

# School Connections

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## Superintendent's Message

Dr. Candis R. Donicht



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School Connections is posted to our Website [www.ms281.org](http://www.ms281.org) three times a year to keep parents, faculty, staff and the general public informed of District happenings.

With the beginning of a new year and a new semester, Moscow School District is excited about upcoming projects and activities related to **connectivity** and **accountability**.

### Connectivity

The Idaho Education Network (IEN) is a statewide network solution that will connect all education institutions to deliver equal opportunities for all students and communities. This state funded initiative will bring additional bandwidth to our community for endless distance learning and live stream video conferencing opportunities for our students, teachers and public agencies. Virtual tours and virtual field trips are soon to be within our capabilities. The IEN will be connecting Moscow High School late this spring.

And, speaking of networks, we are now able to post school closures on our school district Website: [www.ms281.org](http://www.ms281.org). On a closure day, the banner at the top of our home page will increase in size and announce the closure.

It would be wise to also check our regular media contacts (see list on page 8.) If our network is down, or if those of us posting to the network cannot make a connection, posting could be delayed.

### Accountability

We are comfortable with the many faces of accountability, and will be hosting a complete federal programs review in January. Naturally we hope to have an outstanding report to deliver to the community. It has been our experience that any findings and recommendation made by the auditors are generally reasonable and designed to improve already strong programs.

Also in January, Moscow High School will host an on-site visiting review from the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges. Our high school has applied for meritorious status, and we are excited to throw open the doors to the evaluating team.

Accountability also extends to our facilities with regard to safety. In December, a specialist employed by our insurance carrier conducted an infrared survey on the electrical system at Moscow High School. Every electrical panel was evaluated for the presence of overloads, loose connections and/or defective equipment. The resulting report showed nothing in the "serious or critical" range. Eight minor faults were identified and we will have these inspected and repaired by a licensed electrician. In his final report, the evaluator commented that Moscow High School was well managed with good controls.

# A Tribute to Very Special Programs

## Title I; Limited English Proficient (LEP); Response to Intervention (RTI)

by Cindy Bechinski, Ph.D., Curriculum Director

### **TITLE I**

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was passed by Congress in April of 1965. The purpose of Title I is to ensure that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to obtain a high quality education and attain proficiency on challenging state academic standards. Title I federal funding is intended to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers.

The Title I program has helped many children in Moscow. Currently four of our elementary schools receive this funding which is based on census data and the poverty level of each school as defined by the percent of students on free or reduced lunch. The schools that are receiving funding include West Park Elementary, Russell Elementary, Lena Whitmore Elementary, and Moscow Charter School. St. Mary's Catholic School also benefits from this federal funding.

Once a school is identified as a Title I school, the Title I teacher and classroom teachers work together to determine which students in the school, regardless of their economic status, would benefit most from assistance in reading. Our Title I schools have excellent teachers and paraprofessionals working hard to help children make significant gains in reading.

Here is some information about our Title I teachers:

**West Park: Meet Mary Ann Workman!** Mrs. Workman has served as a Title I teacher in Moscow for many years. She especially enjoys working with primary level students in K-3. She has an outstanding educational background in reading and works very hard to ensure our struggling readers catch up. Mrs. Workman loves to read books, spend time with her family, hike, and visit the family cabin on the St. Joe River.



**Lena Whitmore Elementary and Moscow Charter School: Meet Susan Mahoney!** Mrs. Mahoney is

doing an incredible job working with students at two schools. She is very dedicated to her students and exceptionally knowledgeable in the area of reading, as proven by her reading endorsement on her state teaching certificate. Mrs. Mahoney is very versatile and has many interests. She enjoys fishing in Alaska every August to catch Coho salmon and halibut and she also likes to read, garden, golf and cook. She especially loves spending time with her husband and two high school-aged sons, not to mention her two dogs and three cats!



**Russell Elementary and St. Mary's Catholic School: Meet Debby Wyatt!** Mrs. Wyatt has also done a magnificent job working with students at Russell and over-

seeing the program at St. Mary's Catholic School. She has her reading endorsement on her state teaching certificate and has a passion for working with her students in the areas of vocabulary and comprehension. Mrs. Wyatt loves the outdoors so she can snow-ski, hike, bicycle, boat, camp, etc. She especially enjoys traveling with her husband and daughter. Last year, they were part of a group that worked on post-Katrina clean-up in New Orleans.



