to Southeast Service Cooperative!

By Lori Mack

Adrienne Gear is an educator and author who will teach you how to guide and inspire the “language of thinking” as it relates to reading comprehension for your readers. Reading comprehension is a puzzling process for many readers and Adrienne Gear has designed her strategies for reading comprehension based on modeling what proficient readers do naturally to create meaningful interactions with the text.

Reading Power: Teaching Students to Think While They Read

- Is based on research that looks at strategies used by proficient readers.



Author Adrienne Gear

- Teaches students that reading is thinking.
- Teaches students to be metacognitive, or aware of their thinking.
- Creates a “language of thinking” in your classroom.

Adrienne Gear continued on page 4

Three reasons why SSC's pool groups shouldn't panic over health care reform

By Bill Colopoulos

While the list of PPACA regulations is long and complicated, the compliance tasks for most employer plan sponsors in SSC's pools will be relatively straightforward; although some will require strategic planning and possibly changing existing benefit policy.

There are three basic areas of compliance for SSC's pool groups:

1. Benefits compliance – Most SSC pool employers already offer plans that will likely comply with the new “minimum essential coverage” (MEC) and “minimum value” specifications (i.e., plans that offer an average benefit payment ratio value of 60%). All large SSC pool groups will have the ability to offer a MEC plan when it becomes necessary for them to do so.

While there remains concern about what final changes may be

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date the rules will apply, it is likely that last minute revisions will have minimal impact on our current projections of what MEC minimum value plans will be and their costs. Our pools already offer a plan that closely approximates MEC minimum value that we can use to benchmark costs and affordability. Groups may also offer plans that offer minimum essential coverage with minimum benefit payment ratio values in excess of 60%.

In fact, most pool groups already offer health plans with benefit values that are considerably in excess of 60%; plans that are relatively certain to meet PPACA rules for essential coverage (e.g., unlimited lifetime maximums, no pre-existing conditions limitation, dependent coverage to age 26, conforms to wellness benefit provision rules, etc.).

2. Employer contributions – Most pool employers' current contributions are well within the parameters of the safe harbor formulas needed for them to comply with the employer shared responsibility affordability rules. For the few groups whose contributions do not make these thresholds, contribution revisions may be preferable alternatives to using household income testing and reporting. Plus, many such groups offer a plan in excess of MEC requirements; offering an MEC plan could bring their contributions into compliance.



3. Eligibility – The formulas the law requires employers to follow in order to test employee eligibility for their health plans will be challenging to track, but not particularly complicated IF practical choices are made regarding what compliance safe harbor options are used. Once payroll and HR systems learn to track hire dates, “look back” periods (aka measurement periods) and “stability” periods, eligibility administration will become routine.

When all employee classifications and specifications are identified, most pool groups should be in compliance with the new eligibility rules. Some groups will use eligibility “safe harbor” provisions; one of which is designed specifically for educational institutions (it deals with summer break) to make their calculations easier.

“Safe harbors” will be of particular use in the first year the new rules apply as payroll and HR management systems begin to program the new rules and help employers not only administer

their health benefits eligibility automatically going forward, but to help them test their best options for measurement and stability periods – and job classification.

For most groups, extending coverage eligibility to a small additional group of employees initially will represent additional aggregate plan costs.

Eligibility vs. Participation

It should also be noted that the PPACA's rules (and penalties) apply only to the employer's responsibility to offer health benefit coverage to eligible employees, per the specifications prescribed by the new law; effective on or after January 1, 2014. PPACA rules do not address or require how many employees actually enroll in their employer's health plan(s). So long as benefit coverage is offered to all employees in a manner that is in compliance with the law, the employer's PPACA compliance responsibilities are satisfied.

When to get started?

The time is now. There is no reason to wait until the last rule is published. It is likely, if not inevitable, that many final regulations won't be issued until well after the implementation of the law. As is the case with most new laws, final rules and regulations often await the establishment of precedents so the regulators can test what

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is practical from a compliance management perspective.

As employers go through their “what to do” compliance list, keep in mind that plan costs will likely be increasing – both in the aggregate and on a per plan participant basis – as a result of health care reform.

Many employers will have to consider making strategic changes in their workforce in order to limit liabilities caused by the new definition of health

benefits and eligibility. Strategic change is a process that takes time; the sooner one starts, the better.

For more information about how to inventory your health plan for compliance with the PPACA, please contact me.

Bill Colopoulos
bcolopoulos@ssc.coop

Have a question about health care reform? Want to see what others are asking and join the conversation? Visit my blog at: <http://www.ssc.coop/Page/211>.



Mobile Science Lab Programs gets new wheels

By Amy Grover

Thanks to a very generous \$22,000 grant from the Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC), SSC is in the process of developing and deploying a third Mobile Science Lab dedicated to food science!

During the summer of 2012, Ross Aleff, Mayo Clinic Molecular Biology Core Facility and Graduate School Instructor, welcomed the first group of teachers to participate in the brand new Food Science Summer Institute.

Developed in partnership with the Hormel Institute, the food science curriculum includes hands-on experiments such as measuring pH with natural food substances, examining sugar levels in soda, exploring food borne illness due

to E. coli/salmonella/bacillus/listeriosis, testing environmental bacteria, learning about oxidation and food packaging, experimenting with irradiation pasteurization, and fermenting cultured yogurt.

