

Cooperative Connection

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Inside

Consumer Health Plans	1
Health Promotion Programming Funds and Workshop.....	4
Whole Person Health Support ..	6
Dodge County Health Fair	7
Knowledge Delivery Systems ...	8
New Online Bus Driver Course, Award to HVED Director	9
A Message from Springsted	10
History Day Seminar	11
MSC Online Learning	12
Spelling Bee Sponsors, New Members.....	14
Knowledge Bowl, New SMART Board Classes	15
E2T2 Update.....	16
Mobile Science Lab News	17
Board Updates.....	18
Calendar.....	19



Southeast Service Cooperative
210 Wood Lake Drive SE
Rochester, Minnesota 55904
ph (507) 288-1282
fax (507) 288-7663
www.ssc.coop

Math and Science Teacher Academy picks up steam A (PLC) + B (Lesson Study) = (X)cellence

by Heidi Knepper

Southeast Service Cooperative (SSC) hosted the second module of the Math & Science Teacher Academy, a program made possible through a



Academy teachers deep in a group discussion.

collaboration between SSC, Winona State University and The Minnesota Department of Education, in Rochester, November 19 20, 2008.

The teachers in the Academy have been participating in intensive Lesson Study as well as Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings with colleagues at their respective sites. Participation in this rigorous program allows them to experience the power of on site high quality professional development.

Math and Science Teacher Academy
continued on page 13

Kasson-Mantorville's Nancy Wiitanen honored with prestigious education award

by Nicole LaChapelle

Nancy Wiitanen was stunned when she was presented with the WEM Foundation's Regional Teacher Achievement Award at the Kasson Mantorville High School Homecoming Pep Fest on September 26. Nancy, a chemistry teacher at the High School, was nominated by Kasson Mantorville Superintendent Peter Grant.

When asked why he nominated Nancy for the award, Grant shared, Nancy is a phenomenal science teacher. She spends countless hours before and after school with her students. He added many Kasson Mantorville



Kasson Mantorville teacher Nancy Wiitanen displays her award next to SSC Director of Operations, Dale Walston.

Nancy Wiitanen continued on page 13

Consumer health plans lower costs, add value

by Bill Colopoulos



It's official: Consumer Directed Health Plans (CDHP, VEBA, HSAs) cost less than traditional health benefit plans such as HMOs and PPOs. Perhaps more importantly, CDHPs produce substantial savings for both plan sponsors AND employees; adding value for healthcare consumers.

CDHPs are, simply defined, the combination of a lower cost group health plan and an individual account for each employee into which funds are placed to be used for medical costs, or saved, at the employee's discretion.

CDHPs encourage better health, help accrue savings in personal healthcare savings accounts, and support efforts to lower healthcare costs. As reported recently by Blue Cross (nationwide), it is becoming evident that the current slow down in healthcare costs reflected in our recent Southeast School and City/County health pool renewals can be attributed to the increase in participation in consumer directed health plans by our groups employees.

Nationally, in 2007 participation in CDHPs grew by 25% compared to 2006, while the overall healthcare cost trend (for all plans nationwide)

remained steady at 6% during the same period. Trend has tracked pretty much at the same rate during 2008, but in 2009, the national healthcare trend is expected to drop to 5.7%.

However, when trend is examined by health plan type, CDHPs project trend is at 4.5% while non CDHPs project at 6.5%. (This information was recently released in a 2007 survey conducted by Mercer Consulting).

CDHP savings accrue to plan members

Both surveys show that CDHP success is being shared by employer and employee. Statistics show that employees participating in CDHPs are over five times more likely to have funds remaining in their savings accounts that will carry forward to subsequent years than they are to deplete their funds entirely. The savings success of CDHPs combined with employer contributions to employee savings accounts is having a positive effect in attracting new members to these new programs.

Account contributions by plan sponsor crucial to enrollment success

Participation in CDHPs is linked directly to the plan sponsor making significant contributions to their employees healthcare savings accounts (VEBA, HRA or HSAs). Employees who receive contributions from their plan sponsor (employer) are much more likely to participate in a CDHP than those who receive no contribution. Without an employer contribution, a strong negative perception exists that CDHPs are a simple cost shift

from employer to employees. For CDHPs to be successful, employees must receive an incentive to participate in them; a significant contribution to the employee's healthcare savings account is critical.

CDHP controls utilization without compromising care

The Blue Cross report, based upon survey results of their national clientele, showed that CDHP savings are attributable to reduced utilization of healthcare services. Yet the results also showed that chronic care compliance remained virtually the same for those members in CDHPs and those still covered by traditional PPO and/or HMO programs.

The Southeast Service Cooperative pools have offered CDHPs (VEBA programs) for five years. The pools groups reflect the success illustrated in the Blue Cross and Mercer surveys. The pools lower than market trend and claims distribution results clearly show CDHPs produce superior results for the vast majority of the pools members.

The Blue Cross report also reveals their CDHP and non CDHP populations are increasingly similar. Early concerns that CDHPs worked only for the wealthy healthy have been proven false by actual results. CDHP participants now reflect the average cross section of health plan participants in general.

Health Plan continued on page 3

Healthcare Utilization: Study

Savings due to reduced utilization are observed in CDHPs, however, CDHP enrollees are not foregoing needed care



Full replacement CDHPs optimize value

Some plan sponsors have introduced CDHPs as an alternative option to a traditional PPO or HMO plan. However, CDHP savings have accrued optimally to groups who adopt CDHPs as full replacement plans.

Local CDHP Results

The Southeast Service Cooperative pools have offered CDHPs (VEBA programs) for five years. The pools groups reflect the success illustrated in the Blue Cross and Mercer surveys. The pools lower than market trend and claims distribution results clearly show CDHPs produce superior results for the vast majority of the pools members.

For a copy of the Blue Cross survey data or for more information about our pooled CDHP programs available through our pools, please contact Bill Colopoulos at: bcolopoulos@ssc.coop

Reference 1: *The industry wide BCBSA 2008 CDHP Member Experience Survey*

Reference 2: *Mercer 2007 US Health Plan Survey*

City of Kasson earns value from consumer directed health plan



A distinguishing value of participation in the Service Cooperative self funded health insurance pool is that groups can potentially earn funds back in periods of lower than projected utilization. Cities of Kasson and Harmony and Austin Housing Redevelopment received checks from the pool in July. Accepting the check for Kasson from SSC Executive Director Suzanne Riley are, from left to right: Finance director Nancy Richardson, Mayor Tim Tjosaas, Suzanne, Deputy Clerk Linda Rappe, City Administrator Randy Lenth.