We also are very grateful to have highly qualified instructional paraprofessionals helping our students become better readers. They are Sally Norman and Teri

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Summers at West Park, Libby Keyes at Lena Whitmore and Moscow Charter School, Mary Kren at Russell and Chris Lohrmann at St. Mary's.

### **LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY**

The Limited English Proficiency Program (LEP) is designed to help students from other countries who need help in learning to speak and write in English. Typically about 15-20 students are served each year throughout Moscow School District. We have an amazing teacher,



**Ellen Magnuson,**

who works with students from quite a variety of countries—it is truly a multi-cultural learning experience for all! Ms. Magnuson celebrates diversity while she effectively and creatively instructs students to help them succeed in the regular classroom. Her good nature and humor are appreciated by all. Ms. Magnuson enjoys river rafting, cross-country skiing, and picking huckleberries, and she travels extensively.

### **RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION**

The Response to Intervention Program, often referred to as RTI, is an approach designed to help every child succeed as a learner. It involves carefully assessing and monitoring the progress of all students on a regular basis so that teachers can provide tiered/differentiated instruction and specific intervention, remediation, or enrichment that is aligned to individual student needs. The intent of RTI is to intervene as early as possible so students can succeed.



The teacher leading the RTI program is **Glenn Adams**, and he is truly dedicated to the cause! He enjoys camping with his wife and children.



# Annual Robotic Nutcracker Suite

## Performed by Lena's Sixth Grade Students

by Tony McDonnell, Lena Elementary Principal

On December 18, Lena's primary students enjoyed a special and entertaining robotic rendition of the famous Nutcracker Suite. Sixth grade students, led by Molly Pannkuk, borrowed a collection of *LEGO MINDSTORMS*



robots from the Palouse Discovery Science Center in an effort to perform this exciting annual event.

This unique hands on science learning opportunity was eagerly embraced by

Mrs. Pannuk's students. According to information obtained from the LEGO Website, "In 1998, the LEGO Group revolutionized the world of popular and educational robotics with a pioneering concept: *LEGO MINDSTORMS*. The core of the concept was the RCX, an intelligent LEGO brick which enabled users to build and program unique, moving robots. Since its launch, *LEGO MINDSTORMS*, has helped thousands of students grasp (important concepts in) science, technology, engineering and math." Mrs. Pannkuk had previously experimented with the LEGO robotic materials and thought that the unit would be a unique and practical way to introduce her students to the value of math, science and engineering in the real world.

Though our students did not have the opportunity to put the robots together themselves (they came preassembled) they were assigned to teams of three and required to explore the various software programs that were specifically designed to control them. In the orientation to the Robo Lab unit, students were given a basic introduction about the design of the robots themselves. They learned the specific icon symbols necessary to program a variety of various commands and had an opportunity to experiment with them for several days. Ultimately, they were directed to choreograph the machine's movements to the Nutcracker's musical score for the much anticipated Nutcracker performance.

During their daily science lesson, each team reviewed rules for the robot's use, set up laptops for experimental trials and learned the various icon symbols required to run their machines. They held discussions about the logic of the program, gained familiarity with the operational requirements of the Robo Lab and learned to make their machines

follow a series of complicated commands. Teams discovered the importance of working together to accomplish a common goal, practiced valuable and important communication skills as well as managing the differences of opinion that occurred. As the various groups encountered difficulties they had to read and reread technical instructions and directions. They conducted numerous experimental trials, brainstormed solutions to encountered difficulties and rehearsed several times for the performance.

When the big day arrived, parents and students enjoyed the results of their remarkable efforts. Judging by the expressions on the faces of the audience, the program was a wonderful success! For the most part, the robots performed their dance in a well choreographed motion. When the occasional malfunction occurred and a robot strayed off course, the giggles and laughter of the audience seemed to confirm that the project was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

A brief interview with six grader, Samantha Poe, seemed to reveal the essence of the science experience: "The whole thing was just really cool! The project increased your interest in robotics. We had to work in teams and shared a lot of different ideas about how to do things. We had to figure out what we wanted our robot to do and learned about programming and other fun stuff. It was really fun and educational!" Will Brehm and Quentin Fallon said, "It was fun to put together a PowerPoint to share with the audience. We liked watching the robots do what we programmed them to do and thought the unit was a fun break from the routine." As Quentin remarked, "You had to work really well together to get things done!"

Kevin Thomsen, a sixth grader in Mrs. Mock's classroom, seemed to be the most enthused about the project. In a recent interview he remarked, "The whole robotics unit was very interesting...in fact, it was really beyond amazing and allowed us to do teamwork and to practice our group leadership skills. All of my friends thoroughly enjoyed it! I think that sixth graders should have the opportunity to do this every year!"