The availability of this new trailer will support these newly trained high school educators by providing all of the high-tech equipment and consumable supplies required for student learning. Bringing the Mobile Science Lab to their classroom ensures that teachers have access to the full array of scientific equipment necessary to duplicate what they experienced in Mayo Clinic laboratories and to successfully implement the new curriculum.

We are pleased to see the continued expansion of our



program and thank all of our partners and past donors for supporting the program since its launch in 2009.

To learn more about the program and its successes and to explore the classroom protocols, please visit <http://www.ssc.coop/Page/77>. Alternatively, contact Amy Grover at agrover@ssc.coop or 507-281-6693 to learn how to bring this invaluable resource to your district.

Adrienne Gear continued from page 1

- Encourages students to have “busy brains” while they read.
- Provides a concrete visual tool to help teach the five reading powers.
- Helps build a common language of reading comprehension throughout your classroom and your school.
- Can be used to enhance your writing program.
- Is respectful of children’s thinking and encourages them to think beyond the pages of the books they are reading.
- Will change the way you and your students read and think.

-Gear, Adrienne. “What Is Reading Power?” *Reading Power: Teaching Students to Think While They Read*. Markham, Ont.: Pembroke, 2006. 13. Print.

Adrienne will guide participants through the research behind the five reading powers – Connect, Question, Visualize, Infer, and Transform and will also provide modeled sequential lessons for teaching your students how to implement each reading power. Adrienne provides a variety of graphic organizers and grade appropriate book list suggestions to use with your students when you are demonstrating and practicing each individual Reading Power Strategy.

Adrienne will focus this session on her first book, *Reading Power*. Next fall 2013, Lori Mack, SSC’s literacy specialist, will offer follow-up training based on Gear’s other book; *Nonfiction Reading*

Power, as well as her brand new book, *Writing Power*. Adrienne’s books will be available on-site at SSC for purchase, however it is not required that you purchase her book for this session. If you already have her book(s), bring it to the June 19th session at SSC Wood Lake Meeting Center for an autograph!

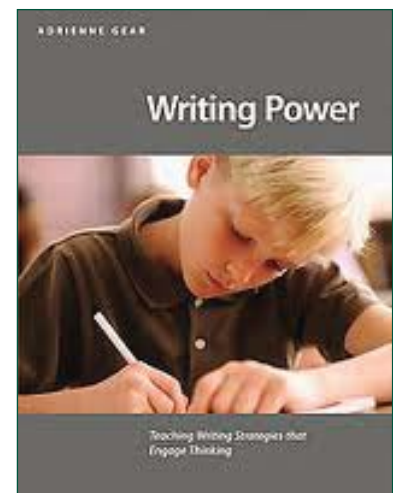
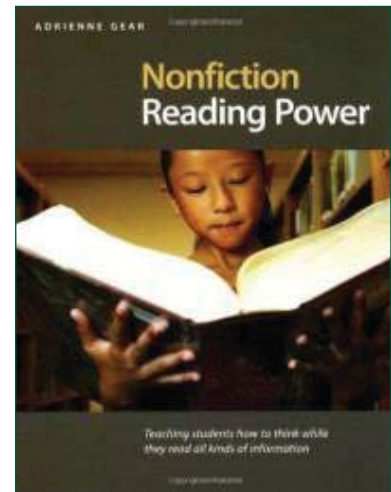
SSC is thrilled to bring Adrienne Gear to Minnesota for this fantastic literacy event. Won’t you consider joining us?

Nonfiction Reading Power

Tuesday, October 8, 2013
Lori Mack, instructor

Writing Power

Tuesday, November 5, 2013
Lori Mack, instructor



Diane Schwinghammer, Director of Instructional Services, retires from SSC

After a six-year tenure at Southeast Service Cooperative, Director of Instructional Services, Diane Schwinghammer, retired on February 8, 2013. Diane joined the SSC team in 2006 to lead SSC's coordination of the AYP School Improvement Program, a partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Through her work, Diane and her colleagues offered guidance, support and resources to dozens of southeastern Minnesota Schools and Districts.

Diane has spent her career in a variety of public and private education settings as a teacher and administrator, most notably as Superintendent of Rochester Catholic Schools for eight years



Diane is pictured here with members of SSC's staff.

prior to coming to the Service Cooperative. She was also a key player at the Service Cooperative during its early development from 1977 through 1988, guiding districts through the planning, evaluating,

and reporting process and planning Title I conferences.

Among her many accomplishments over the years, Diane's recent leadership included developing a design for which Southeast Service Cooperative was chosen by MDE to host one of three Centers of Excellence continuing to serve schools most in need of school improvement technical assistance.

SSC's Board and staff are grateful for the wisdom, experience, and exemplary service Diane has provided to school districts across southeast Minnesota. Diane prefers the word "transition" to "retirement" and is looking forward to new opportunities and having time to pursue other interests.

Longtime SSC Board Member, Don Andring, retires after 18 years of service

The Southeast Service Cooperative Board of Directors and staff would like to thank longtime SSC Board Member Don Andring for contributing his time, knowledge, and ideas during his 18 years of service on the SSC Board.

SSC has greatly appreciated Don's commitment in actively participating as a Board officer and committee member to assist in forming new policies, and making many organizational decisions throughout his terms. Don has so thoughtfully fulfilled his responsibility as an SSC Board member to represent SSC member organizations across southeast Minnesota.



Don is pictured with SSC Board President, Carol Cravath (L) and SSC Executive Director, Suzanne Riley (Center).

