



**MARTENSDALE-
ST. MARYS
COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

December 29, 2009, Issue No. 12

From the Desk of Ms. Peterson, Superintendent

Race to the Top:

Schools in Iowa received the following information from the Department of Education in regard to the Race to the Top Funds.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is an economic stimulus package enacted in February of 2009. A portion of these funds were allocated for education. This includes \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform:

- ❖ achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers
- ❖ adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy
- ❖ building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction
- ❖ recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most
- ❖ turning around our lowest-achieving schools

Race to the Top will reward states that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate their reforms in the future. These states will offer models for others to follow and will spread the best reform ideas across their states and across the country as well.

The Race to the Top fund will distribute billions of dollars in competitive grants from the U.S. Department of Education to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform.

Iowa has an exciting and important opportunity to develop and fund innovative efforts to improve education throughout the state. That is why Iowa is leading an aggressive effort to apply for the highly competitive Race to the Top funds. This work may lead to millions of dollars for Iowa to support improvements and innovations in education over the next four years.

Regional meetings will be held in January to provide specific information, criteria for participation and answer questions for schools. As more information becomes available, I will share this with you in upcoming newsletters.

Iowa Department of Education Site Visit:

I just wanted to remind everyone that the Iowa Department of Education will be in our school district on February 9-11 for their Site Visit.

The Site Visit Process is set forth in the Code of Iowa. The purpose of these visits is as follows:

- To assess progress with the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan
- To make recommendations with regard to the visit findings for the purposes of improving educational practices

- To determine that a school or school district is in compliance with the accreditation standards
- to provide a general assessment of educational practices

There are Seven Themes of School Improvement. The State Department will also be looking at the following areas:

- Vision, Mission and Goals
- Leadership
- Collaborative Relationships
- Learning Environments
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Professional Development
- Monitoring and Accountability

The Department of Education will be interviewing administration, teachers, support staff, parents and students to help them with their reporting. The principals and I are in the process of setting up these interview teams.

After their visit, the Department of Education Team will submit a written report back to us that will include the strengths as well as the areas in need of improvement for our school district. We will include this report on our school's website as well as having hard copies available for anyone interested.

From the Desk of Mr. Crozier

The end of the first semester is fast approaching. We will end our first semester on January 14th due to the three snow days we need to make up. If you child meets the requirements for opting out of semester test they will be on January 13th and 14th. Remember to sign their permission slips to be gone during testing times they have qualified to opt out of. The semester test policy can be found in the student handbook that is posted on our website.

As stated in my December newsletter article we will no longer be sending report cards to parents that have on-line access to their student's grades. We will send report cards home with students of parents that do not have on-line access. If you need an

official report card for any reason please call and request one from the high school office.

Students are not allowed to be in the school building before 7:30 a.m. unless they have an appointment with a teacher or are involved in a supervised activity. We have had students arrive as early as 7:00 a.m. There is no supervision for these students at that time. If students arrive at 7:30 they should be with a teacher, in the library or in the computer lab. These are areas that are supervised before 8:00 a.m. Once students arrive in the morning they are not allowed to leave the school grounds. We also have a supervision issue on early out days. Students need to be out of the building by 1:15 on Professional Development days. Our entire staff is involved in meetings and there is no supervision for students that stay at school. Please make arrangements for your children during these times.

The entire MStM staff has been participating in a Christmas fundraising project during the month of December. The staff was allowed to wear jeans every day for \$5.00 per week. We surpassed our amount raised last year. Over the past three weeks we raised over \$1, 300.00 to be given to families in our community to help make their holiday season brighter. Congratulations to our staff for doing a good deed for our community.

It has been a great year. I am looking forward to many more good things in 2010.

From the Desk of Mrs. Gabbert-Clark,
Music Department

Thank you all who attended the JH/HS Band and Chorus concert! Your support is appreciated! Also, thank you so much to all who helped with the music fundraiser by supporting the students with your purchases. Thank you!

