

# MCAS Communicator

an e-newsletter for the staff of the Michigan City Area Schools

**September 2011**

*(Please post for/share with those employees who do not have email!)*

## **A Message from Our Superintendent**

Our school year is off to a great start! I would like to thank all staff for the hard work and dedication you have shown in preparing for the return of students to our buildings this fall. There are many exciting changes this school year - our two new magnet schools, gifted/talented classrooms, students "dressing for success," a focus on the freshman experience at MCHS, a district-wide emphasis on literacy and algebra readiness, an expansion of programs at A. K. Smith, and much MORE. We made tremendous progress last year, and this is reflected in the fact that our district made AYP -- and that several of our schools achieved significant gains. I am so proud of what YOU have accomplished! At the same time, many of our students continue to struggle, particularly at the secondary level, and we must continue working diligently to improve. This year we are entering the second year of a three-year turnaround plan for MCAS, and I am optimistic that we can accomplish our goal of becoming a model school district, with ALL of our schools performing at an exemplary level. We are on the move - and as we agreed last week at our back to school meeting with teachers, paras, and IAs... "there ain't no stoppin' us now!"  
Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins

## **Science Kit Training**

Teachers in grades K-5 who were not able to attend summer science kit training are asked to respond to a quick poll (link below). This will help Dr. Radford determine which day/time is best to offer this training.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ScienceKitSurvey>

## **Student Loan Forgiveness for Teachers**

Did you know that the federal government has a student loan forgiveness program for teachers? The Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program is intended to encourage individuals to enter and continue in the teaching profession. Under this program, individuals who teach full time for five consecutive, complete academic years in certain schools that serve low-income families and meet other qualifications may be eligible for forgiveness of up to a combined total of \$17,500 in principal and interest on the FFEL and/or Direct Loan Program loans. Visit the link below for more information. (Special thanks to Tess Bowers at Edgewood for this helpful information!)

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/cancelstaff.jsp>

## **MCEF Grants Coming Soon**

Application forms for the annual Michigan City Education Foundation small grants for teachers will be arriving at elementary and middle schools on September 8. Deadline for submission this year is October 3. Reminder: requests for materials should revolve around a class project. The MCEF grant committee will be reading the grants

on October 12 and the winners will be notified after October 19. Checks will be distributed around the week of November 7 (or sooner!).

### **Differentiate and WIN!**

Plato Learning is awarding five grants of \$200 (and a free flip video camera!) through the "We are Teachers" web site. The grants will be given for ideas on differentiating instruction and creating individualized learning plans for students. Deadline for submitting your great idea is September 20th. To apply, visit:

<http://www.weareteachers.com/ideas/partnersk?grantId=68>

### **Donors Choose Grants**

Several MCAS teachers have received funding through Donors Choose, an online clearinghouse that gives website visitors an opportunity to fund classroom projects of their choice. For more information on this resource, visit:

<http://www.donorschoose.org/teachers>

### **Attention, IU (and Penn State) Fans...**

IU is extending a special ticket price to all teachers/educators for the Indiana University vs Penn State football game on October 1, 2011. Adult tickets are available for \$25 and youth tickets for \$5, plus a \$10 handling fee. Parking passes are also available for \$10. To order tickets contact Ross Gaddy at [rjgaddy@indiana.edu](mailto:rjgaddy@indiana.edu) or [812-855-7602](tel:812-855-7602) or follow the link below. Note: Any MCAS employee is eligible for this discount, not just teachers.

[http://mcaswiki.mcas.k12.in.us/@api/deki/files/2407/=Teacher\\_App.pdf](http://mcaswiki.mcas.k12.in.us/@api/deki/files/2407/=Teacher_App.pdf)

### **RDS Reminder**

Attention, night owls: Due to the timing of our back up system, please do not log on to RDS from midnight (12:00 AM) until approximately 5:30 AM from Monday through Friday. This is important to remember because having anyone log on will stop the back up system from running and will block updates needed for the system.

### **Technology Work Orders**

If you have any technology issues that warrant a work order, e-mail [support@mcas.k12.in.us](mailto:support@mcas.k12.in.us). In the subject line, please provide your building name, room number, and computer number. In the body give a complete description of the problem you encountered. You will receive an e-mail back with a hyperlink to access the status of your work order.

### **News from MCAS Grant Funded Programs**

- **Hours for Ours** is seeking new mentors, both adults and high school students! Visit the following link for an application form, or contact Chip Cotman at [ccotman@mcas.k12.in.us](mailto:ccotman@mcas.k12.in.us):

[http://mcaswiki.mcas.k12.in.us/Student\\_Support\\_Services/Hours\\_for\\_Ours\\_Mentoring](http://mcaswiki.mcas.k12.in.us/Student_Support_Services/Hours_for_Ours_Mentoring)