Apply NOW! Funds available for health promotion programming

by Kari Kubicek

SSC launched an Employee Health Support Program this September that provides various free resources for SSC Insurance Pool Members including funding to start or enhance health promotion programming within their organization.

What services are included?

- Local Employee Health Promotion Coordination Training
- Local Funding Assistance for Health Pool Members
- Online Health Assessment with tools and resources
- Health Fair Consulting
- Biometric Testing (\$10/person testing supplies at cost, free training)
- Incentive Items at cost
- Two to three topical forums each year at Southeast Service Cooperative

How much funding can our Pool Member Group receive?

The Local Health promotion support funding is available in the following amounts, based on the group's size (number of contracts in the group):

At or over 200.....	\$1,500
100 - 199 Contracts.....	\$1,250
51 - 99 Contracts.....	\$1,000
At or under 50 contracts...	\$750

What can we use the funds for?

Funds 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. Activities must be made available to all employees.

What are the requirements to receive employee health promotion program funding?

1. The site must be actively participating in the Southeast Service Cooperative health insurance pool.
2. The site must have an active wellness committee representing the employees OR must establish a committee at the beginning of the funding period. The group must appoint a local wellness coordinator.
3. The wellness coordinator must sign a letter of agreement.
4. The wellness coordinator must participate in the SSC Health Promotion Program training/planning session and regional health promotion forums and encourage other committee members and employees to attend.
5. The wellness coordinator must complete a proposal application and budget for at least two Health promotion activities. We encourage you to include offering a health assessment tool in your plan. The application must be approved by SSC staff prior to receiving funding.
6. Communications about your



program should include the statement, Partly sponsored with funding from Southeast Service Cooperative Health Insurance Pool.

7. One half of the funding is distributed when the proposal is approved by SSC staff. To receive the balance, the local coordinator must submit by June 15: a) a final report, b) an employee evaluation of your program (we will provide the form), and c) list of expenses report with receipts to receive the balance. (Balance funds can be provided sooner with submission of documentation, receipts, activity explanation.)

How do we apply for funds?

Visit www.ssc.coop or contact SSC staff member Kari Kubicek or Nicole LaChapelle for an application to lay out what you will accomplish using the funds, along with a budget. We may have questions or ask you for clarification or additional details. Once we approve your plan, you're set to go!

Although other SSC Members (not in the pools) are not eligible for the funding, for only \$400 per year these organizations may benefit from the many other opportunities available to assist them in their health promotion programming.

Health funding continued on page 5

SSC is committed to provide your employees and their families the benefits this program offers. If you have questions or would like to discuss this program with us, we invite you to contact us by phone or email. We look forward to working

with you as we collaboratively promote good health and fitness. Kari Kubicek, Program Coordinator, 507 281 6668, kkubicek@ssc.coop and Nicole LaChapelle, Program Assistant, 507 281 6674, nlachapelle@ssc.coop

Workshop participants learn how to successfully implement worksite wellness programming

by Kari Kubicek



Through its Employee Health Promotion Support Program, SSC hosted a Health Promotion Forum in late October that provided participants with information and strategies needed to develop successful wellness programming in their organizations.

Linda Pellowski, Employer Health Improvement Consultant with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, summarized the results of the Worksite Assessment Surveys completed by SSC health insurance pool members this year and updated the group on current trends in wellness programming. Linda also presented the online resources available to pool members through the BCBSM website.

SSC Executive Director Suzanne Riley and staff members Kari Kubicek and Nicole LaChapelle provided an overview of the

resources and opportunities available through the SSC Employee Health Promotion Support Program. Resources from other health agencies were presented to the group, including the Minnesota Department of Health's *Work Well Healthy Minnesota Toolkit*, a comprehensive collection of strategies, suggestions and resources to help build a worksite health promotion program. It can be downloaded at www.ssc.coop. Click on benefit services, and scroll to the bottom of the page.

Groups of participants worked on specific scenarios outlining obstacles that they may face when implementing a wellness program and strategized how to handle these challenges. Time was also dedicated to working on developing their own wellness programs within their organizations.

Jill Walters, Olmsted County Community Coordinator for Steps to a Healthier Rochester presented a strong case for the need for wellness programming, how chronic disease affects health costs today, and what wellness programming can do to prevent chronic disease and other health problems. At the end of the session, participants were given the opportunity to try out SSC's Working Walkstation.

Participants commented that the workshop benefitted them because of the chance to network and see what resources are available to them and to hear ideas about ways to incorporate and promote healthy living in the workplace.

In this training participants gained knowledge in successful health promotion and learned about several resources available to them through SSC and other health agencies

SSC staff benefitted from the day as well by listening to the participants wellness programming needs and suggestions that will assist them in future forum planning.

The next forum through the Employee Health Promotion Forum will take place in January watch for upcoming announcements! If you have any questions, comments, or are interested in obtaining materials mentioned in this article, please contact SSC staff members Kari Kubicek, kkubicek@ssc.coop, or Nicole LaChapelle, nlachapelle@ssc.coop.

Please see page 6 for information on Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota's Whole Person Health Support Program.

SSC Health Pools focus on “Whole Person Health Support”

by Kari Kubicek

SSC's health pool members will soon have access to a new service incorporated into the pool program through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota (BCBSM).

Launching January 1, 2009, BCBSM's Whole Person Health Support Program replaces the program suite known as BluePrint for Health and is an entirely new approach to health and wellness. Members will know these services focused on the whole person rather than on particular diseases or health challenges as Blue Cross Health Support. Existing services such as Fitness Discounts, Healthy Start® prenatal support, EAP and the 24 Hour Nurse Advice Line are part of this new, integrated health support model.

Getting more involved in your health and health care choices is vital to long term cost control. The Whole Person Support Program is a health management solution that brings together the three most powerful drivers of engagement:

- Plan design that encourages you to make healthier choices;



- Care delivery that guides you to the most appropriate care in the most efficient settings, and
- Health support that focuses resources where there is the greatest opportunity for impact.

Until now, health management has focused on people with particular diseases and conditions. The Whole Person Health Support program allows BCBSM to look at a richer set of data to identify opportunities to extend helpful support, including:

- Medical claims provide health histories.

- Pharmacy claims indicate medication compliance.

- Self reported health assessments detail smoking, dietary and exercise patterns, and openness to behavior change.

- Member conversations with Blue Cross Health Support

staff add context and reveal relationships among behaviors, attitudes, health risks and health events.

As an example, a person with diabetes doing everything recommended to manage her condition has a lower opportunity score, meaning they need less support. Another person with diabetes who is not taking prescribed medications and hasn't had recommended tests has a higher opportunity for improving their health and receives more support. Rather than treating everyone with a condition the same, support is finely tuned to each individual's needs.

