

# MEA • VOICE

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IT TAKES  
A VILLAGE  
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**DAY** *at the*  
**MUSEUM**

# The Long and Short Answers to Questions

FOR THOSE OF US WHO CHERISH PUBLIC EDUCATION AMONG OUR DEMOCRACY'S GREATEST CIVIC INSTITUTIONS, THESE ARE TRYING TIMES.

Candidate Donald Trump promised to divert \$20 billion in public funds to charter and private schools. Now President-Elect Trump's choice of Betsy DeVos to head the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) indicates he means business when it comes to schools—*pun intended*.

DeVos has no experience or expertise in public education beyond her billionaire family's relentless efforts to privatize Michigan's schools. She wants to spend tax dollars on private school tuition, and she pulled the strings that freed for-profit corporate charter schools to run rampant in our state.

That's not school improvement meant to modernize or advance the public education system that has built this country with opportunity for all. Let's call it what it is: a money grab.

DeVos still needs to be confirmed by the Senate, but the question remains: Can Trump's administration destroy public education? We'll return to the short answer to that question in a moment. First, our concerns.

Education policy experts agree Trump and the DOE can use some federal funding and incentives to states in ways that favor even more broadly the syphoning of public tax dollars

from community schools to for-profit charters and private schools—thereby speeding up privatization.

That's especially worrisome here in Michigan, where we're experiencing destructive DeVos policies in action. Our state leads the nation in the percentage of for-profit charter schools.

Michigan spends \$1 billion a year of public money on charter schools that don't disclose their financial dealings and haven't raised student performance on standardized tests. No system is in place to oversee them.

A recent year-long investigation of Michigan's charter school system by the *Detroit Free Press* found wasteful spending, double dipping, contract steering, overall poor academic performance, and no state standards for how to deal with it all.

Voucher schemes haven't proved any better. Vouchers have failed to bridge the achievement gap in any of the 30 states where they have been tried, while continuing to drain resources away from the traditional schools that educate the vast majority of students.

Now for the short answer to the question about whether Trump and DeVos could corporatize public education to its destruction: They can do

damage, but they can't destroy it alone. They can't pass a radical \$20 billion voucher plan to dismantle our nation's public education system without the support of Congress, the courts, and the American people.

And that is where we come in. We—you and us. Together we are MEA, together we have a voice, together we are stronger.

We showed our strength and solidarity in grassroots campaigns that won on Nov. 8. From the western end of the Upper Peninsula to southeast Michigan, 75 percent of our recommended candidates claimed school board seats and 86 percent of our supported school millages passed.

We are united by our commitment to public education, bonds that connect us to school employees across the country. The future depends on our will to stand up together for what we believe in—so let's make some New Year's resolutions.

Let's resolve to actively build coalitions in our communities with parents and civic leaders who share our desire for investment in quality public schools.

Let's speak up with friends and neighbors to raise awareness about what is happening to scapegoat and weaken public education, and what's at stake if we don't stop it.

Let's stand ready to lobby lawmakers in Lansing and Washington if they attempt to implement voucher and privatization schemes that voters nationwide—including in Michigan—have rejected many times.

Let's redouble our efforts to tell the story of public education and MEA—from the challenges we face to the incredible drive and determination our members show every day.

We **are** stronger together. ■



Steven B. Cook  
President

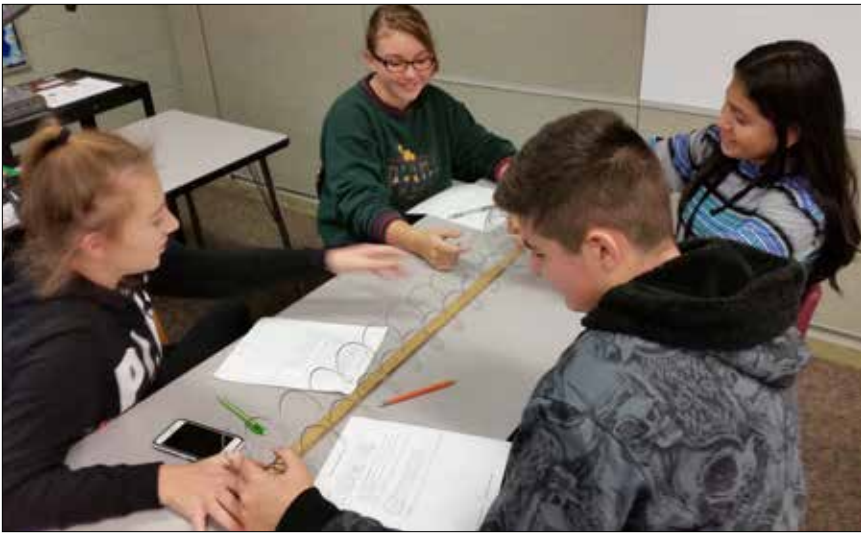


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# MEA Voice

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# Editor's Notebook

The other day I came across teachers on Facebook making analogies for their jobs. One person said teaching is like trying to keep up on a too-fast treadmill. Another compared it to creating a dinner party where each guest requires different foods and eating methods. Someone else said he was a rock star by day and tax accountant by night. I've been known to liken my frustrations with the pressures of teaching high school English—over-testing, bureaucratic evaluations, ever-growing state mandates—to the *Star Wars* scene where Luke, Princess Leia, Han Solo, and Chewbacca are trapped in a garbage compactor with the walls closing in.

What's the best analogy for your job? What's it like to be a school secretary? The middle school custodian? A food services employee? Band teacher or accounting professor?

How do you and your colleagues cope with growing job demands? What have you done to strengthen union bonds and improve the lives of students?

Share your story with me! I'm always looking for content by and about members for *MEA Voice*—and now it's easy to reach out and let me know what's happening in your school or district, or what you think about issues facing public education. Visit our redesigned, mobile-friendly website at [www.MEA.org](http://www.MEA.org) and click on the "Share your Story" button.

We need to tell the story of public education, school employees, and our union.

So tell me about yourself or your interesting co-worker down the hall. Share opinions on the latest news. Drop a line about the quirky comic custodian in your building, or the singing lunch lady all the kids love. You or your colleagues could be featured in the magazine or website!

—Brenda Ortega, Editor

**“The expansion of charter schools is draining funds from our public schools and benefiting some children while leaving others behind with fewer resources. We need a public school system that gives every child an equal chance to a great education.”**

*Actor Matt Damon, quoted in The Washington Post, on why he agreed to narrate a new documentary about corporate “reform” of public education. Makers of the 90-minute film, Backpack Full of Cash, have been raising money for distribution.*

# 82%

Percentage of Michigan voters who agreed with the statement that “a public school should never be closed based solely upon results from statewide standardized testing” in a recent poll conducted by Public Opinion Strategies.