- **Club Discovery**, the after-school program at all three middle schools, is up and running. It's FREE, it's help Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays 2:15 to 5:30, and there is transportation home. This year, Club Discovery will be doing NASA projects and exploring robotics (part of a STEM focus), recording music, mentoring, giving students a taste of video/film editing, working on a character education unit, offering a photography class, and engaging students in community service projects. Tell a student you know about this wonderful opportunity! For information, contact Chip Cotman at [ccotman@mcas.k12.in.us](mailto:ccotman@mcas.k12.in.us) or call [873-2026](tel:873-2026).
- Mark your calendars for the next "**Lights on After School**" celebration at the McDonald's on Franklin; the date this year will be October 20th. This was a fantastic event last year, showcasing many of our students and programs, and it promises to be even better this fall!
- **Cafe Read-a-Latte**, the after-school program at Michigan City High School, is open to students from 2:15 pm to 5:30 pm Monday through Thursday. The program offers homework help, tutoring, credit recovery, and a variety of enrichment opportunities to students. Bus transportation home is provided. For information call Vicky Burton at [873-2044](tel:873-2044) x 4543.
- **Tech Club**, a new offering at Cafe Read-a-Latte, is for all students interested in learning more about computers, including hardware maintenance and software installation. Tech Club sponsor, Eric Wozniak, may be contacted at [ewozniak01@mcas.k12.in.us](mailto:ewozniak01@mcas.k12.in.us).
- Students at Michigan City High School may also join the brand new **First Robotics Competition Team** and get involved in the excitement and challenge of building a man-sized robot alongside other students and professional mentors. An informational meeting for adults interested in being mentors will take place at Michigan City High School cafeteria on Tuesday, September 7 from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm. Any interested students who missed the initial student/parent meeting may also attend. For information, contact Herb Higgin at [873-2026](tel:873-2026) x 8740.

### **Recycle Bowl**

Keep America Beautiful has announced the "Recycle Bowl" competition for schools and classrooms. Schools that recycle the most could win up to \$3,500! For more information check out <http://recycle-bowl.org/>. Registration for this event ends Oct 10, and the competition will be held Oct 17 - Nov 12. Laporte County Solid Waste education coordinator Alicia Ebaugh is available to speak to classes and groups about this or any other recycling topic; you can contact her at [aebaugh@csinet.net](mailto:aebaugh@csinet.net) or [\(219\) 326-0014](tel:219-326-0014).

### **MCHS Homecoming...**

...is just around the corner! The Wolves will take on Merrillville this year for the big game, on September 16th at 7:00 p.m. The annual homecoming parade will step off from the Elston parking lot at 6:00 p.m. and will progress up Franklin Street to Ames Field. The Athletic Booster Club will have its Annual Homecoming Supper prior to the game; tickets are \$5.00 and can be purchased from any fall sports athlete or any Booster Club Board Member. Pizza and Chili will be served from 5:00 - 6:30 at the big tent in front of Ames Field. GO WOLVES!

### Way to Go!

Congratulations to our library media specialists, **Kathy Pizarek, Sarah Blank, Patty Miller, Mary Gish, and Jane Mallott**, who will be honored by the Indiana Library Federation in November with the Esther V. Burrin School Media Award. Our librarians will be recognized for their "Origami Cranes" project, an interdisciplinary unit that they introduced last school year that also served as a benefit for tsunami victims in Japan. In addition, the Indiana Library Federation will recognize **Mary Gish** with its Outstanding New Media Specialist Award, which honors librarians who have been in the field five years or less for their outstanding contributions, communications, and special programming. CONGRATS to our awesome MCAS team!

### Community Announcements

- To mark the **10th anniversary of 9/11**, a special memorial service will be held on Sunday, September 11th at Ames Field. The free program begins at 10:00 a.m. and will also honor local fire, police, EMS, military and rescue personnel. The MCHS marching band will perform, and there will be presentations by State Senator Jim Arnold, State Rep. Scott Pelath, State Rep. Karen Tallian and Honorary Speaker Steve Whitehead. In the event of rain, the program will be moved to the Elston Performing Arts Center. All are invited to this countywide event!
- Also on Sept. 11th: The **South Shore Brass Band** will perform a memorial concert at the Coffee Creek Amphitheater in Chesterton on 9/11 at 2pm. The venue is on Route 49 at the toll road exit. Area police, fire, military, and EMTs will be honored. (The South Shore Brass Band performed and held master classes for our students last school year at Michigan City High School.)
- The Michigan City Boys & Girls Club will be holding a **"Day for Kids"** on Saturday, September 17 from 11-2 at Marquette Mall. This event will feature interactive exhibits for children, by groups such as the Curious Kids Museum, the Trail Creek Dog Training Club, Purdue North Central, the Michigan City Fire Dept. and many others. Safe Harbor, Hours for Ours, Club Discovery, Cafe Read a Latte, and the MCJROTC will also be on hand from MCAS. The event is free - don' t miss it!
- The annual **"Boo at the Zoo"** will be held on Saturday, October 22, 2011 from 5-8 p.m. Children are invited to come in costume to trick-or-treat in a safe environment; many local businesses and organizations will pass out treats. Tickets are \$3 for adults, \$2 for children (Zoo members receive free admission with a \$1 charge to trick or treat.) Tickets may be purchased prior to the event at the zoo gate.