SSC welcomes new Board Member Molly Rieke



Molly has been a member of the Dover-Eyota School Board since 2009 and is beginning her second term. She is a childcare provider and also serves as a member of Governor Dayton's Early Learning Council. Molly's family includes her fiancé Cris, her three children and three step-children. Molly enjoys attending her kids' sporting events, classic car cruising, target shooting, crafting and cooking.

Member vs. Member Walking Challenge winners announced!

By Nicole LaChapelle

Winning teams have been announced in SSC's Walking Challenge, which saw nearly 700 members from twenty-one of its member organizations compete. Fourteen southeastern Minnesota school districts and seven city and county members participated in two separate pedometer-based challenges.

Winners in the School District Challenge are as follows: – Zumbrota-Mazeppa - 1st Place, Kingsland – 2nd Place, Lake City – 3rd Place. The rest of the teams, which each received an honorable mention are listed in the order of their ranking: Plainview-Elgin-Millville, Rochester, Pine Island, Lewiston-Altura, Grand Meadow, Medford, Mabel-Canton, Cannon Falls, Fillmore Central, and Rushford-Peterson.

Zumbrota-Mazeppa Wellness Coordinator, Katie Kennedy, shared, "Our preschool teachers got their classes involved in moving so our fitness was able to trickle all the way down to our students. We had teachers walking in groups after school, before school and during lunches and prep time. I'm so proud of the way everyone took part in improving their own step count."

The City of Byron was the winner in the City/County division. The rest of the rankings are as follows: Rice/Steele 911 Center – 2nd Place, Freeborn County – 3rd Place. The honorable mention placements were – Fillmore County, City of Albert Lea, Wabasha County and the City of Preston.

Marie Peterson, Wellness Coordinator at the City of Byron, noted, "We're very happy about winning the challenge this year. We started the new year with a bang and had more than half the staff participate. We had team members who would walk around the house at night to make sure they made their 10,000 daily steps!"

The contest, which ran the month of January, was based on the number of steps walked by participating members. A trophy, will be awarded to Zumbrota-Mazeppa School District and the City of Byron. Framed certificates will be presented to all teams who participated. Awards will be presented at SSC's Spring Health Forum, which takes place on Wednesday, April 3.



Winning City/County Team - The City of Byron



Winning School District Team - Zumbrota-Mazeppa (Mazeppa team members pictured here)



Winning School District Team - Zumbrota-Mazeppa (Zumbrota team members pictured here)

SEMLAC Educators Come Together to Network and Share

By Amy Grover

On Monday, February 11, SSC helped to coordinate the second common in-service day for Southeast Minnesota Learner Achievement Collaborative (SEMLAC) districts, which include Dover-Eyota, Hiawatha Valley Education District, Kingsland, Lanesboro, Mabel-Canton, Plainview-Elgin-Millville, and Wabasha-Kellogg. Over 375 teachers had the opportunity to gather together again to further develop their regional Professional Learning Communities.

The day kicked off with general sessions about formative assessment and then individuals split into their Teacher-to-Teacher groups. These groups are either grade-level or content-area based, and began their work together last school year and again at the September 24 SEMLAC Professional Development Day.



The recent Teacher-to-Teacher event provided the opportunity for job-alike groups to share resources, discuss how they are using formative assessment in the classroom, and determine how they will remain in contact throughout the school year.

The benefits of this network are extensive. In some of our smaller districts, there may be only one art teacher, so joining a regional network connects art teachers from multiple districts together for collegial, relevant dialogue. Furthermore, all teachers can benefit from sharing resources, lesson plans, curriculum ideas,

online links, articles, and best practices. Southeast Minnesota is lucky to have incredibly talented educators with such expertise, and SEMLAC really capitalizes on that. By providing the opportunity for teachers to have meaningful conversations with their peers, this collaborative really maximizes that valuable time together. Finally, this is a fantastic way for districts to leverage their shared resources and get more professional development “bang” for their individual investment.

On February 27, the SEMLAC Leadership Teams met for the final training session in this series, which will wrap up our 2012-2013 activities and will soon start planning for the 2013-2014 school year activities! If your district might be interested in joining SEMLAC, please contact Amy Grover at agrover@ssc.coop or (507) 281-6693.

Wood Lake Meeting Center hosts Chamber event

On Friday, January 4, SSC welcomed approximately 80 Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce Members to the Wood Lake Meeting Center for the Chamber’s monthly AM Espresso networking event.

Attendees enjoyed a light breakfast (donated by Great Harvest Bread Company), toured the meeting center, and did lots of networking!



The Chamber’s AM Espressos are a perfect opportunity to increase

awareness of both SSC and the Wood Lake Meeting Center.

Southeast Service Cooperative member districts and agencies receive a 40% discount on room rental rates.

New food procurement program

By Katie Schmitt, Cooperative Purchasing Technician

Food service professionals have a lot on their plate from running day-to-day food service operations to implementing new healthy food regulations and meeting continuing education requirements! SSC has identified one thing we can take off that plate. Through member feedback and research of food programs within our region, we found that many districts are conducting their own annual bids or coordinating small buying groups. To increase efficiency and maximize resources among members, SSC will be conducting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the procurement of food and kitchen supplies. As a member of SSC, your school has the opportunity to participate in this program. Agreements that result from RFP's of this



nature, provide participating schools with discounted pricing on food purchases, and reduced commodity delivery charges from the awarded vendor.

How will SSC's Food Procurement Program benefit members?