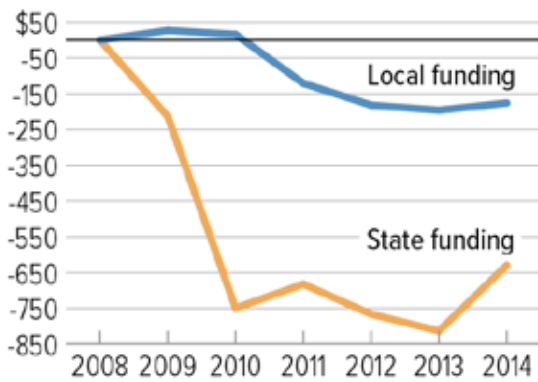


## THE LOOK

In a recent *Edutopia* blog post, “New Teachers: How to Develop ‘The Look,’” writer and former teacher Rebecca Alber discusses what veteran teachers know—the effectiveness of non-verbally communicating with off-task students rather than calling them out publicly. “The look” should not be mean or angry, Alber says, but it lets a student know: *I see you. I’m on your side, but you know what the task is at hand.*

## K-12 Funding Fell Sharply After Recession Hit

Change in funding per pupil compared to 2008, inflation adjusted



Note: Excludes Hawaii and Indiana due to lack of data.

Source: CBPP analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, "Public Education Finances: 2014"

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

## ICYMI

A recent review of state K-12 spending found public investment in schools has declined dramatically in many states over the past 10 years, including Michigan. Even as some states raised general funding per student this year, the level of spending adjusted for inflation continues to be well below states' support for elementary and secondary schools before the Great Recession took hold in 2008. The report notes that decreased funding undermines efforts to attract and retain a high-quality workforce and to reduce class sizes, especially in the younger grades when children are learning foundational skills. "These cuts risk undermining schools' capacity to develop the intelligence and creativity of the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs," the report concluded.

**"You've got a lot of money on one side going in to create a privatized school system that becomes part of the new marketplace for hedge funds and Wall Street investors."**

*Stan Salett, president of the Foundation for the Future of Youth, and co-author of a recent study by the Independent Media Institute which found that 40 percent of the nation's 6,700 charter schools are part of corporate chains or franchises with little or no governance accountability or financial transparency. The group's report, "Who Controls Our Schools? The Privatization of American Public Education," recommends a national moratorium on the rapid growth of charters until the industry's governing structures and business models can be assessed and improved.*

## Above and Beyond

It all started when Traverse City school bus driver Marti Alvarez saw a crying and sockless kindergartner board her bus one sub-zero February morning. Alvarez sprang into action last winter, and her "Warm Toes Sock Drive" run by the Traverse City Transportation Association gathered more than 3,500 pairs of socks to give out to students in need. Now you can give to this year's "Warm Toes Sock Drive" by sending a check or money order to:

Ms. Martha Alvarez, TCAPS Transportation Department, 1180 Cass Road, Traverse City, MI 49685.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### February 2-3—Bargaining, Public Affairs & Professional Development Conference

*Cobo Center, Detroit*

MEA's biggest conference of the year provides updated information and sharpens members' skills in advocacy, communications, member engagement, negotiations, political action, and professional development. This year's theme is "We Are Public School Educators. This is Our Union. And This Is What We Do!"

### March 17-18—ESP Statewide Conference

*Crowne Plaza Lansing West, Lansing*  
Education support professionals will gather to network and get training on topics such as legal issues, ESP certification, privatization, school violence, and member outreach and engagement. The winner of the Leon A. Brunner Award will be honored.

### March 18—Student MEA Conference

*MEA Headquarters, East Lansing*  
Student members from across the state will gather for professional development and election of their 2017-18 officers.

### April 21-22—Spring Representative Assembly

*Lansing Center, Lansing*  
MEA's highest governing body, the RA will consider the organization's budget and policy matters for the coming year and elect new MEA officers. Delegates are elected from locals around the state.



## *Dreaming Big*

MEA member Tracy Foster has co-authored a children's book with a twist. The Corunna Public Schools' 2015-16 Teacher of the Year (pictured above, right) recently published *Benson's Adventures in Michigan*, along with Shannon Cooper-Toma, a building principal in the district. This story of a turtle's travels in the Great Lakes state features fun facts and photos in postcard format. But here's the twist: the two educators—now working on and planning for their second and third books—take students along for the research, following the motto they teach students: "Dream big." They were inspired by a kindergarten field trip to Saugatuck when youngsters said they had never seen Lake Michigan. To date, 56 students have visited 40 locations—logging 9,000 miles of travel, which included a dream meeting with MSU Men's Basketball Coach Tom Izzo for one student with cancer. The pair will be featured authors at the Michigan Reading Association Conference next March in Grand Rapids. And they've started a non-profit to distribute the book to schools throughout Michigan. "We have currently donated well over 3,000 books to students in Michigan," Foster says. Visit [www.BensonsLiteracyFoundation.org](http://www.BensonsLiteracyFoundation.org) for more information or [www.BensonsAdventures.com](http://www.BensonsAdventures.com) to purchase the book.

## MEA SCHOLARSHIP

The MEA Scholarship application is available at [www.mea.org](http://www.mea.org) under Member Benefits.

To be eligible for the MEA Scholarship, applicants must be a dependent of an MEA member or MEA-Retired member in good standing. The general criteria for awarding the scholarships include academic achievement, extra-curricular activities as well as school and community service.

The MEA Scholarship Fund

is financed through voluntary contributions of members, staff and friends of the Michigan Education Association.

Last year, 19 new winners were awarded the scholarship at \$1,200 each. In addition, 15 returning winners were awarded \$500 each.

The application deadline is Thursday, February 23, 2017.

Questions can be directed to Barb Hitchcock at [bhitchcock@mea.org](mailto:bhitchcock@mea.org) or 517-333-6276.

# My Science Students are Trying New Things—and We're Learning Together

By Mike Lerchenfeldt  
Science teacher, Chippewa Valley Schools

IN OUR SEVENTH-GRADE SCIENCE CLASS, WE RECENTLY LEARNED ABOUT ENERGY WAVES. STUDENTS WERE ASKED THE QUESTIONS: IS THERE A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FREQUENCY, WAVELENGTH, AND SPEED? IF SO, WHAT IS IT? IF NOT, WHY?

I could teach about frequency, wavelength, and speed by having students memorize definitions, teaching them the math formulas, and having them do practice problems—then testing them on it. Instead, I had students use the vocabulary, design a model, and plan an investigation in order to discover the math formulas.

As a society and as science educators, we are in a transition from a focus on knowledge itself to a focus on putting that knowledge to use. That shift is behind Michigan's move to a new paradigm for science teaching, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), adopted last year.

The United States' ability to innovate depends on science education. Citizens are required to use critical thinking and communication skills in a global economy driven by advancements in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).

