



February 1, 2011

Message from Dr. Bob Newsum
Interim Superintendent

Greetings and Think Spring:

The Martensdale St. Marys Board of Education will be seeking to extend a voter-approved Instructional Support Levy (ISL) program, in conjunction with the election of school board members, in September. We believe it is important that you understand what impact the continuation of the current Instruction Support Levy program has on our district. First though, we need to understand a bit about how schools are funded in Iowa.

In K-12 funding in Iowa, dollars used for educational programs (staff and materials) cannot be used for buildings and vice versa. Additionally, the state imposes a maximum spending limit per child each year that should not be exceeded locally, with very few exceptions. One of those exceptions, however, is through the use of the Instructional Support Levy program. Basically, it gives local voters the ability to go above the maximum amount by up to 10 percent, but no further. Local voters can fund this through property taxes, personal state income tax surtaxes, or a combination of the two. In our case, the board has decided to use a combination of property tax and state income tax surtax. It is important for you to understand that this Instructional Support Levy program vote is for an extension or continuation and will not increase your property tax rate or personal Iowa income tax surtax more than the current rate and amount.

All but 18 of the 359 school districts in the state of Iowa have implemented some form of the Instructional Support Levy program. The question you may be asking yourself is: Why have so many districts chosen to supplement the amount the state limits us to? Simply, the state maximum amount is not sufficient to provide the level of education that virtually all districts in the state believe is necessary to provide for their children. Recent uncontrollable costs like diesel, natural gas and other energy price increases come from the same pot of money we use to fund our educational program. High energy prices compete for the same dollars that would otherwise fund curriculum and textbooks. In our case, the dollars will be used for the following purposes: general fund expenses, improved technology, and other instruction and curriculum-based programs.

Thank you for taking the time to learn a little more about the Instructional Support Levy program, as it relates to school

finance in Iowa. If I can answer any questions about the Instructional Support Levy program, I encourage you to contact me at school (641-764-2466) or on my cell phone (641-203-8893).

If you are interested in helping us improve our efforts to communicate about the many excellent programs, experiences, and activities taking place in the Martensdale St. Marys Community School District, **please accept this message as an invitation to become a member of a 'District Communications Advisory Committee'**. I am currently working with board members Amy Harper and Scott Anderson to address communication issues and we have decided to organize a committee of board members, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and members of the community to provide comments, suggestions, and ideas for improvement.

The organizational District Communications Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 7, beginning at 7:00 PM, in the school media center. Additional evening meetings will be scheduled throughout the second semester. If you are interested in participating as a member of this important committee, please contact a board member, Mr. Crozier at the high school office (641-764-2686), Mr. Wood at the elementary office (641-764-2621), or Bob Newsum at the superintendent's office (641-764-2466) or cell phone (641-203-8893).

From the Desk of Mr. Crozier,
Secondary Principal

Life's lessons are best learned through experience. Unfortunately, when the target audience is teens and the topic is drinking and texting while driving, experience is not the teacher of choice. The Martensdale-St. Marys school board has approved the secondary building to participate in the Every 15 Minutes Program.

The Every 15 Minutes Program offers real-life experience without the real-life risks. This emotionally charged program, entitled Every 15 Minutes, is an event designed to dramatically instill teenagers with the potentially dangerous consequences of drinking alcohol and texting while driving. This powerful program will challenge students to think about drinking, texting while driving, personal safety, and the responsibility of making mature decisions when lives are involved.

The month of February brings the ITBS/ITEDS to us. We will be taking this test beginning January 31st and finishing on February 4th. All 7th through 11th graders will participate in this test. We will be testing in the mornings on these days, so it is important that your child be present and on time on these days. These tests are important to our school district. It is one measure of our success, according to the state and federal governments. We will be doing several activities in our Advisor/Advisee program to help prepare our students. Listed below are some things that you can do to help your children do their best on the ITBS/ITED tests.

How to Prepare for Standardized Tests...