- Significantly reduce the amount of time spent on bidding and quoting
- Conform to MN bid laws and the USDA food program procurement requirements
- Offer better pricing and reduce delivery charges by

leveraging multi-district buying power

- Improve access to high-quality products by creating a customer network that is attractive to distributors
- Increase communication, build relationships, and create opportunities to partner among regional food service professionals

If you are interesting in participating in this program, please view the requirements for participation on the Food Procurement Program web page or email Katie Schmitt at kschmitt@ssc.coop.

Follow that Blog: Smart Buys



Smart Buys is a new way for members to get the latest cooperative purchasing news, procurement trends and essential resources.

Click [here](#) to access Smart Buys.

Cooperative Purchasing
Smart Buys



Smart Buys is written by SSC's Cooperative Purchasing Technician Katie Schmitt.

Environmentally Sustainable Procurement

By Katie Schmitt

As the discussion about climate-change heats up (and Minnesota winters become milder), “green” procurement will be essential to more eco-friendly communities. Adapting environmentally sustainable purchasing strategies can reduce waste and carbon emissions. More demand for “green” design, products and services will result from increased consumer awareness, cost of oil and manufacturing and state/federal environmental procurement and disposal regulations.

Reduce

To help you get started on the path to “green” procurement, here are five eco-friendly practices to help reduce costs, waste and emissions.

1. Shop and order online. Stop writing checks by employing a purchasing card program.

SSC has partnered with **American Express** to provide a purchasing card program that offers 1% cash rebates, saving you time, money and paper



2. Plan your purchases and bundle your orders to reduce carbon emissions.

OfficeMax can work with you to customize your account settings to keep orders in queue until your total has reached the shipment threshold.



3. Buy products that have more than one purpose and/or can be shared among staff.
4. Make it a habit of taking inventory so you don't get stuck in the vendor trap of re-ordering commonly purchased items that you don't need.
5. Product packaging is estimated to account for 30% of solid waste. To reduce materials, energy and waste associated with packaging, buy from companies that: eliminate packaging, reduce packaging, offer refillable or reusable packages, and produce recyclable packages and packages made of recycled materials.

Reuse

Making the most out of products already made reduces raw materials, energy, pollution, waste, and money in manufacturing, shipping, and marketing. One way we support reuse at SSC is to use ceramic coffee mugs and glass cups in our office and meeting center. Reusable items are available from salvage yards, thrift stores and online networks like

Craigslist or Freecycle.org. For businesses, industry, non-profits and institutions, the Minnesota Materials Exchange provides a free reusable goods network. Businesses and organizations receive materials for low or no cost, reduce purchase and disposal costs, free up storage space, and avoid sending items to the landfill or incinerator.

Remanufactured desktops, laptops and servers, resulting from a statewide Request For Proposal (RFP), are available from **CDI** for SSC members with a discount up to 15%.



Recycle

Many products and their packaging may be with us forever as they are made of non-biodegradable, petroleum-based and rarely recycled materials like plastics. Simply choosing products and packages that are made from recycled materials or that can be recycled at the end of their life cycle reduce waste in landfills.

Did you know that SSC conducts an annual RFP in collaboration with the Minnesota Service Cooperatives for **copy paper** that includes recycled paper?

Sustainable procurement continued from page 9

Green Vendor Selection

Selecting an environmentally sustainable vendor is a critical piece to successful “green” procurement programs. Here are some tips to get started:

- Seek energy efficient products with the Energy-Star label and/or vendors that support efforts toward LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.
- Develop measurable “green” criteria for quotes, bids and RFPs for the following areas:

Caution: Too many particulars may narrow the pool of vendors.

1. Operations
 2. Manufacturing
 3. Packaging Reduction Practices
 4. Shipping (from raw materials to consumer product delivery)
 5. Corporate Environmental Policies
 6. Waste Disposal and Recycling
 7. Emissions and Energy Consumption
- Award additional points for vendors with qualified “green” practices in the quote or RFP scoring matrix.
 - Utilize SSC’s Cooperative Purchasing vendors to save time and money on the bid/RFP process. There are several vendors that offer eco-friendly solutions for facility maintenance, vehicles, office supplies, school supplies, athletics, furniture and technology. SSC can source eco-friendly products from Cooperative Purchasing vendors. Email Katie Schmitt at: kschmitt@ssc.coop

End of the Procurement Cycle

The treatment of materials at the end of a product’s life cycle is as important as when a product is manufactured, but it is often overlooked. Sustainable procurement will require a shift in thinking that includes planning before a purchase is made and what will happen when we are done using a product. Proper disposal of materials including solid waste, recyclables, technology equipment and hazardous materials is the responsibility of the owner.

To help members meet disposal requirements, SSC has a contract for recycling with **The Retrofit Companies**. Items are picked up directly from your location and certificates of recycling are provided for “cradle to grave” documentation.



Resources

The Minnesota Materials Exchange: www.mnexchange.org

CDI Computers
www.cdicomputers.com

Retrofit Recycling
www.retrofitcompanies.com

MSC Purchasing Connection

www.purchasingconnection.org

OfficeMax Representative

Laura Hartsell, 612-296-9887 or laurahartsell@officemax.com

Green Purchasing Strategies: Trends and Implications by Hokey Min and William P. Galle

Rochester Catholic Schools 6th grader is the Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Champion

By Katie Sue Cunningham

Twelve spellers (six from each Regional Spelling Bee) competed in the Final Spelling Bee on Tuesday, February 26, at 9:00 AM at the Southeast Service Cooperative in Rochester. Fifty-six (56) students from 37 districts throughout Southeast Minnesota participated in the two Regional Spelling Bees on February 12, 2013, coordinated by the Southeast Service Cooperative.