The potential payoffs for students are big. The National Science Foundation reports there are currently 2-3 million unfilled positions due to the lack of qualified candidates in the areas of STEM.

The NGSS emphasizes the eight practices essential to scientists and engineers in their workplaces and intertwines these practices with the core

ideas students are learning in science class. They include asking questions and defining problems; developing and using models; planning and carrying out investigations; analyzing and interpreting data; using mathematics and computational thinking; con-

problem-solving fields of thinking.

In my energy waves lesson, the class designed an investigation for small groups to carry out. Then each small group developed a model of a wave using a slinky, meter stick, and stopwatch to measure frequency, wavelength, and speed. Students—not the teacher—determined how to measure the time it takes for the wave to travel down the length of the slinky and back.



Seventh graders in Lerchenfeldt's class used a slinky, meter stick, and stopwatch to design an energy wave experiment.

structuring applications and designing solutions; engaging in argument from evidence; and obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information.

When students are engaged in these practices, they learn how scientific knowledge is developed and how it is linked to engineering and other

All students collected data and recorded their observations. They analyzed the data and computed averages in search of a mathematical pattern or proportional relationship.

I was impressed with their organized data tables and graphs. If students found a mathematical rela-

tionship, they were asked to construct an equation or formula to compute quantities.

In their conclusion, students had to answer the investigation questions and write an argument for their claim supported by evidence from their data. Each small group had time to discuss and communicate their results to the entire class.

Many of the small groups discovered a cause-and-effect relationship between frequency, wavelength, and speed. Those who did not figure it out on their own did understand it after the reporting out and whole-class discussion.

That's an important point to make: This is not a magic solution for every

student to get the "right" answer immediately. However, I believe my students understood more deeply what I was teaching, because they could apply abstract concepts back to what they saw with the slinky.

Engaging students in scientific practice also makes reading more relevant. As my seventh graders set out to investigate the properties of waves, they read "What are Waves?" to guide their thinking. As they did the work of exploring the interactions of frequency, wavelength, and speed—looking for patterns and relationships—we read an article titled "Wave Properties."

Students were more engaged in the reading since they were seeking an-

swers to real questions, which makes it easier to embed Common Core State Standards for Literacy into science teaching.

As the NGSS begin to take the focus off rote memorization, reading, writing and critical thinking will become fundamental skills in a science class—just as they are in a world of 21st century problems that need solving.

That means we need to teach young people how to read and think critically by modeling the strategies we expert readers use to comprehend science text—skills that will be paramount in their lives as citizens and participants in the world.

Was my lesson plan perfect? No. As always, I've reflected on ways to make

## Michigan Science Teachers Test

VICKSBURG EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT LIZ RATASHAK HAS BEEN TEACHING SECONDARY SCIENCE FOR 25 YEARS. NOW SO MUCH IS CHANGING ABOUT HOW HER SUBJECT IS EXPECTED TO BE TAUGHT—AND THE VETERAN EDUCATOR COULDN'T BE HAPPIER.

"This is the kind of guidance I've been hoping for my whole career," Ratashak said.

The new Michigan K-12 Science Standards, based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), call for a "three-dimensional" approach to K-12 science instruction that marries content and process.

Those three dimensions weave together ideas specific to each scientific discipline (life, physical, earth and space, engineering and technology), with scientific and engineering practices (investigation into answers and designing solutions), and big concepts that are common to all areas of science (cause and effect, stability and change, etc.).

Ratashak does not downplay the magnitude of the shift in organization

and practice that schools and science teachers will need to make in transitioning to the new standards. "It's a big philosophical change, from a focus on content to how science is done."

That's the reason behind a new MEA network of science teachers that includes Ratashak and 14 others connected with a Michigan State University project called *Carbon TIME*. Funded with a National Science Foundation grant, the project has developed six teaching units that the MEA network teachers have agreed to field test.

"We believe that teachers are more able to make meaningful changes to their teaching practices when they're supported through networks of colleagues," said Christie Morrison Thomas, the MEA *Carbon TIME* network leader and an MSU graduate

student in curriculum, instruction, and teacher education.

Developed over the last seven years for use in middle and high school science classes, the six *Carbon TIME* units address a big concept that cuts across multiple fields of science and engineering: Transformations in Matter and Energy. They can be found online at [CarbonTIME.bscs.org](http://CarbonTIME.bscs.org).

The MEA network teachers have agreed to complete professional development, offer feedback after teaching three of the six *Carbon TIME* units, and act as a resource for others in their school, district, and region. A second cohort of MEA network teachers will begin working with the project next spring.

"This shift in how we approach science teaching and learning is wonderful and really positive, but it's huge and teachers may feel unprepared," Thomas said.

Developed by states over several years, the NGSS grew out of frus-



it better next time—for example, by assessing individual student understanding through some kind of visible (active) response to questions, differentiating my instruction for individuals who need re-teaching, and offering reading selections at varied readability levels.

Change is messy, and I am shifting my practice. Teachers beginning the transition to the NGSS should expect to have some trial-and-error, but that is appropriate. After all, trial-and-error is the scientific way. ■

Contact Mike Lerchenfeldt with comments or questions at [about.me/mikelerchenfeldt](http://about.me/mikelerchenfeldt).

### Science education will involve less:

Teachers providing information to the whole class

Teachers posing questions with only one right answer

Student reading textbooks and answering questions at the end of each chapter

### Science education will involve more:

Students conducting investigations, solving problems, and engaging in discussions with teacher guidance

Students discussing open-ended questions that focus on the strength of the evidence used to generate claims

Students reading multiple sources and developing summaries of information

# Driving “Next Gen” Standards

tration that science standards and curricula nationwide focused too narrowly on facts and recall, which led to rote memorization instead of exploration, discovery, and problem-solving—the cornerstones of science and engineering.

This is the first year of implementation in Michigan, a time to learn what’s changing, try out new approaches, and replace some units here and there, Ratashak said. “My best advice is to bite off a chunk that seems manageable, and manage it. Then bite off another chunk, and manage that.”

School districts are in different stages of preparation around the state. Some have started training teachers in the new standards, while others haven’t. Some science departments are studying recommended course realignments (online at [NextGenScience.org](http://NextGenScience.org) under “Middle and High School Course mapping”), and others don’t know it’s out there.

Educators should be asking for professional development and demanding more if they’re struggling or the training they receive isn’t adequate, Ratashak said. The new standards are scheduled to be assessed for the first time in 2020, but the assessment is still under development.

“Until then, I say, ‘Do the best you can,’” Ratashak said. “Get some training, and get some more, and eventually it will start to sink in. Try things. Don’t worry about shifting everything all at once.”

Because the standards have been developed over years, some good resources are available online to help teachers understand the changes and take the first tentative steps in a four-year process of implementation.