# Can You Hear Me Now?

by Bill Marineau, West Park Elementary Principal

“*Can you hear me now*” is a catch phrase made popular by a cell phone advertisement. The phrase pertains to cell phones, to our communication with loved ones and communication in the classroom. West Park Elementary is taking active and scientifically-research based actions in improving communication in the primary aged classroom by installing and using Sound Field Systems. The result is that students learn better, class management is simplified, and teachers feel more satisfied.

## ***What Are Sound Field Systems?***

Sound Field Systems are designed to surround the student with an even, audible signal of the teacher’s voice or that of an electronic device. Effective teaching strategies and the use of technology continue to evolve and are implemented regularly. Even with the use of technology, hands on learning, problem solving and simulation, verbal communication continues to lead the regular classroom as the dominant form of teaching. It is found that the majority of the learning-teaching connection is still made using the spoken word. The effective teacher will learn to master oration, altering both inflection and amplitude to fit the changing situation during the lesson. The problem of hearing lies within physics not just effective teaching.

## ***What is the Science Behind a Sound Field?***

As with a magnetic field, sound also weakens by the square of the distance. Pat Blount, Physics teacher at Moscow High School explains, “The sound wave amplitude drops off by the square of the distance. This is calculated by the distance being multiplied by itself. For example, the student sitting at a teacher’s side one foot away hears fine. The student sitting two feet away hears four times less. Four feet away, eight times less. And if the student is ten feet away  $10 \times 10 = 100$  times less!” From the practical aspect, have you ever had someone talk directly in your ear? Ouch, it is too loud! In the class environment a student sitting directly in front of a teacher 4-6 feet, will hear just fine while the student sitting in the back may be daydreaming. This is not just experiential, the cause may be based in science.

The experienced teacher will often use this knowledge and move a distractible student near them allowing the student to hear better and remain focused on the lesson. However, the problem still exists with others who are seated at the back of the room or furthest from the teacher. These students at a distance from the teacher are off task or looking elsewhere more frequently than those who are closer.

## ***The Beginnings of a Solution***

Twenty years ago I was teaching electronics and technology in a lab environment. I did not like using my “coaching” voice to talk over students who were engaged in hands-on activities. To solve the challenge I developed a sound system within the room. I used a microphone hooked to a stereo to talk to the students when I needed their attention or wanted to redirect activities during a lesson. While this system was archaic I found it to be effective in gaining and maintaining the attention of my students. A colleague and friend, Jim Lafortune, also wanted to reach out to his students better. Additionally, Mr. LaFortune said that his voice would often be tired at the end of the day. He asked to install a purchased radio controlled amplification system that had become available. He has used the system for many years with the same student success but also found he finished his teaching day with a more rested voice.

Today West Park Elementary is moving forward by continued installation of many of these advanced, state of the art systems. After research was done on various Sound Field Systems an infrared surround system was chosen (similar to your TV remote control). The surround system speakers are mounted on each of four walls one-third of the way across. The teacher or student presenter then uses a lanyard microphone when teaching the whole class. His or her voice is amplified slightly and spread evenly throughout the classroom. The result is that all students are able to hear better wherever they are in the room. By the end of January there will be a Sound Field System installed in all kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms at West Park. In addition one third grade, PE, and our conference/training rooms will have a Sound Field System.

## ***Students Benefit with Sound Field Systems***

Students with attention deficit may be assisted with their struggle to attend to the lesson. Hearing impaired students can have their listening device connected directly to the system allowing them a personally amplified signal through their hearing aid or cochlear implant. Students are able to use the second microphone to talk to their classmates when presenting information in class. Students with attention deficit find it easier to tune out classroom noise. English language learners find it easier to discern the spoken English instruction.

# University of Idaho Holiday Concert

by Dale Kleinert, Junior High Principal

On December 11, the Moscow School District hosted the University of Idaho Jazz Choirs Holiday Concert. This concert that usually is held at the Kibbie Dome was moved to the Fieldhouse because of cost and scheduling issues at the University. Over 600 performers filled the main court of the Fieldhouse and 1,400 audience members crowded into the bleachers for this annual event.

In addition, our food service staff and parent volunteers fed all 600 participants in our Multi-purpose Room courtesy of the UI President's Office. The students and hungry groups of workers and performers came from 12 area schools, the University of Idaho, and the Bell Choir from the Moscow United Methodist Church. The Orchestra, Bell Choir, Jazz Band, percussion ensembles, and hundreds of vocal musicians from very young children to very tall adults spent an unforgettable evening rehearsing, playing, and eating together before performing before a full to capacity crowd in the Fieldhouse.

