Above: Students at Everett New Tech High collaborate on a group project.

The Bright Side is Back!

After a staff change and a seven month hiatus, The Bright Side is back! Stepping up to the plate is Michigan State University Advertising graduate (B.A. – summa cum laude), Ashley Pendergast, who was recently hired as the district’s marketing and recruitment specialist, and graphic designer.

The Bright Side’s completely overhauled design is accompanied by interactivity for an improved user experience. You no longer have to wonder what to expect in The Bright Side or scan the whole publication to find a specific story – there is now a table of contents so you know exactly what to expect at first glance. Additionally, clicking on an article in the table of contents will take you to the page that article is on. Similarly, clicking on links or logos will take you to those respective sites. Give it a try!

We are always looking for stories to include in The Bright Side and welcome content from anyone in the Lansing School District. It’s time to show the rest of the district what you’ve been up to. If you would like to see your story included in a future issue of The Bright Side, please e-mail your story to Ashley at ashley.pendergast@lansingschools.net no later than the Friday before the end of the month.

We look forward to continually improving and enriching the user experience of The Bright Side readers and hope to see each school represented in future issues.

Events

12/03: 5:30 p.m., Magnet Night - Who Am I/Are We? Lewton Elementary

12/04: 6:30 p.m., Board of Education Meeting, Partington Administrative Center

12/10: 3:00 - 9:00 p.m., Annual Open House (craft show and bake sale, dinner, student program, and raffle), Beekman Center

12/11: 1/2 day Pk-3, 4-6, K-6, K-8, High Schools morning attendance

12/11: 6:30 p.m., Board of Education Information Study Session, Partington Administrative Center

12/18: 6:30 p.m., Board of Education meeting, Partington Administrative Center

12/22 – 01/02 : Winter Break No School, All Grades
Superintendent of the Year

It takes a special person to be able to gracefully face the challenges of working with some 12,000 students and 2,500 employees. The Lansing School District has found just that in Superintendent Yvonne Caamal Canul. A veteran of the district, Caamal Canul has worn many hats in her tenure here. Caamal Canul’s “can do” attitude has seen her through teaching, coordinating, curriculum development, and assistant principal positions and, as of 2012, has been put to use in her position as Superintendent of schools.

Her passion for education was recognized on Thursday, November 13th, when the Michigan Association of School Administrators unanimously selected her as the Michigan Superintendent of the Year for 2015. “Through it all, her love of the Lansing School District has shown through,” said William Mayes, Executive Director of the Michigan Association of School Administrators, shortly after he presented her with the award. He added that “the children of Lansing are precious and you remind us of that every day.”

Yvonne will be representing Michigan in the National Superintendent of the Year competition. All of her materials will be reviewed by a committee in Washington D.C. who will select four finalists for personal interviews. Terry Urquhart, superintendent of Waverly schools, is confident that Yvonne’s hard work and knowledge will represent Michigan very well in the national competition.

“Superintendent Caamal Canul is a gifted spokesperson and indefatigable cheer leader for the improvement of education for students in Lansing and students anywhere in the state. She has demonstrated her commitment and dedication by the way she supports teachers, works with her Board of Education to ensure everyone is on the same page and provides strong leadership in the challenging environment of an urban district,” said Stanley Kogut, Superintendent of Ingham Intermediate School District, of Caamal Canul.

Join us in congratulating Yvonne on this high honor and wishing her the best of luck in the forthcoming national competition.

Left: Yvonne received the high honor of superintendent of the year for the state of Michigan and will be representing our state in the national competition.

Above: Yvonne shakes hands with William Mayes, Executive Director of the Michigan Association of School Administrators, after receiving the award of Superintendent of the year.
Operation Santa

For many children, Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year, but there are some children whose families’ spending is limited by financial or personal burdens. Many of these children never receive the latest toys that their friends might and rarely do they feel special. It is for those children that Operation Santa was started.