[NextGenScience.org](http://NextGenScience.org) offers monthly newsletters, a guide to implementation, course flowcharts, sample classroom tasks, and more. MSU’s *Carbon TIME* units at [CarbonTIME.bsccs.org](http://CarbonTIME.bsccs.org) cover a chunk of the middle and high

school standards—about half of a traditional year of biology at the high school level. At [TeachingChannel.org](http://TeachingChannel.org)/NGSS, videos and other materials are available from teachers working to implement the standards.

Mostly what science teachers need is something that’s always in short supply: time.

“This is still so new,” Thomas said. “What teachers need from administrators is professional development and also a commitment of time to get together, talk, and work with colleagues.”

Meanwhile, teachers can reach out to Ratashak ([iratashak@mea.org](mailto:iratashak@mea.org)) or Thomas ([morris73@msu.edu](mailto:morris73@msu.edu)) for guidance in how to tap into training and networking resources. Ratashak says, “I’m interested in helping anybody along if they want help.” ■

By Brenda Ortega  
MEA Voice Editor

# For Days You're Feeling Low



I'VE BEEN TEACHING FOR 20 YEARS IN SOUTH REDFORD. AT TIMES I'M FRUSTRATED OVER THE DIRECTION PUBLIC EDUCATION MOVES, HOW THE GOVERNMENT TREATS US, OR MY INABILITY TO REACH A STUDENT. I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER SOMETIMES, "WHY AM I DOING THIS?"

But something always brings me back to the reason I return year after year: The kids. Recently a student of mine from 2007—David—emailed to say he was about to graduate college with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, start a job, return for a Master's degree. He concluded:

*"The memory I have of you is showing me the importance of diction and vocabulary by your insatiable love for reading... So I hope this can be a message of encouragement for you to continue teaching and leaving an impressionable mark on someone's life. Thank you."*

I was reminded why we all do this job, and I wanted to thank you for your tireless work. You give your all to provide quality instruction to students who love school or hate school, who are male, female, LGBT, black, white, Asian, Hispanic, Middle-Eastern, multi-cultural, and:

*physically disabled, gifted, learning disabled, average, abused, well-to-do, poor, hungry, neglected, raised in traditional families, from broken families, from foster families, raised in single-parent homes, raised by grand-*

*parents, non-native English speakers, emotionally impaired, hormonal, sleepy, moody, medicated, in need of medication, self-medicated, bored, inconsistent, depressed, suicidal, on parole, comical, cutters, loud, painfully shy, polite, rude, know-it-all, underdogs, confident, insecure, street-wise, naïve, passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, impulsive, angry, violent, guided by faith, not guided at all, jocks, nerds, rockers, skaters, goths, practically invisible, self-confident, looking to find themselves, lost...*

Each day you will strive to meet the needs of students who:

*have traveled the country, have never left the city, have grown up in our system, have just arrived, have a visual learning style, have an auditory learning style, have a kinesthetic learning style, have no learning style, have been read to their whole lives, have never been read to, are reading above grade level, are reading below level, cannot read, love your subject, hate your subject, have attention deficit, hang on your every word, defy you, adore you, surpass every challenge, refuse to live up to potential, seek help, refuse help,*

By Bill Triolet, EA president  
South Redford School District

*go home and do homework, go home and play video games, go home and parent younger siblings, go home to addict parents, have no home to go to...*

And you navigate district and state directives to utilize the most current strategies and prove student growth through a plethora of strategic planning tools and evaluative measures such as:

*Understanding By Design, The Baldrige Criteria, the MEAP, The new MEAP, the SAT, the PSAT, the ACT, the M-STEP, Quarterly Assessments, Summative Assessments, Formative Assessments, Child Studies, The Danielson Framework, SRI, Dibbles, CLASS A, DNA, 6+1, Power Writing, Writing Across the Curriculum, Open Court, CER, T4, Next Generation Science standards, Common Core, GLICKIES, HISSIES, HUSKIES, Diagnostic Reading Assessments, SMI, SRI, PRIMM, Marzano, MLPP, DSM4, 5, 6 and 7, Schmoker, COWS, Woodcock Johnson, STAR Reading Tests, Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Math, STAR Math Tests, QRI's, I-Ready, Manifestations, and MI-Access.*

*You aren't teachers, you are freaking super heroes!*

Remember that fact when you are brought down, as you inevitably will be, by an unkind word from a thoughtless parent, a child who you feel you cannot reach despite your best efforts, or yet another right-wing politician spouting why public education is the root of all the nation's woes. Remember all that you do for so many and so varied young people and be proud. You are an MEA member and a public school educator: Your business is changing lives. ■



# Making the Old *New Again*

*Stories by Brenda Ortega  
MEA Voice Editor*

THERE'S NO ANCIENT CURSE, NO FLASHLIGHT-CARRYING NIGHT SECURITY GUARD, NO T. REX SKELETON PLAYING FETCH OR WAX-FIGURE TEDDY ROOSEVELT SHOUTING "BULLY!" THIS IS NOT *NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM*, THE MOVIE IN WHICH EXHIBIT INHABITANTS AWAKEN AND CAUSE MISCHIEF.

But there is new life in the Grand Rapids Public Museum (GRPM) these days—in the form of permanent sixth- and seventh-grade residents.

About 120 middle schoolers go to school every day inside the three-story museum, which includes access to a portion of the museum's 250,000 artifacts, a planetarium, and traveling exhibits such as "Whales: Giants of

the Deep," on loan from New Zealand through April 15.

It's a new middle school, part of Grand Rapids Public Schools, with classrooms staffed from the start by MEA members willing to take a leap of faith right along with the students and parents who applied for lottery-picked seats when the unconventional school opened in fall 2015.

"I walk in here in the morning, and I think to myself, This is magic; I work in a museum," said GREA member Abbie Marr, a 12-year teaching veteran who eagerly applied to be one of the first sixth-grade teachers at the school.

The overarching goals of the ambitious project: providing experiential learning opportunities that cross traditional subject area boundaries and help students see how to put knowledge to use. In particular, the school's curriculum joins place-based education with design thinking.

"If you stop and think about the

# Teaching and Learning Inside the

IMAGINE BEING A MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT, AND INSTEAD OF SIMPLY VISITING THE PLANETARIUM TO WATCH A SHOW ABOUT THE NIGHT SKY—YOU GET TO DESIGN AND PRESENT THE SHOW USING THE COOL SOFTWARE AND HIGH-TECH GADGETS NORMALLY ONLY HANDLED BY THE EXPERT ASTRONOMERS ON STAFF.

That is the sort of fundamental—yet monumental—shift in teaching and learning happening inside the new Grand Rapids Museum School and beyond the museum’s walls in the outdoor areas and community spaces of the city.

“This school is, like, super hands-on,” said Elijah Taylor, a sixth grader new to the school this year, who so far has most enjoyed touring ArtPrize entries in the city and wearing waders to collect water samples from a local stream. “You’re not always in a classroom.”