The concert and related activities could not have happened without the support, cooperation, patience, and flexibility of all of the people who work, play, and perform at MJHS. PE teachers, coaches, classroom teachers, food service personnel, secretaries, administrators, maintenance workers and custodians all worked together to ensure a quality experience for our students.

We would especially like to thank Dan Bukvich, the numerous public school music teachers from throughout the region, Bill Cole, Terry Evans, Mike Locke, Richard Yutzy, Dan Schoenberg, Tom Crossler and City North American Van Lines, and Dave Tong's crew from the

UI video Production Center.

This performance could not have happened without their expertise. From writing, arranging, and conducting the music, to managing and moving electronics and equipment, to broadcasting the event live on the Internet, the event became a world-class performance available to everyone. Video copies of the event are still available from the UI Video Production Center at 885-0569.

On behalf of all of the students who benefited from this extraordinary experience, we would like to express our gratitude to those who volunteered. We are especially indebted to all of the people who understand that we must keep this important event alive. We live in a great community and this is one more example of all of us working together to make sure our students are our most important priority.



# Response to Intervention (RTI)

by Kevin McDonough, Director of Special Services and Human Resources

Last year, Dr. Cindy Bechinski, wrote a wonderful article describing the District’s Response to Intervention (RTI) instructional model. I am writing now to provide a progress update of the model’s implementation.

As Dr. Bechinski explained, this model is a systematic, data driven, and team based approach to planning and delivering differentiated instruction for students.

All elementary schools in the district are in the process of implementation in the area of reading. Some elementary schools have begun to expand their efforts into mathematics, written language and behavior.

Secondary schools are implementing the model in English and mathematics and are discussing how content area teachers are involved. The Moscow model has three tiers with each tier using a team process, specific data, and sound instructional strategies to improve the educational performance of students. These three components--teaming, data, and instruction, are being defined by the buildings for each tier.

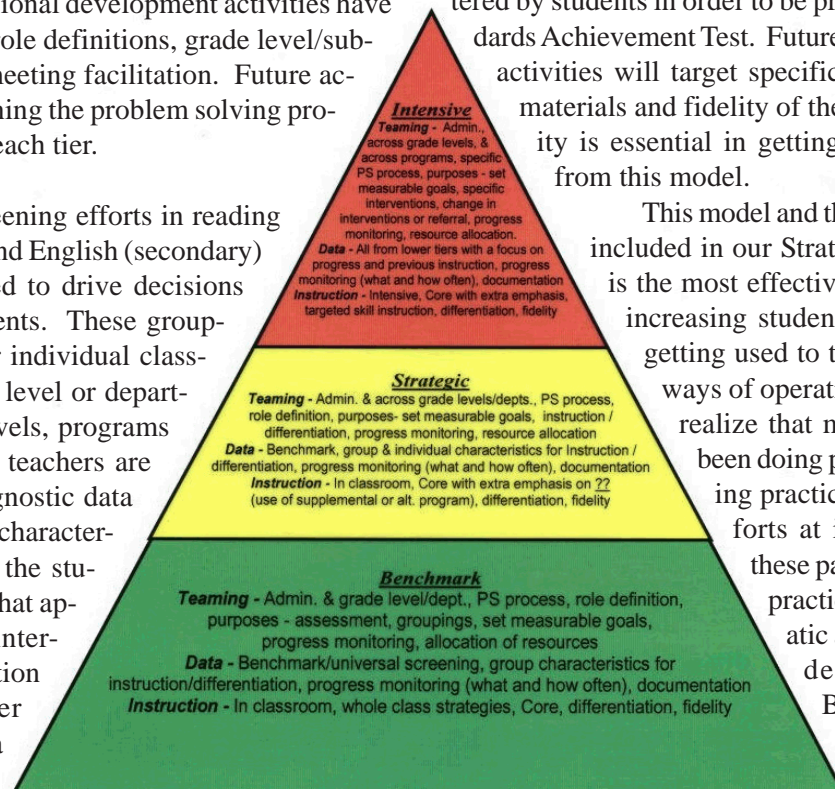
**Teaming:** Each school has defined the needed members that are making decisions about data collection, progress monitoring, goal setting, effective instruction, and parent involvement. Administrators lead these teams and have outlined a process of problem solving that is effective for use at each level. Professional development activities have been used to assist with role definitions, grade level/subject level teaming, and meeting facilitation. Future activities will focus on refining the problem solving processes used by teams at each tier.