Christine Farnberg, a 6th grade student from Rochester Catholic Schools was declared the champion after correctly spelling the word INNOCUOUS.



Christine Farnberg - Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee Champion

Christine advances to the 86th Annual Scripps National Spelling Bee on May 28 - June 1, 2013. She won an all-expense paid trip (for herself and one adult) to Washington, D.C. (donated by Southeast Service Cooperative).



First runner-up, Devon Nerstad (L), Grand Champion, Christine Farnberg and 2nd runner-up, Marisa Alvarado (R).

She also received a first place trophy, Webster's Third New International Dictionary (provided by Scripps National Spelling Bee), a one-year subscription to Britannica Online Student Edition, a \$100 Series EE Savings Bond (donated by Jay Sugarman, Chairman and CEO of iStar Financial in honor of his father, Samuel Louis Sugarman) and Valerie's Spelling Bee Supplement Booklet.

Devon Nerstad, an 8th grade student from Spring Grove Public Schools, was the 1st Runner-Up. Devon received a trophy, and Valerie's Spelling Bee Supplement Booklet.

Marisa Alvarado, an 8th grade student from Kasson-Mantorville, was the 2nd Runner-Up. Marisa received a trophy, and Valerie's Spelling Bee Supplement Booklet.

Other students participating in the Southeast Minnesota Final Spelling Bee were:

Maxfield Brevick
Chatfield Public Schools
6th grade

Emma Bucknam
Winona Public Schools
5th grade

Dylin Danielson
Lanesboro Public Schools
8th grade

Shane DeSilva
Pacelli Catholic School
7th grade

Olivia Fratianni
Kasson-Mantorville Public Schools
6th grade

Jackson Hillmann
Northfield Public Schools
8th grade

Alyssa Mancilman
Zumbrota-Mazeppa Public Schools
5th grade

Emma Rector
Rochester Schaeffer Academy
7th grade

Olivia Sailer
Wabasha-Kellogg Public Schools
7th grade

The Spelling Bee competitions in southeast Minnesota are sponsored and coordinated by the Southeast Service Cooperative.

2013 Young Authors Young Artists Conference – Register now!

By *Katie Sue Cunningham*

Spring is right around the corner and with it comes Southeast Service Cooperative's 26th annual Young Authors Young Artists Conference. Each year, hundreds of students in grades 4-6 from public, private, and home 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.

SSC's Young Authors, Young Artists Conference promotes student engagement in the areas of written and visual communication, and is an out-of-classroom experience that students often remember for an entire lifetime. The upcoming conference is scheduled for May 21 and May 22.

Session topics range from illustrating your own story to book arts to watercolor to storytelling. Presenters this year are a mix of individuals who have presented at the conference in the past and several individuals who are brand new to the conference. We welcome back the following presenters from past conference years: Linda Back McKay, Mary Bleckwehl, Julie Bowe, Amy Christie, Terri DeGezelle, Blake Hoena, Liz Hurley, Ryan Jacobson,



Margie Kiefer, Katie Mcky, Scott Rolfs, Melanie Schmidt, Tom Spense from the MN Center of Book Arts, Shannon Steinfeldt, and Greg Wimmer.

We also look forward to getting to know our new presenters, Faythe Mills and Jon Steffes.

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

YAYA t-shirts will also be available for purchase at this year's conference. Cost will be \$8 per shirt and available sizes will range from youth medium to adult large.

One chaperone said, "It was really a great opportunity for kids and I was excited that we had the opportunity to go - I thought the layout of the sessions and facility were great. The classes were good and the timeliness of the classes was just right to keep their attention."



All schools or individuals in southeast Minnesota are invited to bring 4th - 6th grade students to the conference for an experience unlike any other. To download a copy of the 2013 Conference brochure, please visit the SSC website at www.ssc.coop/Page/122. If you have any questions please contact Katie Sue Cunningham at 507-281-6667 or via email at kcunningham@ssc.coop.

Educator Evaluation Software Demos

By Amy Grover

On February 14, SSC hosted an educator evaluation forum at the Rochester Ramada. This was an opportunity for school district teams to commit one day to learn about six companies that provide educator evaluation software products and services.

Demonstration sessions were presented by:

- MyLearningPlan
- K-12 Evaluation Solutions
- Mods4EDU
- iObservation
- TalentEd Perform
- Teachscape

Each presentation was also livestreamed and recorded by JDL Horizons, and will be available on-demand through EduVision at <https://ssc.eduvision.tv>. This session was not intended for SSC to endorse a specific product/service. Rather, we are responding



School district teams at the Educator Evaluation Forum.

to requests for help from school districts in learning about options available to support their choice of principal and teacher evaluation models. We also hoped to save school districts time, resources, and effort by doing thorough background and comparison work and bringing companies together for one day of exploration.

Offering this session is part of a bigger process that the Minnesota Service Cooperatives are collaborating on. We released a Request for Proposals, and received

12 proposals from companies for provision of educator evaluation observation/evaluation services and products. A Southeast Advisory Group reviewed the proposals and selected six for the live demonstration session. We will be organizing webinar demonstrations with the other six companies as well.