Rest: Children should get a good night's sleep before taking the test! Keep their routine. By getting "plenty of sleep" actually means maintaining normal bedtime hours rather than going to bed much earlier than usual.

Eat: A good breakfast in the morning that your student takes the test is important. Test-taking activities require a lot of energy. The intent is not to have a big breakfast if your student usually has a slice of toast and a glass of juice, but keeping a normal routine schedule is ideal.

Listen: Ask your child to listen carefully to the directions the teacher gives and to follow them exactly. If they do not understand what to do, they should ask to have the teacher repeat the directions or explain them again.

Dress: Have your child dress in layers—kids do better on tests if they don't have to think about how hot or cold they are.

Try: Do their best. They are not expected to know the answer to every question. Some of the questions may seem difficult, but they should keep trying and not give up. Don't be too anxious. Say, "This test is important. I know you will try hard and do your best." Your confidence will be contagious.

Maintain: Keep up regular study habits and not cram for this test. It covers more school work than can be learned in a few extra hours.

Relax: Students who are calm and sure of themselves do better.

Test Day: Give these tips: Skip a question and move on if you don't know the answer.

You can always come back to it later. Maybe you will be ready to answer that question then. Check your answers carefully. Make sure the number of your answer correspond to the numbers of the questions on the test.

Results from these tests will be made available sometime in the spring. If you have any questions regarding the test or test results, feel free to contact myself or Mr. Folkerts, the secondary counselor.

From the Desk of Mr. Peterson, Blue Devils Activities Director

I mentioned in my January newsletter the exciting night we were planning for January 18th. The night went off without a hitch and the place was packed. I want to thank everyone who helped make the night a success.

MStM will host two girls' basketball regional games in February. The first one will pit the Blue Devils against Grandview Park Baptist on February 10th at 7:00. The winner of that game will play the winner of Earlham and Ankeny Christian on February 15th at 7:00. Please mark your calendars.

The boys' basketball pairings will be announced in early February.

The wrestling team will compete in the sectional tournament at Liberty Center on February 5th with a noon starting time. The first and second place finishers from that sectional will advance to the district meet at Truro on Saturday, February 12th, at noon. The first and second place finishers from districts will advance to the State Tournament at Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines. The schedule for the State Tournament for Class 1A is as follows:

Wednesday, February 16th – 1:00 pm
Thursday, February 17th – 2:00 pm
Friday, February 18th – 1:00 & 7:45 pm
Saturday, February 19th – 12:00 & 5:45 pm

Congratulations to Robert and David Walker on earning their 100th career wins. They join the MStM's Wrestling 100 Career Wins Club as only the tenth and eleventh members in the history of MSTM wrestling. Congratulations!

MStM will be hosting the Class 1A Regional Track and Field Meet on Thursday, May 12th. Please put that date on your calendars. Plenty of help will be needed.

MStM Elementary will have a 5th/6th grade music concert on February 3, 2010 at 7:00. Please mark your calendars.

Parting Shot:

I have been encouraging my coaches to set goals with their teams. I believe the athletes, coaches, etc., need to have a road map to follow to help them forge success. I have always liked this saying from the great Yogi Berra.

**"If you don't know where you are going,
you'll end up someplace else."**

Yogi Berra

From the Desk of Mr. Folkerts
Secondary Counselor

Counselors Corner

As a student, you hear a lot of advice about what it takes to be successful.

- Get involved in different activities.
- Plan for the future.
- Achieve high grades.
- Challenge yourself with harder classes.
- Be responsible.
- Study hard.
- Go out and have some fun.
- Earn some money.

So how do you manage those all at the same time? The key is balance. Think of ways to work some of these ideas in with others. For example:

- **To balance classes**, take some courses that you know you can get high grades in, a couple of harder classes that will challenge you, and one or two electives that let you explore new options each year.
- **To balance activities**, get involved in different organizations that let you have some fun and give you opportunities to be a leader and work as a team.
- **To balance the present with the future**, take a part-time job that helps you earn money for the future, shows that you're responsible and gives you experience you can use later.