The school joins together place-based education, in which students

learn by becoming actively engaged in their communities, with design thinking—a creative and collaborative process for solving problems.

School subjects are not divided into distinct classes but blend together in projects and problem-solving tasks. Students work at place-based design projects in a weekly 2½-hour session.

For example, instead of learning history backward to forward, students start with issues in their own community and surroundings and connect it to the past, Principal Chris Hanks said.

For the sixth graders, that meant

starting the year with a Grand Rapids Neighborhoods project involving researching city records archives, meetings with neighborhood association leaders, walking and photographing assigned areas, and looking up historical information.

For seventh graders, studying agrarian societies began with a project to figure out what, where, and how to plant a new living exhibit outside on museum grounds.

Students learned about invertebrates by traveling to various local lakes and streams to gather water samples; capturing creatures from the samples, sorting them into ice cube trays, identifying them, and graphing their findings; and comparing the water’s pH levels to determine which waterways were healthiest.

Lesson plans will eventually be

really awesome moments of learning you’ve had in your own experience, they probably weren’t happening at a desk, or inside of a textbook, or on a worksheet,” said GREA member Kim Rowland, a sixth-grade teacher and curriculum integration specialist at the school.

***“This is a public school—an urban public school—that’s leading in where we’re going with innovative teaching,” Robertson said. “Something about that just seems right to me. Strong, viable public schools are absolutely critical.”***

That’s not to say students never learn from a textbook or receive instruction from a teacher. The school

boasts six state-of-the-art classrooms equipped with Smart Boards and iPads. However, the curriculum takes advantage of surrounding resources to bring learning to life.

For example, a recent lesson about the “characteristics of culture” included readings and discussion about definitions of elastic, dynamic, integrated, learned, adaptive, and shared cultures. But then the students walked down to the museum to hunt for examples of the terms.

They explored wide-ranging exhibits to apply what they had learned, from an Egyptian mummy, to Native American relics, recreations of old-town Grand Rapids, and artifacts from the city’s heyday as a center of furniture manufacturing—taking photographs and creating presentations to connect and communicate their findings.

To demonstrate “shared” culture,

sixth grader Elitta Witte photographed a handmade basket used by Native American women to store newborn babies’ umbilical cords, which were saved as protection and symbolism, and eventually buried with the body at the end of life, Witte said.

“I told my mom that, and she didn’t believe me,” Witte said, adding she enjoys learning from artifacts—especially when allowed to explore. “It’s like we have the best tool right where we are.”

The school launched with one grade, added another this year, and will host sixth through eighth graders by next fall. After that, a museum high school will be opened in a separate building—the old site of the GRPM, which still houses 90 percent of the museum’s archives in storage.

The project took a dramatic turn in September, when the district and its community partners learned the high school initiative under development

# New Museum School

shared with other Kent County schools in a program that will also loan paired museum artifacts, said Grand Rapids Public Museum CEO Dale Robertson.

“So you can hold in your hand a 3,000-year-old Babylonian clay tablet and put it right next to an iPhone and say, ‘Oh my goodness; it’s about the same thing, and it fits in your hand. It’s a personal communication device. Gee, maybe human nature hasn’t changed so much after all.’”

Sometimes, however, the best-laid plans shift as teachable moments arise at the school.

When more students were added this year, and lunchtime noise became unpleasant as it reverberated off the high ceiling of glass and steel beams, students were asked to put on their design thinking caps.

Teachers taught a mini-lesson on sound reflection and absorption and students designed methods to dampen the noise—proposing ideas ranging from hanging cloth sails, to tacking egg cartons to the walls, or building sound dampening panels like movie theater walls.

“If we don’t give students an opportunity to learn problem-solving, they will either fail at it later in life when the consequences of failing are much bigger—or they won’t have any idea how to approach it at all,” said MEA member Kim Rowland, a sixth-grade teacher and curriculum integration specialist at the school.

Another time, students noticed two ospreys feeding in the Grand River outside the school’s windows each day. The observation was used to develop a probability unit

tracking the time when the ospreys showed up and whether they caught a fish or not.

In addition, a weekly after-school program brings in expert volunteers to teach kids about subjects they’re most interested in—including how to build a cigar box guitar, repair bikes, cook, sing, make fiber art, and run the planetarium, among other options.

Developing a new school is not easy, but it’s worth it, Rowland and colleague MEA member Abbie Marr agreed. When kids’ faces light up, when they pursue the answer to a question they’re curious about, when they discover something new, the two teachers share in the victory.

“That’s when we say to each other, ‘Hashtag—that’s what I signed up for.’” ■

was one of 10 entries from among 700 nationwide to win a \$10 million grant, funded by Steve Jobs’ widow Laurene Powell Jobs, known as XQ: The Super School Project.

“Winning this prize has to go down as one of the top events in the 162-year history of this museum,” said CEO Dale Robertson, who hatched the original concept of a grades 6-12 museum school six years ago while running in a club with GRPS School Board President Tony Baker.

“This is a public school—an urban public school—that’s leading in where we’re going with innovative teaching,” Robertson said. “Something about that just seems right to me. Strong, viable public schools are absolutely critical.”

Students will be chosen by lottery to attend both the middle and high schools, an important aspect of the school’s operating plan, said Museum School Principal Chris Hanks.

“I feel strongly that the best schools are those in which students from very different backgrounds and different sets of experiences come together to learn in a high-quality environment,” Hanks said. “Unfortunately as a society we’re moving farther away from that ideal.”

Because there is no testing requirement to get in, the middle school houses students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 plans, those who are testing below grade level in reading and/or math, and students who are achieving well above grade level.

Teachers at the school face the same challenges of educators elsewhere: how to reach all learners wherever they’re at and move them along in

MEA member Abbie Marr says her job is a joy and a challenge: “I love teaching to the core of my being.”





The school engages students in real issues in their community, says sixth-grade teacher and curriculum integration specialist Kim Rowland.

their development, Marr and Rowland agreed. In addition, the staff has been challenged to create a new curriculum from the ground up.

It's frightening to wade into unknown territory at a time when teachers are being evaluated based on ever-narrowing criteria, such as students' standardized test scores, they said.

"It's hard to be building the plane while trying to fly it and reading the owner's manual," Marr joked.

Marr spent all summer planning lessons in a project-based unit that only ran through November. Constant planning and responding to student work carries into most nights and weekends. Sometimes, hours are spent

designing a lesson plan that fails.

"There are moments when we look at each other and say, 'We did not sign up for this,'" Rowland said.

And the national spotlight from the as-yet-unopened high school's \$10 million prize brings additional scrutiny and high expectations, the teachers agreed.

Yes, it's exciting to have the museum's resources available every day, and community partnerships make all sorts of learning opportunities possible, the teachers said. But the limitless nature of the museum's collection, plus outside resources, also can be overwhelming, Marr said.