Coming up in January is the 5th and 6th grade concert on January 26, 2010. The program begins at 7pm with the bands, and the 5/6 grade musical will follow. If you have any artificial trees left over from the holidays, please consider letting us use them for props in our play, "Winter Wouldn't Wait".

The elementary will be singing the National Anthem at the BB game on Friday, January 22. Singers need to be in the high school music room by 6:15 for warm-ups.

**From the Desk of Mrs. Sowder, English
Department / Yearbook Advisor**

YEARBOOK NEWS: Seniors need to turn in four baby pictures and at least one senior portrait (up to three senior poses) to the yearbook staff immediately after winter break. If you have a situation and can't meet the deadline, please e-mail or talk to Mrs. Sowder to make other arrangements.

If you would like the chance to win a free yearbook valued at almost \$50, enter the raffle on January 21 at the basketball games. Several names will be drawn at each half-time and those students or parents have a chance to win a free yearbook by competing in the shooting contest. Elementary students who win the challenge will get a pizza lunch for themselves and three friends. Tickets are \$1 each.

TAG NEWS: Thanks to all those generous Santas out there like Mary Vaught, who donated 10 homemade blankets to the children's YESS charity by means of the giving trees.

This event was sponsored by junior high TAG students, who collected a total of 423 items and delivered them on December 18 to the organization. Almost 100% of the items were new, including seven laundry baskets, seven new sweat suits, 12 containers of baby formula, 30 tubes of toothpaste, 51 pair of new socks, and 89 jars of baby food.

Thanks to the TAG students who assisted with this project: Elizabeth Gerdes for writing the article about YESS in December newsletter; Emily Murphy, Brienne Connor, and Nicole Shutt for making the tree tags and the flier; Eddy Kraber and Anthony Rudich for promoting the cause by speaking to all the third-sixth grade classrooms; Kyle Kisling for promoting the cause by announcing it on the intercom system; Alex Kim and Connor Dunn for decorating one of the giving trees; and Dalton Knickerbocker for making the greeting card for YESS.

**From the Desk of Mrs. Davidson
Art Department**

VISUAL ARTS



I want to thank parents and extended family for their feedback concerning student art work posted on the web gallery on Artsonia.com. The nice comments left for students are very encouraging to them and boosts their confidence in their own art making abilities. Don't forget to include your name with

any comments that you leave in order for students and parents to know who they are from.

We had one student chosen for their "Artist of the Week". Kay in Mrs. Reynolds 4th grade class had her paper mask chosen for this honor. We had many votes for her, but not enough to win the prize. Good Job, Kay and better luck next time!

CALENDARS NEEDED: We have put to good use the images from calendars. If you have a calendar with animals, landscapes or other nice photography, please send it to school with your student. We use them for various drawing projects. Thank you very much! -- Angela Davidson

**MARTENSDALE ST. MARYS
MUSIC BOOSTERS SPONSOR**

The Martensdale St. Marys Music Boosters would like you to become a sponsor! Your donations will help support the Pre-K -12 music programs at our school. Music Boosters help to cover costs not otherwise covered by school funds.

Music Boosters donations have helped to purchase music stands for the elementary music room, music folders for high school chorus, props for the elementary musical, and some percussion instruments for the band. But we would like to do much more.

With your help we hope to be able to work toward these goals:

- Rhythm Sticks & other supplies for Elementary Music Students
- Percussion instruments for the High School Band
- Color Guard flags and uniform parts
- Other Music Program extras

If you would like to become a Music Boosters Sponsor, please fill in the information below and send your contribution of \$20.00 or more to:

Martensdale-St. Marys Music Boosters
PO Box 350
Martensdale, IA 50160

Donation Amount \$ _____
(\$20 or more to have your name appear on the concert program)

Please print your name as you would like it to appear on the music concert programs:

(Name)

"Students who participate in music receive more academic honors and awards than non-music students. Even more impressive, music participants make for a higher percentage of A and B students than their non-music counterparts."