Moving forward, MSC will determine whether we should contract with any of these vendors for consortium pricing. There may be several contracts, realizing that members' needs, interest, and priorities vary widely. The Minnesota Service Cooperatives are conducting an RFP process for consortium pricing arrangements and will publish these when the proposal process is completed.

For more information, contact Suzanne Riley at sriley@ssc.coop or (507) 281-6673.

SSC welcomes elected officials and school administrators to Legislative Forum

On February 2, SSC hosted the annual Legislative Breakfast and Forum. There were 60 school administrators in attendance from 22 districts, as well as SSC staff and Board members Carol Cravath, Mike Christensen, Brian Grudem, Al Nelson, and Don Andring. We also had a fantastic response from our elected officials and welcomed Senators Kevin Dahle, Carla Nelson, Jeremy Miller, Matt Schmit, and David Senjem and Representatives Mike Benson, Steve Drazkowski,

Kim Norton, Gene Pelowski, John Petersburg, and Jeanne Poppe.

This year's forum was led by Superintendent Bruce Klaehn of Dover-Eyota. He and other superintendents shared stories about the impact of specific mandates in their districts. There was lively discussion and time for plenty of questions and answers. SSC was honored to host and pleased with both the turn-out and the organization of the event!



Superintendent Bruce Klaehn presenting at the Forum.

Top Junior High Knowledge Bowl Teams compete; winners named

By Kirsten Kuehl

Fifty-three teams from 18 area districts participated in 2012-13 Junior High Knowledge Bowl. Teams competed in Round Robin competitions in October, November and December. Each team then competed in Sub-Regional competitions in January and the top twelve teams from each tier advanced to Regionals. The competitions consist of 1 written round (60 questions) and 4 oral rounds (45 questions/round).

The Junior High Knowledge Bowl Sub-Regional Competitions were held on January 8-9 at Rochester Community and Technical College. The Tier AA teams were from: Chatfield, Dover-Eyota, Kasson-Mantorville, Kenyon-Wanamingo, Pine Island, Plainview-Elgin-Millville, and Red Wing. The Tier A teams were from: Caledonia, Fillmore Central, Glenville-Emmons, Grand Meadow, Houston, Kingsland, Lanesboro, Mabel-Canton,



Rushford-Peterson, Southland, and Spring Grove.

The Junior High Knowledge Bowl Regional competitions were held on January 22 and 23 at Southeast Service Cooperative.

Teams placing at Regional

Tier A

1st placeRushford-Peterson 1
2nd place...Spring Grove 1
3rd place....Kingsland 1
4th place....Houston 1

Tier AA

1st placeDover-Eyota 3
2nd place...Kenyon-Wanamingo
Black
3rd place....Pine Island 1
4th place....Dover-Eyota 1

The Minnesota Service Cooperative Knowledge Bowl competitions are interdisciplinary academic contests for students. Junior High Knowledge Bowl is for students in grades 6-9. 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. This competition provides a format for student growth centered around academics. Teams consist of six students (six competing in the written round and five competing in each oral round).

Virtual Reality Showcase Event

By Kari Kubicek

SSC is excited to announce the upcoming Virtual Reality Showcase Event on Thursday, April 18, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The Virtual Reality Education Pathfinder program (VREP) is a partnership between government, education, and industry creating an ever-growing consortium of schools and businesses committed to bringing a new kind of learning and teaching



to schools across the country. VREP works by capturing student interest through the use of Virtual Reality and 3D.

The showcase event will feature several VREP district students

presenting projects they have developed using the virtual reality equipment. VREP teachers will also be available to talk about their experience in implementing the VREP program in their schools.

Watch for more details about this event in the next few weeks. Please contact Kari Kubicek, VREP Program Coordinator, at kkubicek@ssc.coop or (507)281-6668 with any questions.

Top placing teams at Regional Knowledge Bowl

Tier A Teams



1st Place - Rushford-Peterson 1



2nd Place - Spring Grove 1



3rd Place - Kingsland 1



4th Place - Houston 1

Tier AA Teams



1st Place - Dover-Eyota 3



2nd Place - Kenyon-Wanamingo Black



3rd Place - Pine Island 1



4th Place - Dover-Eyota 1

How to help today's wired students learn to focus

By Larry Rosen

A recent Pew Internet & American Life Project report surveyed 2,462 middle and high school Advanced Placement and national writing project teachers and concluded: "Overwhelming majorities agree with the assertions that today's digital technologies are creating an easily distracted generation with short attention spans, and today's students are too 'plugged in' and need more time away from their digital technologies."

Two-thirds of respondents with the notion that today's digital technologies do more to distract students than to help them academically. Mind you, we are talking about teachers who typically teach the best and brightest students—and not those who we would generally think of as highly distractible. So, what can be done about this problem?

Recently, my research team observed 263 middle school, high school, and university students studying for a mere 15 minutes in their homes. We were interested in whether students could maintain focus and, if not, what might be distracting them. Every minute we noted exactly what they were doing, whether they were studying, if they were texting or listening to music or watching television in the background, and if they had a computer screen in front of them and what websites were being visited.

The results were startling, considering that the students knew we were watching them and most likely assumed we were observing



how well they were able to study. First, these students were only able to stay on task for an average of three to five minutes before losing their focus. Universally, their distractions came from technology, including: (1) having more devices available in their studying environment, such as iPods, laptops, and smart phones; (2) texting; and (3) accessing Facebook.