Operation Santa is a community outreach project that helps less fortunate children in the Lansing area have happier holidays. A family can be nominated by principals or social workers. Gifts are then purchased for all children in the nominated household.

In an effort to give the children what they want for Christmas, they are asked to put three items on their wish list. They also provide additional information such as age, clothing size and special toys to aid in the selection of their gifts.

Operation Santa is funded solely by donations – not a cent of which goes to administration or overhead – and lead by volunteers in the community. The employees in the Lansing School District Administration Building donated a total of $712.50 – which included the proceeds from an office bake sale that raised $136.00. The money they raised will sponsor five children – a family of two and a family of three – from Riddle Elementary this year.

Nona Hauff, Operation Santa veteran, says that the event is truly one of the most rewarding that she has ever been involved with. Many LSD students have benefitted from Operation Santa over the years and with the continued support of the LSD community, many more will benefit from the program in the future.

We sell popcorn on most Fridays to make money to support our fun activities. We also use some of the funds for charitable donations. The FAB Committee has set up a Wellness Room, assisted/organized food drives, Operation Santa, Halloween celebrations/costume contests, bake sales, soup and salad day, birthday celebrations, etc. They are currently talking about a macaroni & cheese cook off with judges. They are always looking for more ideas.

The main purpose is to promote a healthy, caring, collaborative culture that will begin with the administration building and strive for excellence throughout the district.

A new administrative team was formed in the district in 2012, and with the new staff, came new ideas. An effort was made to begin bringing positivity and unity to the Administration Building as each floor was – at the time - its own separate entity.

Over the next year, some of the staff worked to bring fun to the building. They gave out treats for different occasions, started decorating the building during holidays, and held pot-lucks, etc. In December of 2012, they had their first contest between the floors for Christmas decorations. In the summer of 2013 they came up with a name for the group, the “FAB Committee,” standing for Fun in the Administration Building. It has blossomed from there.

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Below: Members of the FAB Committee celebrate Halloween at the Administration Building with a tongue-in-cheek reference to the Black Eyed Peas.

Above: Families nominated for Operation Santa can tell their children the gifts are from them, the community or from Santa.
The Lansing School District has demonstrated commitment to caring for all kids, including students with disabilities, by providing, hosting, and encouraging staff to attend START trainings (Statewide Autism Resources and Training) over the past few years.

The focus of these trainings is to share information and research that allows districts to make system wide changes in order to better support all kids, and especially students with autism or other disabilities. An effective approach to achieving these goals is to implement Peer-to-Peer support programs which guide students in acting as mentors, role models, and friends to students who need additional supports.

Thanks to collaboration between teachers, administrators, itinerant staff, student assistance providers, and adaptive physical education teachers, there are now Peer-to-Peer programs, called Navigators, popping up in schools throughout the district.

At Forest View, Navigators (with parent permission) gather for lunch and fun team building activities once a week. “We help other kids and we listen to our teachers...My favorite part about Navigators is that we are making friends,” said a student in the program.

A child with Down syndrome recently shared with the Peer-to-Peer team an example of the friendship skills that Navigators had been practicing. He was having a hard time during gym class and did not want to participate. Another Navigator student in his class approached the teacher and asked if she could switch partners to play with him. He was happy when she came over, stopped crying and said that he could “throw and roll the ball with her.” The young girl who asked to be his partner was asked by another peer after class if she liked being his partner and she simply replied “of course!”

Students look forward to spending time in the group, are becoming good friends, and, are creating environments conducive to inclusion. Perhaps most importantly, our students are becoming excellent examples of what is means to be kind.

Top: Second grade Navigators work on “All About Me” posters during their lunch group.
Middle: Students pose in front of their completed projects.
Bottom: Navigators participate in a fun team-building exercise.
A&W Properties of Matter
Field Trip

Fairview 2nd Grade Falcons had a blast at their field trip to a local A & W restaurant! They went to see how the influence of engineering, technology and science affect properties of matter (liquids, solids and gases) as they make their transitions between the different states.