"We could do a million different

things with so many resources at our disposal," she said. "We just have to try to choose what is best for the kids."

Yet both women appreciate being encouraged to grow their teaching practice, engage students in their interests, and help students learn how to solve problems. That kind of growth only occurs when someone feels safe enough to risk trying new things, they said.

"I love the kids, and I love teaching to the core of my being, but in so many places now it's so punitive to take risks," Marr said. "Here we have a lot of autonomy, and we have a lot of support. Failure is welcome here. It's a blessing."

As more grades are added each year and the high school opens, the school's curriculum and lesson plans will be made available to other schools, Principal Chris Hanks said. Students will be involved in community issues and problem solving.

High school students will have access to tens of thousands of items in the museum's storage, and will become part of the curation process, learning how to care for the museum's holdings and design exhibits that tell a story through artifact displays and signage.

The new high school in the old museum building known as the CARC (Community Archives and Research Center) will include classrooms, small-group meeting spaces, and large event spaces intended to blur the boundaries between school and community, Hanks said.

The \$10 million prize will be allocated over five years to redesign the facility, install technology, and design the curriculum. Already, the rigors of the competitive process honed the vision of the school and strengthened the partnership between GRPS, Grand Valley State University, Kendall College of Art & Design, the city of Grand Rapids, and the business community.

"We want to be a model of what's possible in education and to share whatever we learn here," Hanks said. ■



# Learn What's in the New Third Grade Reading Law

A LONG-DEBATED THIRD GRADE READING BILL BECAME LAW WHEN GOV. RICK SNYDER SIGNED IT IN OCTOBER, BUT SOME PROVISIONS WON'T KICK IN QUICKLY, INCLUDING THE CONTROVERSIAL RETENTION MANDATE.

When retention of third graders does become a requirement, several exemptions will allow certain below-grade level readers to avoid repeating the third grade.

Even so, given that only half of Michigan third-grade students performed at the proficient or advanced levels on last spring's M-STEP test, many worry about large numbers of children being held back from advancing to fourth grade—especially in high-poverty and urban areas where proficiency rates were lower than elsewhere.

Another worry educators have

expressed—that children might be retained in third grade multiple times until they are able to pass the state test—were addressed in the law's final form. Students would not repeat third grade more than once.

After lawmakers last spring passed competing bills related to third-grade reading, a measure emerged from closed-door negotiations in conference committee in September to pass the House and Senate the next day.

One “r” word remained in the final measure that many educational experts didn't want to mix with the traditional three “R's”—retention.

The new rules do require students who test a year or more behind grade level on the state's annual reading test to repeat third grade.

But there are several exemptions to the retention requirement, along with one major loophole, all explained in the accompanying table.

Another important fact to keep in mind: the 2019-20 school year will be the first year that third graders must be retained based on sub-par reading scores. The provisions of the new law that start next school year involve providing extra services to struggling kindergarteners through third graders.

Beginning next year, K-3 students must be tested three times a year, and students with reading deficiencies

# Provisions in the new reading law

## Retention:

- begins in 2019-20 school year
- gets triggered when a student is one year or more behind in reading on state assessment

## Exemptions can be granted for students to bypass retention, who EITHER:

- are less than one year behind on state assessment
  - perform at grade level on a state-approved alternative assessment
  - demonstrate grade-level proficiency through a portfolio of work
  - were previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, 2, or 3 and received two years of remediation
  - have an IEP or 504 plan
  - have less than three years of instruction in English Language Learning programs
  - have been enrolled less than two years in the current district and were not provided an Individual Reading Plan in previous school
  - demonstrate proficiency in all other subject areas
- OR
- have a parent who requests an exemption “in the best interests of the student” to be approved by the district superintendent

## Beginning next year, in 2017-18, districts must:

- assess K-3 reading skills three times per year, the first within 30 days of school starting
- provide written notice to parents of a deficiency
- provide an Individual Reading plan developed by the teacher, principal, parents, and other pertinent school personnel, for any deficient students within 30 days after identification
- target specific areas of professional development for teachers
- differentiate and intensify professional development for teachers
- utilize a literacy coach from the ISD or in-house

## Districts will develop a Reading Intervention Program that includes:

- evidence-based core reading instruction
- intensive development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension
- parent “read at home plans” and other documentation of school’s efforts to engage parents
- documentation of dissenting opinions expressed by school personnel or parents in Individual Reading plans

## Grade 3 Reading Intervention Programs must include:

- more intervention time than the previous school year
- daily small-group, one-to-one instruction
- ongoing progress monitoring assessments
- intervention by a teacher, tutor, or volunteer outside of the regular English-language arts classroom time with specialized reading training
- parent “read at home” plans with training workshops

## English Language Learners must receive:

- ongoing assessments that provide actionable data
- instruction in academic vocabulary
- instruction using strategies such as modeling, guided practice and comprehensive input

## Literacy Coaches shall support teachers in:

- each of the five major reading components
- administering and analyzing assessments
- diagnosing reading deficiencies
- using progress monitoring
- modeling effective teaching strategies
- facilitating study groups
- data analysis
- evidence-based practices

must be given an Individual Reading Plan (IRP). Districts with struggling readers also will be required to provide teachers with additional professional development during school time and literacy coaches who will train, model, and offer feedback on best practices in teaching reading.

Services for children also will include increased small group and one-on-one intervention time and “read at home plans” to promote parental involvement. Districts will be encouraged to provide summer reading camps using teachers rated as highly effective.

When the third grade reading bill was first introduced three years ago, it would have mandated retention of all students who did not test at third-grade proficiency level in reading with no exceptions, no remediation, and no teacher training included. Intensive lobbying by MEA and other interested groups resulted in significant improvements—although even with those improvements, MEA opposed the final bill.

MEA will continue to lobby for changes in provisions of this new law that are not compatible with best practices in teaching early elemen-

tary students. The new legislative session beginning in January will provide time to change the first implemented provisions of the law (2017-18) and there will be more than two years to modify the retention provisions before they begin.

Although MEA opposed the bill in its final form, our lobbyists will continue to work for full funding of schools and mandated programs. Early next year, training sessions will be offered to MEA members wanting a more detailed explanation of the new law’s mandates. ■



# MESSA field representatives are ready to help



MESSA'S STATEWIDE NETWORK OF FIELD REPRESENTATIVES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE MESSA EXPERIENCE. THEY ARE LICENSED INSURANCE AGENTS WITH EXPERTISE WORKING WITH EDUCATION EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS TO HELP THEM GET THE MEDICAL, DENTAL AND VISION BENEFITS THEY WANT AND THE OUTSTANDING SUPPORT THEY NEED.

MESSA field representatives can help school employees and management navigate through the entire benefit process, from exploring benefit options and providing support during bargaining, to assisting with plan implementation and member education.