If you have questions related to this program, please contact Kari Kubicek, kkubicek@ssc.coop, or visit www.bluecrossmn.com. You can also link to this information through www.ssc.coop.

Happy Holidays from all of us at Southeast Service Cooperative!



Dodge County health fair draws a crowd

by Kari Kubicek

Dodge County hosted an employee health fair October 27, and the participation rate was much higher than anticipated. Lisa Hager, Dodge County Employee Relations Director, head of Dodge County's Wellness Committee and the main organizer of the event, stated, "Our employees really enjoyed the health fair. I think they received the most useful information from having their cholesterol, triglycerides, and glucose levels measured with the biometric testing equipment provided by SSC." Hager indicated that 103 county employees underwent the testing.

In addition to the biometric testing stations, a variety of staffed informational booths provided information on the following health topics: employee assistance program (EAP), nutrition and weight loss, Glow Germ, massage therapy, living wills, a stroke assessment tool, a flu shot station, adult immunizations, smoking cessation, information on the local Farmers Market, dental health, safety information and home emergency preparedness. Computers were available for participants to complete an online

health assessment sponsored by SSC. Drawings were held to award individuals for participating in the fair.

Hager reported that she learned a lot during the organization and hosting of the health fair. She indicated that she would move the start time of the event forward to account for employees who are fasting for the biometric testing.

Hager is not sure if another health fair will be scheduled for next year, but she hopes that the county will be able to provide the biometric testing opportunity to their employees at least once per year.

The information from the testing is an important picture of individual health, and employees are interested in tracking these measurements. Making the testing available to the employees also gives them the opportunity to take action sooner than later, Hager stated.

Hager worked with other members of the county's wellness committee, three Public Health employees and an executive assistant to organize, promote, and hold the health fair.

Asked how she promoted the



A Dodge County health fair attendee undergoes biometric testing.

health fair to result in the high employee response, Hager said that they used payroll stuffers, the newsletter, and she sent out tons of emails to promote the event.

People were comparing me to the people who promote digital TV because of all of the emails that I sent out. Considering the high number of participants at the health fair, Hager's persistence paid off.

If your organization is interested in hosting an employee health fair, SSC can provide you with assistance in the planning of your event. We also have biometric testing equipment available for organization's use. Please contact Kari Kubicek, kkubicek@ssc.coop, or Nicole LaChapelle, nlachapelle@ssc.coop for further information.

Faribault's Lincoln Elementary School honored as a 2008 NCLB Blue Ribbon School

Fairbault's Lincoln Elementary has been honored as a 2008 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School. It is one of 320 schools in the nation to receive the award.

The award recognizes schools for helping students achieve at very high levels and for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap.

In 2003 Lincoln was dropped off the list of Minnesota schools that needed improvement, and for the last six years it has met

Adequate Yearly Progress, which is a standard that all schools are expected to meet.

Lincoln principal Mark Wergeland attributed the award and national notoriety to the hard work of staff, students and parents.

It's been a long effort, he said. We feel very good about it.

The school was one of just five public elementary schools in the state to achieve the Blue Ribbon status.

SSC introduces online professional learning community resource

Districts across the country need to meet the challenge of how to best deliver and manage professional development for their educators. Knowledge Delivery Systems (KDS) has partnered with Southeast Service Cooperative to earn educators Clock Hours Towards the 125 Hour State License Recertification Requirement. KDS Online Professional Development allows districts to harness technology in order to deliver, assess, and track high quality training at a reduced cost

Using the KDS eLearning Classroom Platform, teachers can instantly access online, self paced courses in a diverse assortment of educational topics produced by nationally acclaimed educators, including Carol Ann Tomlinson, Jay McTighe, Susan Winebrenner, Todd Whitaker, Clifton Taulbert, Debbie Silver, and many other renowned lecturers.

The KDS Classroom greatly enriches districts resources with a diverse course library of high interest topics. The easy to use, CODiE award winning platform provides dynamic eLearning through:

- Streaming video based lectures with synchronized PowerPoint slideshows
- Discussion forums (and optional live chats),
- Assessment activities
- Printable resources
- Online note taking
- Cumulative coursework portfolios

Administrators gain accountability through the integrated Learning Management System (LMS), which

furnishes using tracking and aggregate (exportable) data reports. Facilitators can cultivate Professional Learning Communities using Discussion Boards to post announcements, share best practices, and foster intercommunication amongst participants.

Timely, high interest offerings include:

- Instructional Strategies
- Differentiated Instruction
- Middle School Instruction
- Assessment and Evaluation
- Teaching Diverse Learners
- Brain Research and Learning Styles
- Aiding Students with Learning Disabilities
- English Language Learners & Cultural Awareness
- Preparing Students for High Stakes Tests
- Anger Management and School Violence Prevention
- Gifted Education: The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model
- Building Educational Leaders and Strong School Communities
- Coaching and Mentoring to Improve Student Learning
- What Great Teachers Do Differently

Discovery Based Mathematics
Character Education
Improving Literacy
And many more

COMING SOON!

Response to Intervention (RTI)
Teaching English Language Learners across the Curriculum Using Sheltered Instruction

Courses are available for individual educators to purchase at \$55 for a 10 Clock Hour Course.

Districts may call 1 800 728 0032 or email SSC@kdsi.org for questions about bulk pricing.



www.kdsi.org/SSC

New online bus driver emergency preparedness courses offered

Southeast Service Cooperative's Online Learning Program is happy to announce two new bus driver orientated courses available through the SSC Online Health and Safety Training Service.

Pre trip Your School Bus (BUS1):

Ensure the safety of your students before the bus leaves the school grounds. This program provides a detailed checklist for drivers to use for pre trip inspections.

Included are sections on:

- Around, inside and outside the bus;
- The engine compartment,

Required documents;
Brake and emergency equipment.

School Bus Drivers: Dealing With Behavior (BUS2): Help your school bus drivers learn how to manage student passenger behavior with this important training program.

Types of student behavior are unacceptable on school buses and why

Common reasons for misconduct

Management techniques
How to deal with situations that may arise.

For more information on joining the schools and counties currently using Southeast Service Cooperative's Online Health and Safety Training, contact Dick Riley at 507 281 6666 or driley@ssc.coop.

Visit the SSC website, www.ssc.coop, and under Administrative Services, select Health & Safety Services, then click on the link to Coastal Learning System for more detailed information.