Students were provided a demonstration of the root beer making process. They toured the kitchen to observe engineered cooking and measuring tools, and they enjoyed a well-balanced meal which included protein, fruit, vegetable and grain. The best part was the root beer float treat which included all states of matter (root beer liquid, gas bubbles, and solid ice cream). Yum! THIS experience eventually led them to further their learning by performing a sugar analysis of popular foods they eat, and WHOA did they learned a lot!

The visit came after the students had a chance to make their own ice cream in the science lab, where they developed an understanding of cause and effect via the observable change in the state of liquid to solid matter. Students formed explanations of processes by reproducing a repeatable scientific model; then they ate it! Their own ice cream production led them to an inquiry into how professionals handle making foods and how the properties of matter relate to their use in an everyday setting.

Mr. Jerry and the awesome crew at A & W, 4919 W. Saginaw Hwy, were generous and accommodating hosts who gave the students a whole new perspective toward the classification of different materials and their properties. The class wants to thank them and the owners of A & W for providing such a fantastic learning experience!

It was an unforgettable experience for all!

Top and Middle: Students show their appreciation for all states of matter - especially when they taste this good.
Bottom: Students watch as an A&W employee demonstrates the root beer making process. The addition of a whole bag of sugar led the students to perform a sugar analysis of popular foods they eat.
Students Gear Up for Otsu

While Michiganders are gearing up for yet another frigid winter, the Japanese teachers of the Lansing School District are looking ahead to spring by preparing their students for a once in a lifetime trip to our sister-city of Otsu, Japan. The exchange program that began in 1995 matches students from Shiga Prefecture, home of the beautiful Lake Biwa, with students from our beautiful Great Lakes state.

At this time, these highly motivated, future “goodwill ambassadors” from Gardner Academy, Sexton and Everett are going through a comprehensive selection process by submitting an application, letters of recommendation and an essay communicating why they would like to participate in the program as well as what they hope to gain from this wonderful cross-cultural experience.

Once the final selection is complete and twelve of the most qualified students are chosen, they will prepare for the trip by participating in fund raising activities, attend orientation sessions with their parents to learn about Japanese cultural norms and prepare a talent show performance that will take place on the final night of their stay in Otsu.

While staying in Otsu, students will have a true homestay experience through the hospitality of a local family where they will experience a Japanese home life and form a special bond with their host sister or host brother. Together they will attend school, participate in cultural activities, and explore the beauty Lake Biwa and its surrounding areas.

We wish all of our students the best of luck in this exciting endeavor as they build lifelong friendships and become goodwill ambassadors representing Lansing, Michigan!
Willow Watch D.O.G.S.

A diverse group of gentlemen sat patiently as they waited for the first meeting of the year to start. Several were attending the event solo, and others had small children in tow. They all had one thing in common: becoming more involved in the lives of their children and doing their part to make a difference in the lives of other children who may not have a positive male role model in their life.

They are the Willow Watch D.O.G.S. – Dads of Great Students – and they’re setting out to change the day-to-day lives of the students at Willow Elementary. Willow Watch D.O.G.S. is a father involvement initiative instituted by the National Center for Fathering in 1998, and boasts 4,086 schools nationwide.

Willow Elementary, just entering its second year of the Watch D.O.G.S. program, has already witnessed a decrease in disciplinary problems, an increase in father (and community) participation and a lot more smiles. Steven Lonzo, Willow Elementary principal, says that the most important thing the program has to offer is a father’s presence. Beyond that, fathers can tutor students, help teachers in the classroom, lead fun projects, supervise recess - really anything that that father has the time and comfort level for.

Modesto Munoz, who joined Willow Watch D.O.G.S. in its first year, loves that the students’ smiles and success continue to rise with the increasing father involvement at the school. At first, Munoz said he was in a shell, but he has since taken on teaching children how to make “lava lamps” and become a very proud advocate of the Watch D.O.G.S. program.