Other researchers have found similar attention spans among computer programmers and medical students, and in those studies technology provided the major sources of distraction.

We also looked at whether these distractors might predict who was a better student in general. Not surprisingly, those who stayed on task longer and had well-developed study strategies were better students. The worst students were those who consumed more media each day and had a preference for switching back and forth between several tasks at the same time.

One additional result stunned us: If the students checked Facebook just once during the 15-minute study period, they had a lower grade-point average. It didn't matter how many times they looked at

Facebook; once was enough. Not only did social media negatively impact their temporary focus and attention, but it ultimately impacted their entire school performance.

So, what was going on with these students? We have asked thousands of students this exact question, and they tell us that when alerted by a beep, a vibration, or a flashing image, they feel compelled or drawn to attend to that stimulus. However, they also tell us that even without the sensory intrusions, they are constantly being distracted internally by thoughts such as, "I wonder if anyone commented on my Facebook post," or "I wonder if my friend responded to the text message I sent five minutes ago"—or even "I wonder what interesting new YouTube videos my friends have liked." Three-fourths of teens and young adults check their devices every 15 minutes or less, and if not allowed to do so, they get highly anxious. And anxiety inhibits learning.

I am convinced that learning to live with both internal and external distractions is all about teaching the concept of focus. In psychology, we refer to the ability to understand when you need to focus and when it is not necessary to do so as "metacognition," or knowing how your brain functions. In one recent study, we found a perfect demonstration of metacognition, albeit totally by accident. In this study, we showed a video in several psychology courses, which was followed by a graded test. Students

Helping wired students continued from page 15

were told that we might be texting them during the videotape and to answer our text messages. In fact, one-third did not get a text message, one-third got four texts during the 30-minute video, and the other third got eight texts—enough, we guessed, to distract them and make them unable to concentrate on the video. One other wrinkle was that we timed the text messages to occur when important material was being shown on the videotape that was going to be tested later.

We were right that the students who got eight texts did worse—they averaged a “D” on the test—but the students who received four texts and the students who did not receive a text message during the video got a “C” on our test. However, a mistake in our instructions told us more about what was going on inside the students’ heads when the text arrived. We told students to reply to our text messages, but we did not tell them when to reply. Those students who manifested a knee-jerk reaction to their vibrating phone and answered our texts immediately were the ones who got the lower test grades. Those few students who opted to wait a few minutes to respond got the highest scores in the class.

After the study, when asked why they did not respond immediately, they told us that they were waiting for a time when the videotape material seemed less important and not likely to be on the test. Those students were using their metacognitive skills to decide when was a good time to be distracted

and when it was important to focus.

How do we teach focus in a world that is constantly drawing our attention elsewhere? One strategy that we are using in classrooms around the world is called “technology breaks.” Here’s how it works: In many classrooms, students are allowed to use their smart phones, tablets, or laptops as tools to search the web, access social media, or perform other activities that promote learning. In such classrooms, teachers often report that in between times that students are using their devices for schoolwork, they are checking their eMail and text messages, tweeting, or accessing social media.

A tech break starts with the teacher asking all students to check their texts, the web, Facebook, whatever, for a minute and then turn the device on silent and place it upside down on the desk in plain sight and “focus” on classroom work for 15 minutes. The upsidedown device prohibits external distractions from vibrations and flashing alerts and provides a signal to the brain that there is no need to be internally distracted, because an opportunity to “check in” will be coming soon.

At the end of the 15-minute focus time, the teacher declares a tech break and the students take another minute to check in with their virtual worlds, followed by more focus times and more tech breaks. The trick is to gradually lengthen the time between tech breaks to teach students how to focus for longer periods of time

without being distracted. I have teachers using this in classrooms, parents using it at the dinner table or at a restaurant, and bosses using tech breaks during meetings with great success. So far, though, the best we can get is about 30 minutes of focus, thanks to Steve Jobs (and others) for making such alluring, distracting technologies.

Technology is not going to disappear from our world and, in fact, it is only going to get more appealing as screens become sharper, video becomes clearer, and touch screens become the norm—all of which attract our sensory system and beckon us to pay attention to them rather than schoolwork or the people in front of us.

With more electronic social connections in our lives, internal distractors are also increasing—and tech breaks can be used to train the brain to focus without worrying about what we might be missing in our virtual social world.

Larry Rosen is a professor of psychology at California State University and author of five books on the “psychology of technology.” He wrote this for The Free Lance-Star in Fredericksburg, Va. (c) 2012, The Free Lance-Star; distributed by MCT Information Services.

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Recent Board meeting actions and information

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

In addition to routine fiscal and business actions, the Board took the following actions in recent regular meetings:

December 2012

Approved a resolution committing to participation in the statewide CCOGA Health Pool Bid process.

Accepted a grant in the amount of \$22,000 from MAELC and approximately \$7,500 from the Mayo Clinic Career Awareness Program to support the addition of a Food Science Mobile Lab to the current Mobile Science Lab Program.

Revised the SSC Board Elections timeline due to inclement weather meeting cancellation by rescheduling the deadline for receipt of ballots at SSC, counting them, and declaring winners. Incumbent Board members on the ballot were appointed to continue their service through the month of January.

Tabled action on appointing a replacement to fill Don Andring's remaining year on the MSC Board.

Accepted the application by the City of Lonsdale for CCOGA membership in SSC effective November 1, 2012.

Approved the 2011-2012 Annual Report.