Director Woodward of Hiawatha Valley Education District wins award, praise from area administrators

by Cynthia Porter

Gary Woodward, who is the executive director of the Hiawatha Valley Education District (HVED), has spent 31 years working to address the needs of youth with mental health disorders.

From his days as a school psychologist to his tenure leading one of the largest education collaboratives in Minnesota, Woodward has been referred to as a visionary.

Woodward's kind nature, his sharp intelligence and his ability to encourage creative thinking for the betterment of children were all lauded by nominators, but each said they respect him the most for his dedication to helping children. Rick Wolter, principal of La Crescent High School, said Woodward has



Gary Woodward

dedicated hours to La Crescent programs even when he wasn't being paid, doing so only to help the children. Gary was a key player in our district creating and managing a mental health center for secondary students, but the HVED has not earned a dime for his efforts. He works on a different scale than many, he wants to see kids be successful. He is most deserving of any award given to a person who cares, gives and expects very little in return.

Superintendents, principals, mental health professionals and peers all stepped up to say much the same, telling the association they just could not find someone more passionate or more deserving than Gary Woodward.

In my 30 years as an educator, I have never met a more committed and dedicated individual who worked passionately as an advocate for those in our community who might have the greatest needs, wrote District 861 Superintendent Paul Durand. If I need a job done and done well, I would seek out Gary Woodward. He is one of the best educators that I have ever worked with.

This article appeared in its entirety in the 11/12/2008 issue of the Winona Post.

Public finance recommendations of the Government Finance Officers Association

Jim Schmitt, Vice President and Client Representative

Most school district officials do not deal with the municipal bond market on a routine basis. Therefore, they often seek advice from outside organizations. The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) can provide some unbiased guidance to school districts in regards to the municipal market. GFOA is an independent professional association whose purpose is to enhance and promote the professional management of governments for the public benefit by identifying and developing financial policies and practices and promoting them through education, training and leadership. GFOA has no affiliation with any of the public advisory firms.

GFOA recently approved updated recommendations to guide public finance practices for school districts and other entities. Utilizing the services of a financial advisor is a dominant theme in their recommendations. Four new or newly revised Recommended Practices developed by GFOA's Debt Management Committee contain information and recommendations related to municipal bond sales. The four Recommended Practices include:

- Selecting and Managing the Method of Sale of State and Local Government Bonds
- Selecting Financial Advisors
- Selecting Underwriters for Negotiated Bond Sales
- Pricing Bonds in a Negotiated Sale

The key recommendations from these reports are paraphrased in

brief below. The complete recommendations, including background and rationale for each, are available from GFOA at www.gfoa.org, under Recommended Practices and Debt Management .

Recommendations:

1. Unless the issuer has sufficient in house expertise and access to market information, it should hire an outside financial advisor prior to undertaking a debt financing. Issuers should select financial advisors on the basis of merit using a competitive process and periodically review and evaluate these relationships. If the issuer is contemplating a negotiated bond sale, the financial advisor should be retained prior to selecting the underwriter so that the issuer receives advice on the method of sale as well as the selection process for an underwriter.
2. When state or local laws do not prescribe a method of sale, issuers should consult with their financial advisor to review relevant factors on the method and structure of the sale. Due to inherent conflict of interest, issuers should not use a broker/dealer or potential underwriter to assist in the method of sale selection unless that firm has agreed not to underwrite the transaction. This recommendation also delineates the factors that would support using a competitive sale.

3. In a negotiated transaction, GFOA recommends that a firm hired as a financial advisor should not be allowed to resign in order to underwrite the proposed negotiated sale of bonds, and that issuers use an RFP process to select the underwriter to promote fairness, objectivity and transparency.
4. Issuers should strive for the best balance between the yield for each maturity and the sales commission to achieve the lowest overall cost of financing. In order to achieve this objective, issuers are encouraged to discuss specific goals to be achieved in pricing the bonds and expectations regarding the roles of each member of the financing team, including the issuer and its independent financial advisor.

Springsted, as an independent advisor, fully supports GFOA's recommendations. We strongly advise school districts to seek advice from one of Minnesota's independent advisors prior to selling bonds. Doing so will ensure that you receive independent advice from an advisor who will not be involved in underwriting the debt, minimizing costs to the issuer and maximizing the overall benefit of the bond sale.



Springsted

History Day theme to focus on historic individuals

by Kari Kubicek

SSC hosted a History Day Workshop in October, led by Jessica Ellingson, History Day Program Associate from the Minnesota Historical Society. This workshop was offered through the Teaching American History Grant project, *Blufflands and Prairies: Southern Minnesota's Place in the Fabric of America's Story*.



Teachers at the seminar work on creating mock ups of History Day projects.

30,000 students nation wide participate in History Day in some capacity, whether it's just as a classroom assignment or as part of the competition. It is an exciting co curricular program that encourages young people to explore a historical subject related to an annual theme. The 2009 theme is "The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies."

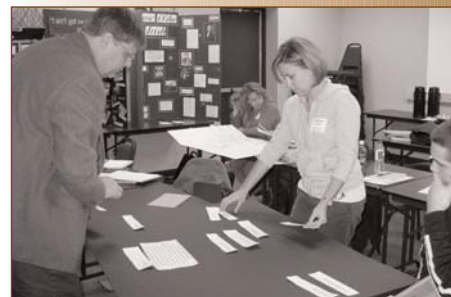
This year's workshop at SSC was an advanced format for teachers who wanted a more in depth discussion of historical skills and classroom management. Sessions included instruction in teaching thesis statements and analysis, analyzing the 2009 theme "The Individual in History: Actions and Legacies," and guiding students in developing their History Day projects. Previous workshops have provided a macro look at History Day, and this year's workshop was a micro investigation

of the particular skills needed to complete a quality project.

Jason Freed and Tom Hilgren, two veteran History Day teachers, gave a short introduction to the programs at their schools and then received questions from the workshops participants on everything from structuring History Day in the classroom to raising money to participate in the national contest. Hilgren, a long time History Day teacher from Chatfield, has attended the national contest with his students multiple times, and Freed, a three year veteran from Houston, attended the national contest this year as a Minnesota History Day Teacher of Merit.

Participants were shown various examples of older History Day projects and were asked to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the projects. They also viewed a 1993 documentary on the International Workers of the World and were asked to pinpoint the differences between the state and national versions. And finally, the group discussed what specific elements could be improved upon on several exhibits displayed around the room.

SE teachers had a particularly successful year for History Day in 2007 2008. Three projects qualified for the national event, which is a great accomplishment. Hanna Cody, Nora Laskowski, Maria McGlinch, Carrie Schweyen, and Megan Vandevoorde from St. Francis of Assisi School in Rochester went to nationals with their junior group performance. Erik Hilgren and Matti Boice from Chosen Valley Jr/Sr. High went to nationals with their senior group documentary. Bailey Hilgren



Teachers organizing elements of a successful History Day project.