Success in high school leads to success later in life, whether you choose to continue your education or pursue a career. Find the balance that works for you to start achieving success now.

Recommended Courses

Which is better: Taking a class you know you'll get a high grade in or choosing one that will challenge you but won't guarantee you an A?

Good grades look great on a college or job application, but a 4.0 GPA isn't everything. Colleges look at the courses you take as well as the grades you earn. They prefer students who don't always go for the easy A. Besides, a different or more challenging course may change your outlook on life or help you determine what you want for your future.

From the Desk of Ms. Condon
Family & Consumer Science Department

Dear Parents of Family and Consumer Science Students,

My name is Courtney Penick and I will be student teaching with Ms. Condon for eight weeks at Martensdale St. Marys. I

am an Iowa State University student, and I am majoring in Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Education. Student teaching gives me the opportunity to implement the skills I have learned at ISU and build upon those skills in the classroom setting under the guidance of Ms. Condon. I have started teaching some of the FCS classes, and I will continue adding a new class to teach each week until I am teaching the full schedule. I will be with Ms. Condon until Thursday, March 3rd.

I am very grateful for the opportunities to student teach at Martensdale St. Marys, and I have enjoyed working with the students. If you have questions, please contact me at cmpenick@iastate.edu

Sincerely,
Courtney Penick

From the Desk of Mrs. Davidson
Art Department

Elementary Art Show

Preschool-6th grade students are preparing artwork for the Elementary Art show. The art show will highlight books that have received the Caldicott Medal for Illustrations.



Students are creating their own illustrated art projects based on the different books chosen.

The art show will be in the evenings of March 7 and March 10 in conjunction with Parent-Teacher Conferences and displayed in the commons area. Come and enjoy the art!

From the Desk of Mrs. Clark, Music Dept.

“Forever Rock and Roll” is the theme for the 5th and 6th grade concert on Thursday, February 3rd, at 7:00pm. Students will be singing songs from the past, as well as singing about our 50 states, and our own state of Iowa.

The 6th grade band will perform under the direction of Mr. Randy Olson. Please mark this on your calendar and come and support the students with your presence.

Thank you to all the elementary students for singing the National Anthem in January. It's always great to hear our young students sing! Looking forward, the Variety Show will be Friday, March 4th at 7:00pm.

From the Desk of Mr. Wood,
Elementary Principal

Does Your Child Have a Learning Disability?

Maybe you suspect something's not quite right, that your child is falling behind classmates in school, not because he or she doesn't want to succeed, but because something's holding your child back. That "something" may very well be a learning disability. But the good news is that schools are better equipped than ever before to help children succeed. But how do you know if your child is dealing with a learning disability? Here are some signs to look for:

"I just don't understand."

Most children with learning disabilities really want to succeed and work hard to understand their homework and complete their assignments, but they often find that they just don't "get it" and become frustrated and discouraged.

Trouble Memorizing.

So much of schoolwork involves memorizing. For example, learning to recognize common words is vital to becoming a good reader, and knowing basic multiplication and division tables "by heart" is essential to moving forward in math. Does your child have difficulty memorizing numbers or words, even after repeated practice?

Flipping.

While it's very common for young students to have trouble with letters or words that look similar—think of the letters "p," "q," and "d" or the words "rug," "mug," and "jug"—for children with a certain learning disability known as dyslexia, the confusion lasts beyond early elementary school. Other signs to look for are problems coming up with rhymes to words and significant difficulty learning to either read, write, or both.

Trouble Communicating.

Imagine that you're in another country where you don't speak the language and are trying to communicate. That's what it's like for children whose learning disabilities interfere with their ability to communicate. Sometimes, it just takes these children much longer to come up with the words to ask or answer a question. Other times, these children simply give up; it's too hard for them to even try. It's not that they don't know what they want to say, it's that they just can't get the words out.