From the Desk of Mr. Wood,
Elementary Principal

How to Succeed with School Personnel

No child sails through his or her entire school life without at least a few rough waters. Sometimes it's a classmate who's causing problems. Sometimes it's an issue of how the teacher handles the class or treats a child. Sometimes it's a big misunderstanding. And, yes, sometimes the problem is even with your child. No matter what the issue, there are some tried-and-true ways to make dealing with problems at school much smoother.

Start with the teacher.

The best first step is to call your child's teacher and set up a phone conference to discuss the problem. Often, the next step is a face-to-face meeting at the school, either with or without your child. Only if the problem is still unresolved should you take it to the next level—a meeting with the principal.

Don't be afraid.

Many of us feel like children again when we have to meet with the teacher or principal. While these educators are in positions of authority, they're also adults just like you who are interested in your child's education and eager to make the situation better. Don't worry that raising issues with them will "hurt" your child in the classroom. Leaving problems unresolved can be more problematic.

Think positively.

In preparation for a meeting with school personnel, envision that everything will work out for the best. A positive attitude makes it easier for everyone to calmly discuss the issues and find solutions.

Get the facts—from both sides.

Sit down with your child and write down his or her version of the situation. If it's a problem with grading or schoolwork, bring along examples of papers that illustrate your points. Then go through the issues with the teacher and listen to his or her perspective.

Take off the rose-colored glasses.

It's hard to hear a teacher say that your child is having issues in class, but the situation won't

improve unless you understand the teacher's side of things as well.

Use some psychology.

No matter how frustrated you are, you can make the situation better if you offer positive comments. For example, if you're meeting with your child's teacher think of the good things you've heard about the class. Teachers need to know that you see their good efforts as well.

Be respectful.

Even if the teacher is "to blame," it's important that you and your child behave respectfully. Children learn what they live and should observe you treating others with respect at all times.

Decide on a solution—together.

Work with your child's teacher to come up with a written list of how to resolve the situation. There should be items for you and your child to address and items for the teacher to address. Have the teacher make a copy of the list for both of you, and then schedule a follow-up appointment to see what progress has been made.

Follow-up on your end.

If a teacher has asked you to work on some issues with your child at home, it's important that you do so. You certainly expect the teacher to follow-through with what he or she has promised, and it's only fair that you do the same.

Be realistic.

Not every school year will be perfect. Sometimes, children and teachers just don't "click." But by dealing with situations calmly and by focusing on the solutions—not the problems—you'll be making the best of the year for you and your child.

From the Desk of Mrs. Pelzer
Fourth Grade

Mrs. Pelzer's 4th grade was able to raise \$913 for Mercy Hospital (NICU) and Blank Children's Hospital.



With the money donated from several community members, teachers, and businesses the kids were able to buy many craft kits, card games, movies, Wii games, a Wii, board games, coloring books, etc.



We want to thank so many of you who helped us reach our goal this Christmas. Here's wishing all of you a happy & healthy New Year from Mrs. Pelzer's 4th grade class.



From the Desk of Mrs. Pribil,
Counselor's Corner



Starting right after winter break, we will be talking about responsibility in large group guidance. Our next Character Counts assembly will be January 15 at 8:40 in the small gym.

Responsible people take care of themselves as well as others and can always be counted on to do the right thing, even when the right thing is hard to do.

Be Accountable

Responsibility means being accountable.

Exercise Self-Control

- Take charge of your own life.
- Practice self-discipline with your health, emotions, time, and money.

Plan and Set Goals

- Set specific goals and plan to achieve them.
- Organize and manage your time in order to keep commitments and promises.

Choose Positive Attitudes

- An attitude is an outlook on life.

Do Your Duty

- Know and do your duty for yourself, your family, groups in which you participate, your community, and the world.

Set a Good Example

- Lead by example—take the initiative to do what needs to be done.
- Role modeling—what you do is more important than what you say.



MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
NOVEMBER 2, 2009

The Board of Directors of the Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District met in a special workshop session, pursuant to law, on Monday, November 2, 2009.