(also from Chosen Valley) went to nationals with her junior individual documentary.

Besides the three groups that went to nationals, there was one fourth place from Stewartville, 18 projects that received honorable mention, and four projects that received special prizes in the history of agriculture, Civil War history, humanitarian history, and a U of M scholarship.

This is the third year that a History Day Workshop has been offered through the Teaching American History grant project. A fourth workshop will be offered next year free to any teacher interested in initiating History Day curriculum into their classroom, or for those teachers who currently do offer the curriculum but would like to gain more experience. Through the grant project, SE teachers are eligible to receive free follow up assistance directly in their classrooms from Jessica

If you would like more information related to History Day or the TAH grant project, please contact Kari Kubicek, kkubicek@ssc.coop or Nicole LaChapelle, nlachapelle@ssc.coop, or visit the project website at www.blufflandsandprairies.org.

MSC Online Learning Project – your district’s step in the right direction

by Kari Kubicek



SSC launched the MSC Online Learning Project this fall with four districts enrolled in the program: Albert Lea Public Schools, Byron Public Schools, Cannon Falls Public Schools, and Northfield Public Schools. Seven students have enrolled in courses offered through this program.

Through the MSC Online Learning Project, districts receive:

- Online coursework for your teachers to use

- Online instructors available if your district does not have a qualified teacher for a

- Specific online course offered through the program

- Access to the Moodle Course Management System

- Online facilitator teacher training for up to three teachers

- Online PLC and work space

- Opportunity for your own teachers to publish their own courses

The Minnesota Service Cooperatives (MSC) Online Learning Project, an approved online provider with the Minnesota Department of Education, is a collaborative of Northeast Service Cooperative and its member school

districts, SSC, Lakes Country Service Cooperative, and Resource Training and Solutions.

The program represents an innovative, collaborative solution to providing high quality, cost effective opportunities for online teaching and learning for students in grades 9 through 12. Because this program is a part time, non diploma program, students remain enrolled in their own district while taking courses with MSC Online.

SSC member districts enrolled in the program are entitled to have three individuals trained in online teaching. The Facilitating Online Teaching course takes place in both face to face and online learning environments using Moodle course management tools. Online teaching aspects covered in the course include: 1) the review of best practice strategies for online courses using asynchronous and synchronous learning, 2) the time commitment required for the learner, instructional designer, and facilitator, 3) best practices strategies for participating in an online course, facilitation of an online course, and evaluating student work in an online course, and 4) a review of writing direction for the online audience, time management tips, copyright and fair use, course management and grading, and the discussion problems and solutions for specific curriculum areas and the implementation of an online course.

SSC's first Online Teacher Training course began September 23, as a

face to face meeting, followed by a three week online component, and a final face to face meeting on October 14. The training was led by Pat Sterle of Northeast Service Cooperative. Three of the four enrolled districts had individuals trained and certified to teach online courses through the MSC Online Learning Project. A second teacher training will be scheduled. However three SSC staff members will also be prepared to facilitate the teacher training course. This will enable more teachers to become certified sooner.

Linda Smith, District Technology Director for Cannon Falls, participated in the Online Teacher Training. Described as a gadget person, Linda maintains that computers and technology have really caught my attention. Linda has worked with Moodle for a few years and began her online



Linda Smith

teaching by developing professional development courses for Cannon Falls. She now teaches her grade 6 class as a blended class; the coursework is all online while the students attend class regularly.

Asked to provide her thoughts on online learning, Linda professed to
Article continued on next page...

Online Learning Project continued from page 12

be a firm believer that online learning will become the new norm. Linda states, There will be no boundaries as to the opportunities available to our students. Course offerings will not be limited to what is available inside our four walls. The concept of traveling across the pond translates to the world being a click away from anyone who is connected. I am sure that it will

take a little while for people to get their mind around the transformation that is quietly happening in education. I am very glad that I can be part of the online education movement it's exciting! With the continued support, advocacy, and participation of individuals such as Linda Smith, online learning will continue to grow in southeast Minnesota. Take advantage of the guidance,

support, and resources available to you through the MSC Online Learning Program to successfully implement online learning in your district.

If you have questions related to the MSC Online Learning Program, please contact Kari Kubicek, kkubicek@ssc.coop, or Nicole LaChapelle, nlachapelle@ssc.coop, or visit our website at www.ssc.coop.

Math and Science Teacher Academy continued from page 1

During our 2 day Fall Academy session teachers participated in a session with Lesson Study expert Pete Ziegler of Pike Consulting, in order to further their understanding of this process. Teachers also had the opportunity to meet with their PLC teams and Academy Mentors to begin planning their next lesson study projects.

The second day of the Fall Academy was spent with Professional Development Experts from the MN Science Museum who led them through activities revolving around inquiry based mathematics during the morning session. In the

Mainly I have learned that I need to spend more time focusing on how I think students will respond to a lesson, not necessarily what works best for me.

A MSTA Teacher

afternoon, the Science Museum staff led small groups in an investigation of the research of Dr. Carol Dweck, regarding motivation, personality and development in middle school students.

We will continue this year long learning experience by coming together for our final lab sessions March 4 5, 2009 at Southeast

Service Cooperative. Teams will also continue their site based learning by participating in a second Lesson Study, and continuing work with their Academy Mentors

One attendee summed up the change that the group is experiencing through this academy, Mainly I have learned that I need to spend more time focusing on how I think students will respond to a lesson, not necessarily what works best for me.

For more information, contact Heidi Knepper at hknepper@ssc.coop.

Nancy Wiitanen continued from page 1

graduates contact Nancy to thank her for preparing them so well for college chemistry. A very caring teacher, her interest in her students goes beyond the classroom.

The WEM Outstanding Educator Awards Program was created in 1998 by the WEM Foundation in support of teachers and their important role in helping all students achieve academically, and seeks to bring recognition to the often unsung heroes who daily meet the challenges of teaching in a variety of settings. The Center for

Education should be at the forefront of everything, so it is such a blessing when people see that, and give it the respect it deserves.

Nancy Wiitanen

Academic Excellence, in partnership with the Minnesota Service Cooperatives, administers the award program on behalf of the WEM Foundation.

Nancy was one of four regional winners of the Teacher Achievement Award. She was

awarded a cash prize, trophy, and the consideration for the state wide award next year. This award recognizes educators who support, inspire and assist students to attain greater learning evidenced by student achievement

Nancy has taught chemistry at Kasson Mantorville for 31 years and says she still loves it. Nancy was very pleased with her award, and stated, Education should be at the forefront of everything, so it is such a blessing when people see that, and give it the respect it deserves.