Feeling "Distant."

Does your child prefer to be alone rather than playing with friends or siblings? Is it hard to get him or her to look you in the eye when you're talking? Did he or she learn to speak unusually late and, even then, was it in an almost mechanical tone of voice? These are all possible signs of autism, one of the most rapidly growing disorders affecting children today, and a condition that can range from moderate to severe.

Acting Out.

Some children with learning disabilities develop behavior issues in school. Whether the misbehavior is related to a

feeling of failure in school or due to another related condition—attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or attention deficit disorder (ADD)—education specialists, working closely with the child and parents, can make a tremendous difference, both in the child's behavior and their school performance.

If you recognize any of these signs, it doesn't mean that your child has a learning disability.

Talk to your child's teacher and see if he or she has noticed the same things you have and find out if there are things you can do at home to help. While you're following those suggestions, keep copies of schoolwork that show why you're concerned, and write down in a notebook a record of the date and type of problems you're noticing.

If things don't seem to improve, the next step is to request that your child be evaluated for a learning disability. It is a formal process involving a series of tests and meetings and, in the case of a significant learning disability, ends with an education plan (known as an individualized education program, or IEP) developed specifically with your child's needs in mind. While it may seem like a hassle, the bottom line is that, if your child does have a condition that is truly impairing his or her ability to learn, there will be help.



Counselor's Corner
Mrs. Pribil, Elementary PK-6

Students in grades 3rd-6th will be taking the Iowa Test of Basic Skills from January 31-February 10. We spread out the tests, so that the kids are only taking 1 or 2 tests a day rather than 4 or 5. Some tips to help your child do the best they can on ITBS:

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest the night before the test
- Make sure your child has a healthy breakfast at home or at school the morning before the test.
- Emphasize to your child that he/she needs to take this test seriously.
- Encourage your child to do his/her best. Tell your child that taking this test will give them an opportunity to show what they know. It's a time to show off all that they have learned up to this point in time.

Our next character counts assembly will be held on Friday, February 11 at 8:40 in the small gym. We will be recognizing one student from each classroom that demonstrates the Character Counts pillar Caring. We will also be awarding students who made the Gold and Blue Honor Roll in grades 4th-6th. Parents are more than welcome to attend the assembly!



From the Desk of Mrs. Franey & Mrs. Scrivner
Second Grade News

Second Graders Celebrate Polar Express Day!
By Mrs. Franey and Mrs. Scrivner

In 2010 the second grade holiday tradition continued. On Monday, December 20th the second grade classes were treated to a day revolving around the popular children's book The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg. Activities that the students shared in included: wearing their pajamas to school, word games and puzzles, handmade ornaments, games, and enjoying treats and hot cocoa while watching "The Polar Express" movie. The students were able to practice their compare and contrast skills using both the book and the movie. A great time was had by all.



MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2010

The Board of Directors of the Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District met in regular session, pursuant to law, on December 13, 2010.

Members Present: Scott Anderson, Wade Gibson, and Amy Harper; together with Mike Crozier, Tom Wood, Josh Moser, Interim Superintendent Bob Newsum and Business Manager Jill Gavin.

Members Absent: President, Nicole Bunch; Vice President, Dave Shutt

- I. Welcome Board President
Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and welcomed all guests.
- II. Consent Items
 - A. Approval of Minutes Board President
 - B. Approval of Agenda Board President
 - C. Approval of Bills and Secretary's Report Board President
 - D. Approval of Hot Lunch and Activity Reports Board President

Gibson motioned to approve the consent items seconded by Harper. Roll call: 3 ayes.

III. Celebrations
Tom Wood celebrated the fact that it was December 13th and there has not been an early out, late start or snow day for the school year. He also commented on the kindness of the community for their donations of clothing and supplies to students in need.

IV. Public Comments - none

V. Old Business
A. Reports

1) Facilities Report – No report.