Members Present: Scott Anderson, President; Nicole Bunch, Vice-President; Dave Shutt, Amy Harper, Wade Gibson, Mike Crozier and Tom Wood together with Superintendent Jean Peterson and Business Manager Jill Gavin.

Members Absent: None

The President called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

Further discussion was made regarding possible cuts for December of 2009 along with proposed cuts for FY2011 due to the 1.5% cut from FY2009, the elimination of Phase I, and the most recent 10% ATB Cut from Governor Culver on October 8, 2009.

Harper moved to adjourn, seconded by Gibson. Roll call: 5 ayes; Time: 6:33 p.m.

APPROVED

Scott Anderson
Board President

Jill C. Gavin
Business Manager

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
NOVEMBER 5, 2009

The Board of Directors of the Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District met in regular session, pursuant to law, on Thursday, November 5, 2009.

Members Present: Scott Anderson, President; Nicole Bunch, Vice-President; Dave Shutt, Amy Harper and Wade Gibson together with Superintendent Jean Peterson and Business Manager Jill Gavin.

Members Absent: None

I. Welcome – Board President

The President called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. Public Comments

Supt. Peterson introduced Matt Carlile to give an update to the Board regarding the Track/Field project. The lines have been painted on the track. Matt and the MStM Administrators are still debating with Pinnacle regarding liquidated damages and a punch list that is still not complete.

III. New Business

A. Discuss November 9, 2009 Agenda Board Packet
Supt. Peterson

Supt. Peterson and Gavin reviewed the agenda items for the November 9, 2009 Board Meeting. Anderson asked about the tabled item from the September Board Meeting regarding substitute bus drivers. Additional information had not been submitted and Anderson requested to add this to the agenda for Monday to remove it from the table. The Board asked what the costs were for coaching overloads. Bunch asked for information on what grades are the students that are open enrolled out. This information will be provided at the November 9th Board Meeting.

B. Discuss/Approve Board Policy 407.6 – Early Retirement
Supt. Peterson

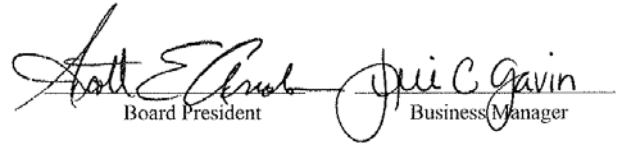
The Board reviewed the policy for early retirement and requested to remove the second bullet regarding years of services and amend the deadline date of March 1 to December 22. Bunch motioned to approve the removal of the second bullet regarding years of services, to amend the deadline to December 22nd, add the cash incentive information and to add that this policy is subject to change on an annual basis or when necessary seconded by Shutt. Roll call: 5 ayes.

C. Approve Offering Early Retirement
Supt. Peterson

The Board reviewed the Early Retirement packet that is provided to those that are requesting early retirement. Bunch motioned to approve amending the deadline date of March 1st to December 22nd and to remove item #7 regarding years of service seconded by Shutt. Roll call: 5 ayes.

Gibson moved to adjourn, seconded by Harper. Roll call: 5 ayes; 6:10 p.m.

APPROVED



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**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING**

**NOVEMBER 9, 2009**

The Board of Directors of the Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District met in regular session, pursuant to law, on November 9, 2009.

Members Present: Scott Anderson, President; Wade Gibson, Amy Harper and Dave Shutt together with Superintendent Jean Peterson, and Business Manager Jill Gavin.

Members Absent: Nicole Bunch, Vice-President

I. Welcome

Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed all guests.

II. Consent Items

- A. Approval of Minutes.
- B. Approval of Agenda
- C. Approval of Bills and Secretary's Report
- D. Approval of Hot Lunch and Activity Reports

Gavin requested approval for an additional bill from Young Mechanical for the air condition project. Gibson asked why the Preschool fund was in the negative. Gavin explain that the 5-yr old tuition money had never been transferred to the Preschool Fund in the past.