"There's always someone you can call," says Frank Musto, MESSA's director of field services.

"The field representative is one of the unique aspects of MESSA," Musto says. "The field representative is an insurance resource for districts, local association leaders and members. They will help you find the best medical and ancillary benefits for your group that meet your financial needs."

MESSA field representatives are known for being organized, flexible workers who can think on their feet and find creative solutions. They also have a reputation for being rapidly responsive to the needs of education employees and school business offices.

"MESSA is the only organization that I've worked for that places such a strong and genuine emphasis on personal, one-on-one service to members," says Andrew Lavendusky, a MESSA field representative in Wayne County who's worked for MESSA for six years—the first few in MESSA's East Lansing Member Service Center. "Nothing is worse than having a question and having to jump through hoops to find the answer. I like

that I'm able to work directly with members, bargaining teams and school business offices to resolve their issues and concerns."

MESSA Field Representative Monica McKay says she views her job as a way to give back to the educators who helped her reach her goals.

"As the daughter of a retired public school teacher, and having had many influential relationships with school employees in my lifetime, I feel fortunate to be able to return the favor and serve public school employees and help them with their health insurance needs," McKay says.

To contact your MESSA field representative, call 800.292.4910. ■



# Education Policy Watch



AT PRESS TIME FOR THIS ISSUE, THESE ARE SOME OF THE EDUCATION-RELATED BILLS THAT MEA LOBBYISTS AND STAFF WERE WORKING ON IN LAME DUCK AND IN PREPARATION FOR A NEW LEGISLATURE IN JANUARY.

Priorities can change quickly. For the latest news and information stay tuned to [MEA.org](http://MEA.org), sign up to receive *Capitol Comments* and *MEA Voice Online*, and follow Michigan Education Association at [Facebook.com/MichiganEducationAssociation](https://Facebook.com/MichiganEducationAssociation) and [Twitter.com/MEAOnline](https://Twitter.com/MEAOnline).

## SCHOOL EMPLOYEE PENSION (HB 5218 AND SB 102)

The DeVos family and Mackinac Center announced the top legislative priorities they want Republican leaders to pursue, including moving newly hired public employees from a defined benefit system to a defined contribution plan (401k).

*MEA position: oppose*

## BARGAINING CALENDAR (HB 5194)

Sponsored by Rep. Daniela Garcia (R-Holland), this bill would add school calendar and schedule to the list of prohibited subjects of bargaining. The bill has passed out of the House Education Committee and is on third reading on the House floor.

*MEA position: oppose*

## YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLS (HB 5193)

Sponsored by Rep. Daniela Garcia (R-Holland), this bill establishes criteria for waivers to establish year-round schools. The bill has passed out of the House Education Committee and is on the House floor.

*MEA position: no position*

## REMOVAL OF HARD CAP (HB 5924 AND 5925)

Sponsored by Rep. Peter Lucido (R-Shelby Township), this bill would eliminate school employees' health care cost calculation known as the "hard cap," which sets a ceiling on the dollar amount districts pay toward health care premiums. The "80-20" option, which requires employees to pay 20 percent of their health care premium, would remain in place. The bills have been sent to the House committee on Appropriations.

*MEA position: support*

## COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (HB 4552)

HB 4552 would add a requirement that a school counselor complete at least 25 hours of PD covering counseling about the college preparation and selection process and at least 25 hours of PD regarding career counseling to be eligible to have a counselor credential renewed by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). This bill has passed the House and has been referred to the Senate Education Committee.

*MEA position: oppose*

## SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT BILL PACKAGE (HB 5409-5418)

This bill package puts into law a long-standing state policy on the use of seclusion and restraint in all schools in Michigan. After significant input by MEA members and lobbyists, the package passed out of the House Education Committee and was sent to the House floor.

*MEA position: support*

## TEACHER STUDENT-LOAN RELIEF (HB 5967)

Sponsored by Rep. Adam Zemke (D-Ann Arbor), this bill would help educators carrying college student loan debt who are working in school buildings where 50 percent or more of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. It would grant tax credit to those educators based on the amount of student loan debt paid during a calendar year.

*MEA position: support*

## ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION (SB 491)

Sponsored by Sen. Phil Pavlov (R-St. Clair), this bill would allow the board of a school district or intermediate school district to engage a non-certificated, non-endorsed teacher to teach a course in writing, journalism, health sciences, or a course in a discipline designated as a critical shortage discipline, if he or she had in the previous seven years at least five years of occupational experience rather than a major or graduate degree in that field. This bill has passed the Senate and been referred to the House Education Committee.

*MEA position: oppose* ■



# Join MEA-Retired to Protect Your Benefits and Preserve Public Education

Nearly 40,000 retired Michigan school employees stand together as members of MEA-Retired, working to protect your retirement rights and benefits. A one-time membership fee also buys retirees lifetime access to MEA/NEA discounts, insurance plans, and publications.

Right now, the need for unity and strength in numbers has never been more urgent. When Republican leaders announced plans to dismantle our state’s pension system in the next legislative session, MEA-Retired members stepped into action. They need your help and support.

You can become a lifetime member of MEA-Retired for a one-time fee, and join the fight for our future while continuing to enjoy the MEA/NEA savings and benefits you’ve come to love.

MEA-Retired members regularly join in lobbying efforts at the State Capitol, most recently over plans to destabilize our pension system by removing new teachers from MPERS and forcing them into less secure 401(k)-style defined contribution plans. The changes pushed by the billionaire DeVos family ignore the significant changes made to the

pension system in 2012—changes that are working to bring stability to the system for all school employees, both current and future.

Jo Bird, president of the Lakeshore MEA-Retired chapter, regularly calls on legislators by phone, email, and in person—to help them understand the dedication and challenges of school employees doing the vital work of educating the next generation. “How will school districts in Michigan ever attract qualified and dedicated individuals to the field if salary, benefits, and rights continue to be impaired?” she asks. “How will morale in the field ever improve if legislators continue to attack school employees?”

Membership in MEA-Retired offers discounts on products and services ranging from home, auto and life insurance to travel and leisure. Members also have access to NEA insurance plans and publications (life insurance, death benefits, and liability insurance if you return to the classroom in any way), as well as the *MEA Voice*, *This Active Life*, and the *Michigan Retirement Report*. Members may run for a delegate position in the MEA Representative Assembly (RA), NEA RA, and the NEA RA Retired

Annual meeting.

“I believe there is hope if we work together,” says Harvey Miller, MEA-Retired past president.

*Thinking of retirement? Nearly 40,000 MEA-Retired activists need you to help in the fight for public education, public school employees, and retirees. For more information, go to [www.mea-retired.org](http://www.mea-retired.org). ■*



MEA-Retired members participating in lobbying efforts at the State Capitol prior to the 2016 general election.

