



Press Release

Marketing and Communications

412 Webster, Post Office Box 32

Traverse City, MI 49685-0032

Phone: (231) 933-1783

Fax: (231) 933-1782

febingra@admin.tcaps.net

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Traverse City Area Public Schools Announces:

TCAPS' Central High School and West Senior High School To Receive Smaller Learning Communities Grant As Part of a Michigan Consortium of School Districts Awarded Federal Grant Funding

Press Conference Scheduled for 11:00 AM on October 17th

Traverse City Area Public Schools will participate in a newly formed Michigan Smaller Learning Communities Consortium, which has been awarded a federal Smaller Learning Communities grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). The Consortium is comprised of six large Michigan high schools and includes TC Central High School and TC West Senior High School. TCAPS will receive \$2.3 million dollars to support a five-year initiative to further the ongoing efforts at our high schools to provide personalized learning environments for every student throughout his/her high school experience that will improve student achievement, result in successful graduation for all students, and further promote successful transitions for students into post-secondary education.

In addition to TC Central High School and TC West Senior High School, the Michigan Smaller Learning Communities Consortium includes Grand Rapids Creston High School, Grand Rapids Union High School, Marquette High School, and Muskegon High School. The purpose of the Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) grant is to provide resources to large high schools that serve over 1,000 students to improve student achievement, increase graduation rates, and promote successful transitions for all students in high school and beyond graduation.

The new Michigan Merit Curriculum now requires rigorous new graduation standards. Our consortia high schools recognize that the human and fiscal resource implications to implement the new graduation requirements are enormous. "For TCAPS this grant will bring much needed resources and funding that will supercharge transition planning that is already underway for a successful reconfiguration of our high schools to serve grades 9-12 in 2008-2009 and to support the move to a trimester schedule at our high schools," remarked Dr. Jayne Mohr, TCAPS' Associate Superintendent.

“Across our school district we have committees who are developing plans to ensure that every student will experience a smooth transition into our secondary schools and to support each student’s academic achievement and growth both socially and personally. To accomplish this, we are focusing on providing flexible scheduling opportunities that will improve student achievement; engage parents, students, staff, and the community to keep strong connections to schools; provide communications that support the change process; and ensure that TCAPS maximizes our facilities, operations, and resources,” noted Dr. Mohr.

“We are very pleased to participate in this Michigan Consortia of school districts. Our two large high schools will receive this award, and TCAPS looks forward to working closely with the Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools. We view this as a responsible and necessary collaboration that will not only benefit the students in our area but will serve as an effective and efficient model for the sharing and exchange of best practices in high school reform among other Michigan school districts,” noted TCAPS’ Superintendent Jim Feil.

The Michigan Smaller Learning Communities Consortium was formed by the Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools (MCES). The Consortium represents a collective commitment by these high schools to create successful, personalized learning environments for each and every student, resulting in increased achievement and success following graduation for all. The Consortium schools represent diverse geographic areas within Michigan, and have agreed to work in collaboration to dramatically enhance the likelihood of success as opposed to individual efforts to improve and reform.

National research confirms that smaller learning communities result in improved academic performance, fewer discipline problems, and reduced dropout rates. The federal Smaller Learning Communities grant was available nationwide to any high school with 1,000 students or more. The SLC grant process was very competitive and the USDOE received 235 proposals nationwide. Of those proposals, only 38 were funded totaling \$86,315,247.

Each respective school district will gain much needed resources for implementing Michigan’s new graduation requirements and to further ensure that Michigan students are prepared for the 21st century global economy. Michigan’s economy and competitive advantage is critically connected to the education level of its students and workforce. Educators from each Consortium school are committed to establishing Smaller Learning Communities that will personalize the high school experience and create an environment in which teachers and other adults within the school know the needs, interests, and aspirations of each student, closely monitor each student’s progress, and provide the academic and other support each student needs to succeed. The six high schools serving those communities are rising to the challenges to address the unique needs of each student within large high schools.

To meet these challenges, each school will receive extensive support over the next five years from the Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools and Michigan State University. The [Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools](#) (MCES) is part of a national network of schools and centers that is engaged in restructuring and redesigning school organization and curriculum to promote better student learning and achievement. The MCES mission is focused on classroom practice, the simple authenticity of its Principles, and its determination to measure the long-term impact of school reform on the lives of students. Rigorous academic standards and high expectations for all students are at the core of this effort. MCES has served as a school change partner in over 50 schools across the state.

Michigan State University's Department of K-12 Educational Administration in the College of Education will be extensively involved in the project by evaluating the implementation of the Michigan Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) Consortium program. MSU will provide timely and regular feedback to the Consortium schools throughout the five-year implementation. MSU will collect, analyze, and report data related to the implementation of the Michigan SLC Consortium program and the impact of this program on student achievement. "Additionally, TCAPS will serve as fiscal agent for the grant, which means that our district will provide ongoing technical assistance for the overall financial management and budget oversight of this large federal grant award," noted Superintendent Jim Feil.

An initial consortium meeting is scheduled for October 16th and 17th in Traverse City, Michigan.

SPECIAL NOTE: A Press Conference will be conducted to officially launch this major statewide educational initiative. Speakers will include representatives from the Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools and key administrators from the participating high schools who will be available to respond to questions regarding how each respective school plans to implement the initiative. Additionally, Michigan legislators and U.S. Congressional elected officials will be invited to participate and will be acknowledged for their support for this significant educational grant initiative in Michigan.

Press Conference Date: Wednesday, October 17, 2007
Time: 11:00 AM
Location: Holiday Inn West Bay
615 E. Front Street
Traverse City, Michigan

Press Conference Contact: Alison Arnold
TCAPS' Marketing & Communications Director
231-933-8995

Program Contacts:

Dr. Jayne Mohr, Associate Superintendent
Traverse City Area Public Schools
412 Webster Street
Traverse City, MI 49685-0032
(231) 933-1777

Shug Brandell, Co-Director
Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools
400 Jackson Street, Suite #2
Jackson, Michigan 49201
(269)-317-9664

Jim Bodrie, SLC Project Director
Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools
400 Jackson Street, Suite #2
Jackson, Michigan 49201
(231) 730-7007