Munoz also stated that his son’s pride in him is nearly palpable – he was so excited to have his dad at the school that he asked if he could go get his Watch D.O.G.S. shirt out for him in preparation for that day’s meeting. In truth, all of the students’ faces light up whenever a Watch D.O.G. is at Willow.

There is no minimum commitment to be a member of the Willow Watch D.O.G.S. Whether you have a half an hour, or a half of day, your presence can make a difference. You don’t even have to be a father to make a difference – Watch D.O.G.S. is open to the all male members of the community.

If you would like more information about the Willow Watch D.O.G.S., contact Steven Lonzo at (517)755-1681 or steven.lonzo@lansing-schools.net.
**T.E.A.M. Attendance**

Together Everyone Achieves More. That is the premise of T.E.A.M. Attendance – a truancy reduction program spearheaded by Child and Family Charities. T.E.A.M. Attendance works closely with the Lansing School District to identify and resolve issues leading to truancy.

T.E.A.M. Attendance is an early intervention service in which liaisons meet and build interpersonal relationships with truant students – and their parents – to identify and address the underlying causes of absences and barriers to school attendance. Their goal is to prevent more formal juvenile court involvement.

T.E.A.M. Attendance uses the collectivism theory to establish a support system and believes, according to coordinator Jonathan Fergusson, that “when the people are one, there is nothing they cannot accomplish.” Through educating parents, home visits and, of course, creating a healthy incentive based competition between classrooms (winners get a pizza party) for accountability reasons, T.E.A.M Attendance has seen a significant decrease in cases where more formal action is necessary.

“A lot of the times it is as simple as telling a parent that a student is only allowed 10 unexcused absences,” says Christina Medina of T.E.A.M. Attendance.

Currently, T.E.A.M. Attendance extends its services to 5 LSD schools: Attwood, Fairview, Gardner, North and Willow.

If you would like to learn more about T.E.A.M. Attendance contact Jonathan Ferguson at (517)371-2823 or fergusj@cooley.edu.

**Michigan College Advising Corps**

All students face unique challenges when following through with postsecondary education, but low-income, first-generation and underrepresented students face additional challenges and obstacles that make them less likely to follow through. This is where the [Michigan College Advising Corps (MCAC)](https://www.michigancollegeadvising.org) comes in.

The goal of MCAC is to increase low-income, first-generation and underrepresented students’ persistence in postsecondary education in the state of Michigan. MCAC recruits and trains recent University of Michigan graduates to work as college advisers to underrepresented schools in the state of Michigan.

These advisors assist high school students in every aspect of navigating the college application process. Campus tours and field trips; assistance with college applications and essays; scholarship and FAFSA help; and fee waivers and transcripts are just a few of the tasks that MCAC advisors help students with.

Eastern and Sexton are the two Lansing School District schools that MCAC has partnered with. To date an MCAC advisor has met with 86% of the 197 senior students at Eastern at least once and received 250 total college applications. 92% of Sexton’s 154 seniors have met with their MCAC advisor at least once, and have submitted 300 total applications. Seniors from both schools have been involved in college rep visits, field trips, and essay workshops and have more field trips, FAFSA events, and additional events that all lead up to Decision Day.

If you have any questions regarding college please contact Erin Fischer (Eastern’s MCAC advisor) at (517)755-4281 or erifisch@umich.edu or contact Charnay Wright (Sexton’s MCAC advisor) at (517)755-2070 or wrightct@umich.edu.

Below: Both organizations seek to fill as many desks as possible, whether they be for secondary education or postsecondary education.
According to a 2011 report by Feeding America, 19.9% of Ingham County children were food insecure. But, due to the higher numbers of poverty contained in the urban core, it is estimated that as many as 25% of Lansing children are food insecure. According to a survey conducted by Share Our Strength, No Kid Hungry, most teachers said that a lot of their students rely on school meals as their primary source of nutrition. It is no surprise then that the survey also indicated that childhood hunger remains a serious issue for public schools, impacting not only a students’ health, but his or her ability to perform in school during critical times in their social, physical and intellectual development.