# Save time and money with home delivery of medication

By Ross Wilson,  
MESSA Executive Director



MANY OF US TAKE PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS, WHICH CAN BE PRICEY EVEN WITH INSURANCE. THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE COSTS TO YOU AND YOUR HEALTH PLAN.

One of the most effective things you can do is to switch to home delivery of long-term maintenance medications whenever possible.

For example, the Express Scripts Pharmacy—MESSA's designated mail-order pharmacy—offers convenient, free home delivery for prescription drugs you take regularly. That means fewer trips to the pharmacy and waiting in line for what can seem like an eternity, and

more time for you and your family.

Switching to Express Scripts can also save money for you and your health plan, as Express Scripts has negotiated discounts on drugs. They also offer a tool to help you compare costs of specific medications to help you get the best value.

To get started, log in to your MESSA member account at [messa.org](http://messa.org) and click "Rx home delivery." ■

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## Calling Artist-Members

MEA MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING CAN SUBMIT ARTWORK FOR AN ANNUAL ART EXHIBITION AND SALE THAT RESULTS IN SOME PIECES BEING PURCHASED FOR DISPLAY AT MEA HEADQUARTERS OR REGIONAL OFFICES.

Entries to the 53rd Annual MEA/ Michigan Art Education Association (MAEA) Art Acquisitions Purchase Exhibition will be accepted from Feb. 20-March 4, 2017. Works will

be accepted from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. on weekdays and from 9 a.m.-noon on Saturday, March 4.

A juror will determine whether each artwork entry is accepted or

rejected into the exhibit. Awards are as follows: 1) Juror's award; 2) MEA purchase awards; 3) MAEA purchase award; 4) Best of Show; 5) Honorable Mention. The exhibit opens at MEA headquarters in East Lansing on March 6 and continues through April 19, 2017. ■

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## CLASSIFIEDS

Our ad policy, rates and schedule can be found online at [www.mea.org/voice](http://www.mea.org/voice). The classifieds deadline for the February 2017 issue is Jan. 13.

### TOURS

**Visit the Homesites of Laura Ingalls Wilder.** 2017 brochure available. Phone 810-633-9973. Email [lhsitetours@email.com](mailto:lhsitetours@email.com). Visit our website [www.lhsitetours.homestead.com](http://www.lhsitetours.homestead.com)

### RENTALS

**Lovely Lake Huron beachfront home in Oscoda.** Now taking reservations for summer 2017 Spacious 5-bedroom 2 full-bath on sugar sand beach. Teacher-owned. Weekly rentals \$1,800-\$2,200/wk. 810-266-6240 [jsonpd@gmail.com](mailto:jsonpd@gmail.com)

### WELLNESS

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**Crystal Kinard** is vice president of the Ann Arbor ESP association. She works as a community assistant at Pathways to Success, an Ann Arbor Public Schools high school for students who desire a smaller environment or non-traditional offerings, such as community internships, dual enrollment, evening classes, online coursework, and project-based learning.

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***What does your job entail?***

I'm responsible for the safety and security of the building, so I go around and check the doors and everything like that. Then I'm the counselor, the therapist, whatever the kids need. Some students feel more comfortable speaking to me than a social worker or behavioral specialist, so I help them or direct them to get the help they need. We have a RAHS (Regional Alliance for Healthy Schools) clinic here, which is affiliated with U of M, so I'll usually direct them there.

---

***What kinds of problems do kids come to you with?***

Students confide in me about a lot of personal things... I had a student come to me who was in an abusive relationship, and her mom was in an abusive relationship, so she would tell her mom, "He's beating on me," and her mom would say, "Well, it's because of what you're doing." So I had to reiterate: "It has nothing to do with what you're doing." As we continued to talk, I found out that it was generational—her grandmother had been abused—and that's when I told her, "This is a pattern, and you need to go get help to get out of the relationship." I just told her you have to go to Safe House... I set it up and had her call, but I sat with her so she would feel safe.

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***How do you handle it when you try to help students but they keep making poor choices?***

Before I came to Ann Arbor, I lived in Maryland, and I worked for 2½ years in the Department of Juvenile Justice in the biggest detention facility in the state—Cheltenham. There you can teach with a degree (and I have a degree in business management and I was working on my certification for teaching). I made my classroom very inviting, and I thought *I'm going to save these kids*—back then I was 27—so I was young. One day literally walking down a hall, the light bulb came on and said, "Crystal, you can't save everyone." And I got it. So those who want help, I help them. Those who don't want help—I accept it, because not everyone wants to be saved.




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***Business management? Where did you get that degree? And why?***

I went to Morgan State University in Baltimore, and—oh my goodness—since I was a kid I wanted to have my own business and I pictured myself all dressed up in a suit with a briefcase and heels. After I graduated, I worked in Taco Bell hell—that's what I call it, because that's what it was—as an assistant manager. After I left there, what made me go into education? I was watching a program on TV—I'll never forget—a young man was shot and he died, and I said to myself *Our kids are not lost. No way are they that lost.* That brought me into working with kids.

---

***Three years ago, you became a homeowner—a dream-come-true for you and your two sons—thanks to Habitat for Humanity, your sweat equity, and volunteers. What was that like?***

It was the best experience ever, such a blessing to me. I met a lot of nice people. Then I had women from Growing Hope come back later and help me learn how to garden.

They come right to your house, and they give you the seedlings, and you have to do all the work, but they teach you, so I have nice flowers, and I am now a vegetable gardener. When I'm asked what I like best about owning my own home, I say: "The peace. It's peace and quiet."

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***They say it takes a village—how does that idea come full circle in your work at Pathways?***

Something we do here that's different is we started an etiquette class that I help teach, where we use the book *White Gloves and Party Manners* and we have a tea party. The girls are very open to learning, and the day of the tea party it's so nice to see how they get all dazzled up. We had a student that normally would be wearing jeans, and she came in for the tea party with a dress on and her hair flat-ironed. And I'm like "Is that you? You look so pretty!" Her face just blossomed. That's when my heart is happy. That and when I see the students graduate. That is the biggest joy—to see the ones who struggled but they made it and they graduated. ■

# Have you unwrapped the benefits of an MEA Membership?

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# 24/7 online doctor visits

*All MESSA plans cover online doctor visits through Amwell. Connect with a board-certified Amwell doctor when you need convenient, affordable care for minor, nonemergency illnesses.*

**T**he \$49 visit will provide significant savings to you and your MESSA health plan. To compare, a trip to urgent care costs about \$120 and the average emergency room visit costs \$1023.

Visit with an Amwell doctor for minor, nonemergency issues such as colds, flu and seasonal allergies, pinkeye, and rashes. The visit will be covered like an in-network office visit subject to your plan deductible and copayments.

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**Phone:** 844.733.3627

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- Add your MESSA health plan information

Questions about your MESSA coverage?  
Call the MESSA Member Service Center  
at 800.336.0013.



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