2) MStM Music Booster Minutes – Minutes were provided from the November 16, 2010 meeting. The Board thanked the Music Boosters for submitting their financials.

3) MStM Athletic Booster Minutes – No minutes were submitted

4) MStM PTO Minutes – Minutes were provided from the November 9, 2010 meeting.

B. Presentations

1) Principal's Report Tom Wood

Tom announced to the Board that the Elementary Student Council had a fundraiser for Helping Hand in Indianola. The 4th graders made posters, the 5th graders boxed food as it was collected and the 6th graders delivered the donations to the Helping Hand. The kids did a great job and they received a nice thank you card from Helping Hand.

The Elementary Staff is having their annual jeans fundraiser. This is the 4th year in a row where the staff will contribute \$15 to wear jeans for three weeks. Currently, they have raised over \$800 and they are confident of hitting their goal of \$1000. Gift cards will be purchased and delivered by Tom and Mike to needy families in our community. Great job Elementary Staff!!

Tom announced the Character Counts Students Demonstrating Respect

PK - Carolyn Amfah and Elijah Moore
K - Greyson Hall and Kailey Phinney
1st - Hannah Tibbits and Jonathan Devore
2nd - Jayda Gay and Grace Dunahoo

Gibson motioned to approve the At Risk/Modified Allowable Growth Application for 2011-2012, seconded by Harper. Roll call: 3 ayes.

- C. Vote District #8 IASB Board Member
Supt. Newsum

Harper motioned to approve Joan Corbin for the IASB Board of Directors for District 8, seconded by Gibson. Roll call: 3 ayes.

- D. Approve Iowa Drug and Alcohol Testing Program
Supt. Newsum

Harper motioned to approve the 2011 Iowa Drug and Alcohol Testing Program, seconded by Gibson. Roll call: 3 ayes.

- E. Approve Personnel Resignations
Supt. Newsum

Gibson motioned to approve Sharon Benshoof's resignation as cook, seconded by Harper. Roll call: 3 ayes.

Gibson motioned to approve Heidi Tiano's resignation as Special Ed Transportation Associate seconded by Anderson. Roll call: 3 ayes.

- F. Approve Cooperative Student Teaching Agreement
Supt. Newsum

Harper motioned to approve the cooperative student teaching agreement with Iowa State University to allow education students from ISU to student teach at MStM, seconded by Gibson. Roll call: 3 ayes.

- G. Discuss/Approve Personnel Request
Supt. Newsum

Gibson motioned to deny the early retirement incentive request from Paula (Tesda) Chorna, seconded by Anderson. Roll call: 3 ayes. The Board appreciates her contribution and service to the District but her request does not meet the requirements of the current board policy.

- H. Confirm – Next Meeting Dates
Bob Newsum

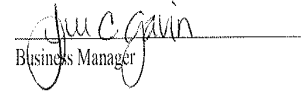
01/05/11 – Agenda subcommittee by e-mail
01/06/11 – 5:00 p.m. Board Agenda Meeting
01/10/11 – 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting

VII. Adjournment

Gibson motioned to adjourn the meeting seconded by Harper. Roll call: 3 ayes. Time: 7:34 p.m.

APPROVED


Board President


Business Manager

It is the policy of the Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District not to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, age (for employment), marital status (for programs), sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic status (for programs) in its educational programs and its employment practices.

There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact the district's Equity Coordinator.

MStM's Equity Coordinator is Mike Crozier, secondary principal. His address is MStM Community School, 390 Burlington, Martensdale, Iowa 50160. His phone number is 641-764-2686 and his email address is: mike_crozier@m-stmarys.k12.ia.us

The Martensdale-St. Marys District Newsletter is published and disbursed by the end of the preceding month.

The newsletter is available for pickup in the Superintendent's office, Jiffy station and Roadside Inn. All of which are located in Martensdale.

Copies are also available at Kum & Go in Bevington. You may also view it on the <http://mstm.us/> website.

Questions or concerns may be addressed to:

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