**Data:** Universal screening efforts in reading (elementary), and math and English (secondary) are in place and are used to drive decisions about groupings of students. These groupings may be within their individual classroom, within their grade level or department, or across grade levels, programs and departments. Some teachers are gathering additional diagnostic data to consider the particular characteristics and skill levels of the students in these groups so that appropriated instruction, interventions and differentiation can be delivered. Other teachers use existing data to make the same deter-

minations. Using all of the data that is collected, goals are set for each group, as well as for individual students within the group. As instruction is delivered, progress monitoring systems are in place to collect data to move students in and out of groups, drive changes in instruction, and measure progress toward goals. Professional development activities have helped us identify appropriate assessments to use at each data collection opportunity and have clarified the decisions that have to be made after looking at the data. Future activities will continue to refine these data collection and analysis procedures.

**Instruction:** A wide variety of instructional strategies and programs were already used in the district and more have been identified and purchased for use in the tiered model. The district has provided targeted professional development to define explicit core reading instruction at the elementary level. Building administrators and teachers are using that definition to implement a very strong and effective core reading program. Administrators and teachers at the secondary level are also doing the same for mathematics and English. Content standards that drive instruction at the secondary level have been identified for each course and applied or essential courses have been added to the master schedules to work on essential standards that must be mastered by students in order to be proficient on the Idaho Standards Achievement Test. Future professional development activities will target specific programs, strategies and materials and fidelity of their implementation. Fidelity is essential in getting the results that we want from this model.

This model and these activities have all been included in our Strategic Plan. We believe this is the most effective way to meet our goal of increasing student achievement. Some are getting used to the new language and new ways of operating that this brings, but we realize that many of our teachers have been doing pieces of this as good teaching practice for many years. Our efforts at improvement bring all of these past practices, as well as new practices together in that systematic approach to enhancing student instruction that Dr. Bechinski described in her newsletter article.



# Emergency Closure Procedures

Adverse conditions may cause schools to be closed, such as heavy snowfall, extreme cold, or high winds.

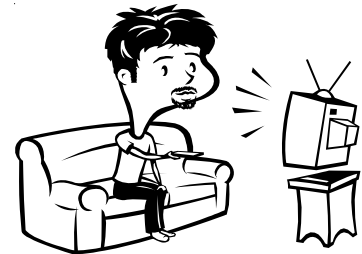
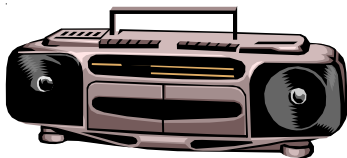
In the event of unanticipated school closures, please do not call school district phone numbers as this unnecessarily ties up the phone lines.

Instead, tune your radio or TV to one of the following stations on days when weather is extreme or extraordinary events are occurring:

<u>AM Stations</u>	
KMAX	840
KQQQ	1150
KWSU	1250
KRLC	1350
KRPL	1400
KCLX	1450

<u>FM Stations</u>	
KUOI	89.3
KPBX	91.1
KRFA	91.7
KRFP	92.5
KZZL	99.5
KRAO	102.5
KHTR	104.3
KVTY	105.1
KZFN	106.1
KMOK	106.9

<u>TV Stations</u>	
KREM	Ch. 2
KLEW	Ch. 3
KXLY	Ch. 4
KHQ	Ch. 6



Closure announcements are usually made shortly after 6AM though parents may want to monitor reports throughout the day.

Parents of children riding the bus should have a contingency plan for when emergencies may close the schools that disrupt the normal way and time children would get home.

## Can you hear... continued from page 5

### *Classroom Applications of Sound Field Systems*

Mrs. Petersen wrote “The system has helped preserve my voice and at the same time students have been able to hear my instructions equally around the room.” Class management is simplified. Mrs. Leendertsen reported, “The students seemed a little off task today. Then I noticed that the system was turned off. When I turned it on they were attending as usual again.”

and calming music in the classroom while students were working. Mr. Markley uses the system in Physical Education to energize his active students. He uses a remote control to turn on fast paced music to start an activity and turns it off when he needs the student’s attention.

If you have any questions or would like to see Sound Field Systems in operation, please call Mr. Marineau at West Park Elementary, 882-2714.

### *Best Practices Using Sound Field Systems*

Mr. Bascom hooked his iPod up to the system to play quiet