January 2013

Accepted the report of the Canvassing Committee and declared election of the following individuals:

Education Position: Two new 4-year terms (January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2016): Al Nelson and Molly Rieke.

Government Position – New 4-year term (January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2016): Theresa Arrick-Kruger.

Recognized Don Andring for 17 years of service as an active SSC Board member, having served on several committees and as Clerk during his terms as well as Chairperson of the MSC Board for a term. Chairperson Cravath presented Don with a recognition gift.

Elected 2013 Board Officers: Chair - Carol Cravath, Clerk - Al Nelson, Vice-Chair – Peggy Merkel, and Treasurer – Susan Phillips.

Appointed Mike Christensen to complete the MSC Board term through June 30, 2014 vacated by Don Andring's retirement from the Board.

Set the Board meeting schedule for 2013 through January 2014:

- Wednesday, January 23, 2013
- Wednesday, February 27
- Wednesday, March 27
- Tuesday, April 16 – this is the rescheduled date made at the February meeting
- Wednesday, May 22
- Wednesday, June 2
- Wednesday, July 31
- Wednesday, August 21
- Wednesday, September 25
- Wednesday, October 23
- Monday, November 25
- Monday, December 23 OR Monday, December 30 - to be set later in the year.
- Wednesday, January 22, 2014 – REGULAR AND ANNUAL MEETING

Accepted the retirement resignation of Diane Schwinghammer effective February 8, 2013, and extended the Board's deep appreciation for her contributions to development and delivery of instructional services support to SSC Members.

Accepted the retirement resignation of Dick Riley effective June 30, 2013, and extended the Board's deep appreciation for his years of service since 1992 in several roles of support to members and the staff and Board.

February 2013

Chairperson Cravath appointed Board Members to the following committees: Finance, Personnel, Policies, and ByLaws.

Accepted the settlement report for the 2011-2012 School Health Insurance Pool and credited calculated excess claims fund for the one calculated eligible group, Medford School District, in the amount of \$7,631.50.

Authorized the Executive Director to initiate a search for a Program Assistant and fill the position with sufficient time for training prior to Dick Riley's retirement.

Approved a salary adjustment for Center of Excellence Special Education Specialist Barbara Marchetti equivalent to an annual \$2,500 pay increase effective February 15, 2013.

Accepted the notice of membership withdrawal by the City of Goodview effective July 1, 2013.

Changed the April Board meeting date to Tuesday, April 16.

Calendar

March

Introduction to E-Textbooks

March 5
8:00 - 10:30 AM

So Many Words; So Little Time - Growing Your Students' Vocabulary

March 5
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

MASA Region 1 Administrators Winter Session

March 5
11:30 AM - 3:00 PM

MSTP Elementary Science Cohort Session

March 6
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

MSTP Math Cohort Session

March 7
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

English Learners Leaders' (EL) Network

March 13
1:00 - 3:00 PM

Middle School 6+1 Traits Writing Across the Content Areas

March 19
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Senior High Knowledge Bowl Sub-Regional-Tier A

March 19 at RCTC
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

Senior High Knowledge Bowl Sub-Regional-Tier AA

March 20 at RCTC
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

AAC Meeting

March 20
12:00 - 3:00 PM

Senior High Knowledge Bowl Regional-Tier A

March 21
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

Senior High Knowledge Bowl Regional-Tier AA

March 22
8:00 AM - 2:30 PM

Save Your License Saturday

March 23
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

MDE Teacher-Principal Evaluation Forum - Session 3

March 27
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

SSC Board Meeting

March 27
5:30 - 8:00 PM

MDE Teacher-Principal Evaluation Forum - Session 3

March 28
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

April

SSC Spring Health Promotion Forum

April 3
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

MDE Teacher-Principal Evaluation Forum - Session 3

April 4
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Gifted and Talented Network

April 4
12:00 - 3:00 PM

The Challenges and Joys of Parenting a Child With Gifts

April 4
6:30 - 8:00 PM

Leveraging the iPad Investment for Learning

April 8
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Generation AO (Always On)

April 8
6:00 - 8:00 PM

Leveraging the iPad Investment for Learning

April 9
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

AAC Meeting

April 11
12:00 - 3:00 PM

Math Strategies - K-5

April 15
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

SSC Board Meeting

April 16
5:30 - 8:00 PM

Sustainable Facilities - Resources for Going Green

April 26
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Enhancing Teaching and Learning in Language Arts

April 30
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Apple Learning Tour

April 30
1:00 - 4:00 PM

May

Enhancing Teaching and Learning in STEM

May 1
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Enhancing Teaching and Learning in Language Arts

May 1
1:00 - 4:00 PM

Gifted and Talented Network

May 2
12:00 - 3:00 PM

Parenting Twice Exceptional Children

May 2
6:30 - 8:00 PM

MASA Region 1 Administrators Spring Session

May 7
11:30 AM - 3:00 PM

English Learners Leaders' (EL) Network

May 9
1:00 - 3:00 PM

AAC Meeting

May 16
12:00 - 3:00 PM

Young Authors, Young Artists Conference

May 21 & 22
8:15 AM - 1:30 PM

SSC Board Meeting

May 22
5:30 - 8:00 PM

June

Math Strategies - Grade 6 - High School

June 10
8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

An Introduction to Reading Power: Linking Thinking to Reading Instruction

June 19
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Astronomy: Connecting Awe with Aha!

June 20
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM



SSC is a 2012 Recipient of the Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility.

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