Harper motioned to approve all consent items seconded by Gibson. Roll call: 4 ayes.

III. Celebrations

Crozier announced to the Board that the Jr High Volleyball team went undefeated this season with a 9-0 record. Crozier announced that Sue Clark was asked to be a guest conductor at the POI Blue Grass Conference.

Wood announced that 50% of our students in grades 4-6 are listed on the Gold/Blue Honor Roll.

IV. Public Comments – No public comments

V. Old Business

- A. Reports
- 1) Facilities Report – Supt. Peterson

Supt. Peterson presented to the Board a settlement letter from Pinnacle regarding liquidated damages to the Track/Field project and stated that we will be in contact with our legal counsel. Supt. Peterson presented the long range facilities plan and will set a date to meet with the Facilities Committee to discuss the timeline for each item.

2) MStM Music Booster Minutes – Supt. Peterson – Minutes from October 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

3) MStM Athletic Booster Minutes – Supt. Peterson Minutes from September 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

4) MStM PTO Minutes – Supt. Peterson Minutes from October 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### B. Presentations

1) Superintendent’s Report – Supt. Peterson  
Supt. Peterson introduced to the Board Randy Folkerts, Secondary Guidance Counselor, and Jen Pribil, Elementary Guidance Counselor. Randy and Jen presented to the Board an overview of our K-12 Guidance Curriculum, Bullying and Harassment activities done with staff and students, and the MStM Iowa Youth Survey results. The Board thanked Randy and Jen for their presentation. Supt. Peterson reminded the Board that the Quality Support Committee will be meeting November 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. and discussing with this committee, what their role will be for the upcoming State Department of Education’s Site Visit in February. Supt. Peterson informed the Board that there is a possibility that there could be another Across the Board Cut or selected deappropriations by the legislature once it convenes.

2) Principals’ Report –Tom Wood and Mike Crozier

Tom Wood announced to the Board that there was 98% in attendance for the Elementary Parent Teacher Conferences on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. Wood presented his October Classroom Behavior Sweeps data and noticed an increase in teachers circulating and observing students from the previous month. He announced the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Honor Roll for 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades. Wood then provided additional information on area preschools and their tuition costs.

Crozier introduced Ron Peterson, At-Risk Director. Peterson presented to the Board what the program is about, the program goals, what they use as identifiers of an at-risk student, where we are at now in the program and where we are going. This is the

second year for this program and he is very excited how the program is moving forward and how they are helping students that have the potential of dropping out. The Board thanked Ron for his presentation.

Crozier presented data on the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Discipline Report. Detentions were cut in half from a year ago in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. Suspensions were close to the same as a year ago. Crozier explained to the Board about the Exit Surveys that are given to Seniors for our Site Visit requirement and how we will have a one-year follow up with these students. Crozier announced that the Secondary Parent Teacher Conferences received only a 59% attendance rate; which is very low compared to last year. The administration is looking toward student led conferences for next year. Crozier announced the October Students of the Month.

|                  |                                   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Emma Johanson                     |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Kaitlyn Belieu                    |
| 9 <sup>th</sup>  | Cody Harvey                       |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> | Jasper Jones                      |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> | Rachel Connor                     |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> | Kyle Wiedmann and Emily Hutchison |

#### VI. New Business

A. Approve 2009-2010 Personnel Recommendations - Supt. Peterson

Harper motioned to approve

- paying the Jr. High Girls Basketball coach the overload due to the number of players on the team,
- the Jr. High Boys Basketball coach’s request for Brent Parrott as the assistant coach due to the number of players on the team,
- Todd Verwers as the High School Softball Coach
- Brian Sweet as the High School Softball Assistant Coach
- Justin Dehmer as the High School Baseball Coach
- Jon Fitzpatrick as the High School Baseball Assistant Coach

Seconded by Shutt. Roll call: 4 ayes. The Junior High Softball and Baseball positions will be posted.