The Weekend Survival Kit (WSK) program, which was started nearly ten years ago by the Mid-Michigan Food Bank (MMFB) in partnership with the Red Cross, combats food insecurity by providing supplemental meals during times when children aren’t being served a school meal or at times when their household food supply is low. After the MMFB’s parent organization, the Red Cross, ceased operating programs, a consortium of local agencies came together to continue providing the WSK program to those children living in food insecurity.

In the 2013/14 school year this consortium distributed 5,911 WSK’s to 622 unique students throughout the Lansing School District. Considering that each kit can provide four to six meals for two children, depending on age and appetite, this translates to between 22,476 and 33,714 meals! Each WSK costs $3.75 and 100% of the funds contributed to the WSK program serving Lansing schools are used to purchase food. The rest of the components - labor, transportation, accounting and fiduciary functions, administration and food ordering - are provided in-kind as part of an organizational mission (NorthWest Initiative, Many Hands Foundation, Ingham County MSU Extension) or as part of a mission to meet students’ needs (Lansing School District).

If you have questions about the WSK program or would like to donate, please contact Jody Taratuta of SodexoMAGIC at (517)243-3930 or Jody.Taratuta@Sodexo.com or Jeff Gorsline of Many Hands at (517)881-2234 or jef@manyhandsmi.org.
In order to better meet your needs, SodexoMAGIC is conducting a survey of our food service program.

Please take a minute to complete a short questionnaire to let us know how we are doing. The survey can be completed by visiting our survey site or scanning the QR Code to the left with a smartphone.

Our survey link will be open until December 19th 2014. Please complete a survey for each child enrolled in Lansing School District. Results will be shared in mid-January.

We appreciate your time in providing us with this valuable information! Your answers will help us improve the school nutrition program to better meet your student’s needs.

For more information on school menus, nutritional information and upcoming events visit our website.

$400 Grants for Youth Service

Youth Service America (YSA) and Sodexo Foundation are looking to the best and brightest – our youth – for new ideas about how they can end childhood hunger in their communities.

$400 grants have been made available by the duo for the 100 best ideas because they want to turn those ideas into action to make an impact on the issue of childhood hunger on Global Youth Service Day, and beyond.

If you or someone you know has designed a youth-led community service project to address childhood hunger – particularly one that involves bringing the community together – have them visit the grant page and fill out an application.

Applications are due by 12:00 A.M. on January 15, 2015.

$5K Stop Hunger Scholarship

Stephen J. Brady Stop Hunger Scholarships, a program of the Sodexo Foundation, are $5,000 scholarships awarded to students who are creating awareness, catalyzing peers, and creating innovative models and solutions to eliminate hunger in America.

Recipients will each receive a $5,000 scholarship for their education as well as a matching grant in their name for a hunger-related charity of their choice.

Each scholarship recipient will also be sent to Washington DC. to attend the Sodexo Foundation Dinner. Sodexo Inc. will pay for transportation, meals and lodging for the recipient and up to two of his or her immediate family members.

Visit the Stephen J. Brady Stop Hunger Scholarships page for more info.
Announcements

Reminder
Make sure your School Safety Drills are up to date.

To Mr. Harrington’s Visual Imaging Class:
Thank you for the many wonderful logo’s placed throughout the district buildings.
— admin

Mac & Cheese Cook Off
It started with some humble talk about a family favorite – it ended with a challenge.

On Monday, December 15th, the Administration Building is having a Mac & Cheese cook off.

Who will take home the title of “Best Mac Maker”? Will it be Cordelia, Diana, or... A mystery contestant?

12-1:00 p.m., Board Room

Future Issues
If you have any events, stories, or announcements that you would like to have included in future issues of The Bright Side, please send them to Ashley Pendergast, Marketing and Recruitment Specialist, and Graphic Designer.