Spelling Bee thanks McNeilus Steel and KM Telecom!

by Kirsten Kuehl

This year we are pleased to welcome McNeilus Steel, Inc. and KM Telecom as co sponsors. Their generous contributions enable southeast Minnesota to

conduct a Spelling Bee final for the region (rather than the top four students advancing to the Multi Regional Spelling Bee in St. Cloud). This year the winner of the Spelling Bee Final will advance to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, DC.

There will be two (2) Regional Spelling Bees on Tuesday, February 17, 2009. The top four spellers from each Regional will advance to the Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee on Tuesday, March 3, 2009.

To participate in the Regional Spelling Bee, districts register with the Southeast Service Cooperative. Districts may register one participant for every 1000 K 12 students in the district. Districts with less than 1000 students may register one participant.

Each participating school must also register with Scripps (www.spellingbee.com). If your school has not yet registered with Scripps do it immediately. The deadline has been **extended to December 19**.

Schools will receive unlimited online access to all of their study materials: the official study booklet and various word lists. Enrollment provides you with 25 study booklets (2009 Spell It!) and the following online resources:

- from Encyclopedia Britannica, a free one year subscription to *student .britannica.com* for one student at the school (valued at ~~\$6995~~)
- three grade specific versions of the 2009 Classroom Pronouncer Guide
- the 2009 School Pronouncer Guide
- award certificates
- key information about your local spelling bee program

Forms can be found on our website, www.ssc.coop. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Kirsten Kuehl, 507 281 6670 or email, kkuehl@ssc.coop



Spelling Bee Timelines

December 8, 2008

Spelling Bee Meeting for District Coordinators
4:00 5:30 pm at Southeast Service Cooperative



December 19, 2008

Scripps Registration Deadline (extended from 10/15/08)

February 6, 2009

District Spelling Bees must be completed
Submit Name of Participants for the Regional Competition to SSC

February 17, 2009

Regional Preliminary Spelling Bees (Southeast Service Cooperative)
9:00 AM and 1:00 PM

March 3, 2009

Southeast Minnesota Spelling Bee (Final)

May 26 & 27, 2009

Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C.

SSC welcomes our new members and participants in the health & benefits program

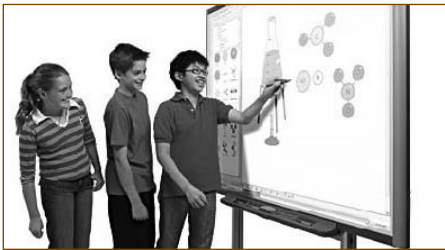


Houston County



Steele County

Become your district's expert with our new SMART Board trainings!



You asked for it, and we responded!

SSC has created day long, grade specific SMART Board trainings. These seminars, *Pooling Resources with SMART Board: Grade Specific SMART Board Training*, allow for

more hands on instruction and collaboration with peers, which is exactly what area educators have requested.

The morning of the seminars will be spent reviewing Notebook software, investigating online resources, and discussing ways to implement SMART Board activities. The afternoon will feature hands on instruction and plenty of time for teachers to create their own lessons based on their curriculum.

Teachers will be able to collaborate with their grade specific peers, which should greatly increase the effectiveness of these trainings.

Class Schedule:

Grades K 1 Thursday, January 15
 Grades 2 3 Thursday, January 22
 Grades 4 5 Thursday, January 29
 All classes are 9 AM 4 PM
 Go to www.ssc.coop for more information.

Junior high students test their knowledge

by Kirsten Kuehl

Over 336 junior high students have been coming together to test their knowledge against students from other schools!

This fall 56 teams from 20 school districts have competed each month at the Southeast Service Cooperative.

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. 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). Teams compete in Round Robin competitions in October, November, and December at the Southeast Service Cooperative. Each team then competes in a Sub Regional competition and the top twelve teams from each tier advance to the Regional competition in January.

At the Sub Regional and Regional levels, power ranking is used to determine which teams will compete together in each round.

If you have questions, please contact Kirsten Kuehl at 507 281. 6670 or email: kkuehl@ssc.coop.



Schools participating in the 2008-09 Junior High Knowledge Bowl season:

School	# of Teams
Caledonia	1
Chatfield	3
Dover Eyota	4
Fillmore Central	3
Glenville Emmons	1
Goodhue	2
Grand Meadow	1
Houston	3
Kasson Mantorville	3
Kenyon Wanamingo	5
Kingsland	2
Lanesboro	3
Mabel Canton	1
Pine Island	4
Plainview Elgin Millville	6
Red Wing	4
Rushford Peterson	4
Southland	1
Spring Grove	2
Winona	3

Exciting new SMART Board resources available through SSC's E2T2 project

by Kari Kubicek

In the last few months changes have been made to the current E2T2 Grant Project. Originally, a component of the work plan was to develop a Trainer Network of educators to be paid a stipend to travel to other districts and train other educators in various technology programs. Due to the limited number of trainer applications and numerous requests from member districts for SMART Board trainings, we opted to narrow the focus of the project to providing Advanced SMART Board trainings free to E2T2 member districts and to offer all of SSC member districts additional SMART Board resources through our website.

Eight advanced SMART Board trainings were offered free to teachers in the E2T2 project schools this past summer, with Shelley Rinkel, SSC staff member and a Master Certified SMART Board

trainer, leading the trainings. All of these sessions were full and participant evaluations rated the training very high. Two more advanced trainings, free to E2T2 member organizations, are scheduled for December 16 and 17.

Another component of the project is the development of an online user group for SMART Board users. This online user group is available to anyone interested in learning more about SMART Boards and integrating it into the classroom. It features a SMART Board blog, facilitated by Shelley Rinkel, who will initiate discussions and answer questions posed by SMART Board users

Additional SMART Board resources offered to the user group include: 1) a SMART Board Link Library listing websites that contain quality SMART Board lesson plans, 2) a SMART Board File Library comprised of SMART Board lesson plans



submitted by educators in the SE region, and 3) a SMARTIE Tutorial Library.

Although this project has developed differently than was expected, it has assisted us in pinpointing a tremendous need of area educators and allowed us to successfully meet this need. If you would like additional information related to this program, please contact Amy Grover, agrover@ssc.coop or Kari Kubicek, kkubicek@ssc.coop, or visit our website at www.ssc.coop.