B. Certified Count 2009-2010 - Jill Gavin

Gavin informed the Board that the Enrollment for 2009-2010 has been certified at 524.6; which is a decrease in enrollment of 9.1 students from the 2008-

2009 school year. MStM has 86.1 open enrolled out students and 91 open enrolled in students.

C. Approve Early Graduation Requests  
Supt. Peterson

Gibson motioned to approve early graduation for Kyle Howell and Zach Streyffeler if they pass their necessary requirements seconded by Harper. Roll call: 4 ayes.

D. Approve Open Enrollment Request  
Supt. Peterson

Supt. Peterson received an open enrollment request after the March 1 deadline but the request is for good cause and I-35 confirmed that the funding would follow. Harper motioned to approve the open enrollment request for Tyler Lester seconded by Shutt. Roll call: 4 ayes.

E. Approve SBRC Application for Modified Allowable Growth to Replace Phase I Jill Gavin

Gavin explained to the Board the importance of requesting Modified Allowable Growth to replace the Phase I funding cut for FY10. The district had already certified its budget by the time this action was taken by the legislature. The district understands this is a one-time request but to not receive the spending authority for the current fiscal year would have a negative impact on the students of our district. Gibson motioned to approve the request for Modified Allowable Growth to replace the Phase I funding cut for FY10 seconded by Shutt. Roll call: 4 ayes.

F. Present SBRC Application for Increasing Enrollment/Open Enrolled Out Jill Gavin

Gavin explained that since we did not have an increase in enrollment or open enrolled out students that we need not need to complete this application but wanted to keep it on the minutes from year to year.

G. Approve Allowable Growth for Negative Special Education Balance Jill Gavin

Supt. Peterson and Gavin explained the possible scenarios that have caused the district to have a negative special education balance from how the State lowered the way they weighted special education students, more special education expenses that include salaries, transportation and supplies, and how the funding that we received for FY10 is from the special education count a year earlier. Gavin presented what our balances have been for the past 10 years. Harper motioned to approve the request for allowable growth and supplement aid for our

negative special education balance for the current school year seconded by Shutt. Roll call: 4 ayes.

H. Discuss/Approve Budget Cuts for FY10  
Supt. Peterson

Gibson approved Supt. Peterson's recommendations to the Board that we cut 4 associates, 1 secretary, 1 part time secretary, 1 custodian and that we cut the custodians' hours from 40 hours a week to 35 hours a week starting on December 22, 2009 due to budget cuts for FY10 seconded by Shutt. Roll call: 4 ayes.

I. Approve Bus Driver Substitute -Tabled from September 14<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting Supt. Peterson

Supt. Peterson and Gavin explained to the Board that they requested an official letter from JoRo Enterprises requesting who they wanted for substitute drivers twice and nothing was received. Gavin explained that the substitutes that were to be approved have now met all requirements and we are just waiting for the official letter. Shutt motioned to approve the removal of the substitute driver request of JoRo Enterprises from New Business seconded by Gibson. Roll call: 4 ayes.

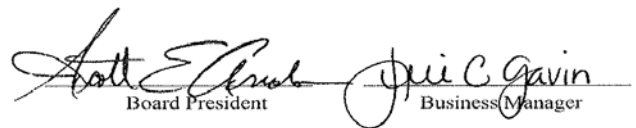
J. Confirm – Next Meeting Dates

12/09/09 – Agenda subcommittee by e-mail  
12/10/09 – 5:30 p.m. Agenda Meeting  
12/14/09 – 6:00 p.m. Board Meeting

VII. Adjournment

Harper motioned to adjourn seconded by Shutt. RC: 4 ayes. Time: 7:53 p.m.

APPROVED

  
Board President Business Manager

*The Martensdale-St.Marys District Newsletter will be available by the end of each month.*

*Questions or concerns may be addressed to:  
Mrs. Tomlinson  
Martensdale-St.Marys  
Superintendent's Office  
390 Burlington  
Martensdale, Iowa  
641/764-2466*