We Need Your SMART Board Lesson Plans

An exciting offering through the SMART Board Online User Group developed through the E2T2 Grant project is the SMART Board File Library. This file library is comprised of SMART Board lesson plans submitted by educators in our region. We are asking YOU as a SMART Board user to submit your SMART Board lesson plans (instructions listed below), and to recruit other SMART Board users to submit their lesson plans.

To submit your SMART Board lesson plan

To submit a SMART Board lesson plan, simply send your lesson plan to kkubicek@ssc.coop

Please include the following items so that we may post it immediately to the website:

The lesson plan title

A brief description of the lesson plan

Subject area

Intended grade level

Indicate if you would like to either post your name with the lesson plan, or remain anonymous

We are very excited to develop this resource for our educators and believe that it will prove to be extremely useful to you as you continue using a SMART Board to teach your students!

Mobile Science Lab hits the road

by Amy Grover

Graduates of the Mayo Clinic Molecular Biology Course, taught by Ross Aleff, won't want to miss out on the opportunity to use this amazing new resource to help them bring what they learned to life in their classroom!

In partnership with the Mayo Clinic and Rochester Area Math Science Partnership, SSC was awarded a \$75,000 grant by HealthForce Minnesota (affiliated with the Minneapolis City Planning and Center of Economic Development Office, Winona State University, and a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities) to develop and coordinate the mobile science lab trailer project.

After months of hard work ordering supplies, selecting and purchasing the trailer, and building and stocking the transport cabinets, the trailer is ready to go! All teachers have to do is reserve the trailer, pick it up, and roll the equipment right into their classrooms.

The ribbon cutting and debut of the trailer took place at the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce's STEM Summit on November 4. The trailer was on display at the event, and was also shown at the annual meeting of HealthForce Minnesota the week prior to that.

Now that we've launched the program, the trailer is officially available for rent. Rentals are for a 2 week period, allowing for an entire week of classroom usage, plus time for transport, set up, and inventorying. During the first year, there is NO CHARGE. In the future, there will be a rental fee on a sliding scale based on enrollment. Teachers fill out a simple request form before and usage report after use.



Mobile Science Lab

This traveling trailer contains all of the scientific equipment that teachers need to duplicate, for students in the classroom, the exact learning experiences conducted during the Mayo Clinic Educator Academies in Mayo Clinic laboratories.

For teachers who are interested in participating in Ross' class next June, more information about applying will be available soon. Please contact Amy Grover if you'd



SSC Program and Planning Manager Amy Grover cuts the trailer's ribbon at the Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce's STEM Summit.

like to receive the announcement and application materials. If you'd like to learn more about the mobile science lab or reserve it, please contact:

Questions About the Equipment?

Contact Ross Aleff
aleff.ross@mayo.edu
507 266 0181

Want to Schedule a Loan?

Contact Dick Riley
driley@ssc.coop
507 281 6666

Inquiries About the Grant?

Amy Grover
agrover@ssc.coop
507 281 6693

Interested in receiving the Cooperative Connection electronically?

If you would like to start receiving an electronic version of the *Cooperative Connection* delivered to your inbox, please email Nicole LaChapelle at nlachapelle@ssc.coop or call her at 507 281 6674.

Recent Board meeting actions and information

August 2008

No formal actions taken. Board received several reports from staff, including the following topics:

Health and Benefits program updates.

Information about Summit Energy.

SEMNET Telecommunications activity and discussions.

Math and Science Teacher Academy progress report

AYP School Improvement Program progress report

Online Learning progress report.

SMART Board and Senteo training

SSC will contribute a modest amount to co sponsor the Future of Nature Book Project coordinated by RCTC.

September 2008

Received the proposed Health/Benefits Program Administration Policy Revision for a first reading and referred it to the Policy Committee.

Established the 2008 election schedule.

Accepted Southeast Spelling Bee sponsorships: McNeilus Steel, Inc. for \$2,500 and KM Telecom for \$500 and approved an independent regional competition to send a Southeast Minnesota student to the national competition. The Board recognized Mark Packard for being instrumental in coordinating these sponsorships

Received the proposed Mobile Science Lab Policy for first reading and referred it to the Policy Committee.

October 2008

Accepted the proposal of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota to replace the current disease management services for the SSC health insurance pools with the Blue Cross Health Support Program effective January 1, 2009.

Accepted the application of Houston County to SSC membership and for joint powers agreement participation in the Health and Benefits Program effective January 1, 2009.

Received a clarification on the elections process and open positions in the Education category.

Adopted the Administration of Health and Benefits Program policy as recommended by the Policies Committee.

Adopted the Mobile Science Lab Policy as recommended by the Policies Committee; a copy of which will be attached to the official minutes of this meeting.

Accepted the proposed Fiscal Policies revisions for first reading, as presented by the Policies Committee.

Approved an arrangement with Knowledge Delivery Systems to promote online professional development in instructional strategies. Motion passed. This resource will be incorporated into SSC's Professional Development online learning

November 2008

Received the Finance Committee's report, including a report on disposal of two vehicles (1999 Dodge Intrepids) to reduce the fleet from three vehicles to two, based on usage and depreciation reports, for greater efficiency and cost management

Accepted the 2007-08 fiscal audit report as presented by Abdo, Eicke, & Meyers.

Accepted the application of Steele County for SSC membership and for joint powers agreement participation in the Health and Benefits Program effective January 1, 2009.

Accepted the withdrawal of Triton School District from the School Health & Benefits Pool effective January 1, 2009.

Terminated the consulting contract with School Management Services pursuant to the terms of the agreement and compensate SMS for services provided through November 30, 2008.

Entered into a one year contract with Next Generation Benefits Solutions, LLC for insurance and benefits consulting services of William Colopoulos effective December 1, 2008.

Authorized the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with Dr. Jerry K. Jensen for consulting assistance in conducting SSC's 2008-09 organizational review.

Adopted the fiscal policies introduced at the October 2008 meeting, as recommended by the Policies Committee.

Casted SSC's ballots for Superintendent Jim Busta for MREA Administrator representative on the MREA Board of Directors

Congratulated Suzanne Riley, Dale Walston, and the rest of the staff on efficient, meticulous financial management and an excellent report from both the MDE AYP desk audit and the 2007-2008 fiscal audit

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

Calendar

December

Monday Wednesday, December 1 3

9:00 AM 3:00 PM

**Junior High Knowledge Bowl
Round Robins**

Wednesday, December 3

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

Basic SMART Board Training

Thursday, December 4

9:00 AM 3:00 PM

**MDE Professional Learning Communities:
Essential Skills for Effective Teamwork**

Thursday, December 4

9:30 AM 3:00 PM

**Teaching American History: Northern Lights
Seminar**

Thursday, December 4

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

Creating Interactive PowerPoint Games

Monday, December 8

9:00 AM 3:30 PM

**Sheltered Instruction for English Language
Learners Day 1**

Monday, December 8

4:00 PM 5:30 PM

Spelling Bee Coordinator s Meeting

Wednesday, December 10

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

Basic SMART Board Training

Thursday Friday, December 11 & 12

9:00 AM 3:00 PM

**Senior High Knowledge Bowl
Round Robins**

Monday, December 15

9:00 AM 3:00 PM

**Senior High Knowledge Bowl
Round Robins**

Tuesday, December 16

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

**Beyond the Basics SMART Board Training
(E2T2 Districts only)**

Wednesday, December 17

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

Beyond the Basics SMART Board Training

Monday, December 29

5:00 PM 8:00 PM

SSC Board Meeting

January

Monday, January 12

1:00 PM 4:00 PM

**Using and Understanding Microsoft Word
2007**

Tuesday, January 13

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

Basic Smart Board Training

Wednesday, January 14

8:30 AM 2:30 PM

**Junior High Knowledge Bowl Sub Regionals
Tier AA**

Wednesday, January 14

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

Beyond the Basics SMART Board Training

Thursday, January 15

9:00 AM 4:00 PM

Grade K 1 SMART Board Training

Tuesday, January 20

8:30 AM 2:30 PM

**Junior High Knowledge Bowl Sub Regionals
Tier AA**

Wednesday, January 21

8:30 AM 2:30 PM

**Junior High Knowledge Bowl Sub Regionals
Tier A**

Thursday, January 22

8:00 AM 4:00 PM

Group Benefits / Step by Step Compliance

Thursday, January 22

9:00 AM 4:00 PM

Grade 2 3 SMART Board Training

Thursday, January 22

12:00 PM 3:00 PM

AAC Meeting

Friday, January 23

9:00 AM 3:00 PM

**MDE Professional Learning Communities:
Supporting Teacher Effectiveness**

Saturday, January 24

9:00 AM 12:00 PM

**Teaching American History: The Emergence of
Modern America (1900 1920's) Seminar**

Monday, January 26

1:00 PM 4:00 PM

Excel 2007 Charts

Tuesday, January 27

8:30 AM 2:30 PM

**Junior High Knowledge Bowl Sub Regionals
Tier A**

Wednesday, January 28

8:30 AM 2:30 PM

**Junior High Knowledge Bowl Sub Regionals
Tier AA**

Wednesday, January 28

1:00 PM 4:00 PM

Excel 2007 Worksheets

Wednesday, January 28

5:00 PM 8:00 PM

SSC Board Meeting

Thursday, January 29

9:00 AM 4:00 PM

Grade 4 5 SMART Board Training

February

Monday, February 2

9:00 AM 3:30 PM

**Sheltered Instruction for English Language
Learners Day 1**

Monday, February 2

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

Basic SMART Board Training

Tuesday Thursday, February 3 5

9:00 AM 3:30 PM

**Senior High Knowledge Bowl
Round Robins**

Monday, February 9

4:30 PM 7:00 PM

Beyond the Basics SMART Board Training

Tuesday, February 10

9:00 AM 3:00 PM

**Teaching American History: America
Becomes a World Power Workshop**

Wednesday, February 25

9:00 AM 3:00 PM

**MDE Professional Learning Communities:
Using Data and Protocols**

Wednesday, February 25

9:30 AM 12:00 PM

AAC Meeting

Thursday, February 26

9:00 AM 3:00 PM

**MDE Professional Learning Communities:
Classroom Formative Assessment**



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.

editor: Nicole LaChapelle
nlachapelle@ssc.coop

Southeast Service Cooperative

210 Wood Lake Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904
Phone (507) 288 1282
Fax (507) 288 7663

Office Hours
Monday Friday
8 AM 4:30 PM

For up to date news, visit
www.ssc.coop



Southeast Service Cooperative

210 Wood Lake Drive SE
Rochester, MN 55904
ph (507) 288-1282 - fax (507) 288-7663
www.ssc.coop

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- 4 . . .EHSM
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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.

	<i>name</i>	<i>phone</i>	<i>email</i>	<i>service area</i>
SSC Staff	Katie Cunningham	... (507) 281-6667	..kunningham@ssc.coopProgram Assistant
	Amy Grover	... (507) 281-6693	..agrover@ssc.coopProgram and Planning Manager
	Chris Hancock	... (507) 281-6671	..chancock@ssc.coopAccounting Assistant
	Heidi Knepper	... (507) 281-6669	..hknepper@ssc.coopSchool Improvement Coordinator
	Kari Kubicek	... (507) 281-6668	..kkubicek@ssc.coopProgram Coordinator
	Kirsten Kuehl	... (507) 281-6670	..kkuehl@ssc.coopInstructional Services Coordinator
	Nicole LaChapelle	... (507) 281-6674	..nlachapelle@ssc.coopCommunications and Program Assistant
	Dick Riley	... (507) 281-6666	..driley@ssc.coopProgram Assistant
	Suzanne Riley	... (507) 281-6673	..sriley@ssc.coopExecutive Director
	Shelley Rinkel	... (507) 281-6672	..srinkel@ssc.coopTrainer
	Diane Schwinghammer	... (507) 281-6683	..dschwinghammer@ssc.coopLead School Improvement Coordinator
	Bob Tweten	... (507) 281-6663	..btweten@ssc.coopHealth and Safety Consultant
	Dale Walston	... (507) 281-6675	..dwalston@ssc.coopDirector of Operations

SSC Consultants

Consultants	Bill Colopoulos	... (612) 987-4155	..bcolopoulos@ssc.coopHealth and Benefits Consultant
	Lesley Hauser	... (507) 281-6684	..lhauser@ssc.coopSchool Improvement Consultant
	Roger Jones	... (507) 286-7807	..rjoneshr@prodigy.netHuman Resource Mgmt Consultant

IEA (Institute for Environmental Assessment)

	Thad Dahling	... (507) 281-6680	..thadd@ieainstitute.comEnvironmental Technician
	Neal Forde	... (507) 281-6665	..nealf@ieainstitute.comProject Manager
	Bruce Huffer	... (507) 281-6681	..bruceh@ieainstitute.comFacility Consultant
	Natalie Nagel	... (507) 281-6688	..natalien@ieainstitute.comAdministrative Assistant
	Angie Radel	... (507) 281-6682	..angier@ieainstitute.comSenior Field Technician
	Pat Weir	... (507) 281-6677	..patw@ieainstitute.comRegional Manager

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