

# Rochester School District Newsletter

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- ESY Summer Programs for Students with Disabilities
- The 90% Reading Goal
- Title I & McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- M3 Make Mathematics Matter
- Words Can Change Our Lives
- Questions & Comments:

RSDNewsletter@  
rochesterschools.com

**ESY SUMMER  
PROGRAMS FOR  
STUDENTS WITH  
DISABILITIES**

~Sharon Pray

**SPRING IS HERE!**

Where has the time gone? April is the month that our school IEP Teams begin to make decisions about Extended School Year (summer) programming for students who are identified as having an educational disability.

IDEA 2004 defines extended school year (ESY) summer services as special education and related services that are provided to a child with a disability beyond the normal school year of the public agency, in accordance with the child's IEP and at no cost to the parents of the child.

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**THE 90%  
READING  
GOAL**

~Mike Hopkins

In 2000, the Rochester School District began to explore and discuss the adoption of a 90% Reading Goal. The goal was to have 90% of the third grade student reading on grade level by the Spring of 2007. This was an ambitious goal that the District has not yet obtained. Striving for this high standard has improved reading instruction and student performance in the District. Many more students are reading on grade level now than were on grade level in 2000. We have constant requests to discuss our reading interventions and the 3 tier reading model.

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**M<sup>3</sup> MAKE MATHEMATICS MATTER**

~Susan Deese

We live in a time of amazing and ever accelerating change. The need to understand and be able to use mathematics in everyday life as well as in the workplace has never been greater. To this end, parents often ask what they can do to assist their student in learning and valuing

mathematics. A place to start is by "**making mathematics matter**". The district's Mathematics Leadership Team has coined the above phrase in hopes of bringing to light the importance of the study of this subject. We are in the midst of planning for activities and the dissemination of simple materials to encourage

people to "do math" outside of school. Our message will include the fact that people were meant to enjoy mathematics... and most children are born with enthusiasm for math! So how can we keep those positive feelings alive?

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**WORDS CAN CHANGE OUR LIVES**

~Sally Riley

Remember when you were in school, and the way that you were taught new vocabulary? You were asked to look up words in the dictionary or glossary, and then use them in a sentence. Surprise, but this is not the most effective approach to use when you want children to learn new words. (Scott et al., 1998; Watts, 1995). Isabel L. Beck in her book, *Bringing Words To Life* indicates that for children to build their “vocabulary repertoires” they need to develop an interest and awareness of words. Helping children notice words in their environments (home, school) is the first step in increasing their vocabulary. Children of all ages, even adults need to become aware of and explore the relationships among words in order to fully understand their meaning. Beck indicates “being curious” about the meaning of an unknown word that one encounters and about how it relates to other words is a hallmark of those who develop large vocabularies.”

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**TITLE I MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT**

~ Marty Brennan

**Who is homeless?**

The term “homeless children and youth” -

A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and

B. includes –

1. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

2. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...

3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

4. Migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances describe in the above clauses.

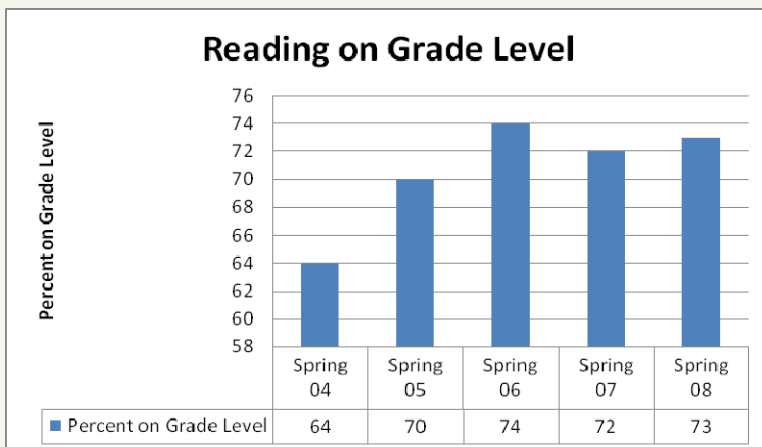
*Excerpt from a brochure produced by the US Department of Education & the National Center for Homeless*

**THE 90% READING GOAL, CONT.**

The District had to set a standard: How do we determine if a student is reading on grade level? The District decided scoring above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile on the NWEA reading assessment determined if a student was reading on grade level. We understood that one test should not be used to define a student long term, but the NWEA MAP assessment is good snapshot of what is happening within the District. We began in 2002 with the NWEA assessments and we had 60% of the third grade students reading on grade level.

By Spring of 2007 we had 72% of Grade 2 to 5 students on grade level, and by Spring 2008 we had 73% on grade level.

The District has increased its focus beyond grade 3 students to include all students in grades K-8. The addition of K and 1st students required the search for another assessment. The DIBELS assessment allows quick accurate assessments of K-1 students. We can't just focus on grade 3 students because we



have a high turnover of students at each grade level.

*Next month: Three tier reading model and interventions that work for students.*



## WORDS CAN CHANGE OUR LIVES, CONT.

So what can we do to build our “vocabulary repertoires?” The following is a list of strategies for vocabulary development written by Susan Watts-Taffe, one of the authors of the Rochester School District’s K-6 *Reading Street* program.

1. **Provide both definition and context information:** Look up the word together. Talk about what the word means and how it is used in many different contexts. Each context brings added dimension to what is known about the word. The need to know multiple uses is particularly important in the upper grades.
2. **Active learner involvement and mental processing:** Create a “mental image” of what the word may look like. Act the word out or draw a picture representing their understanding of the word.
3. **Activate prior knowledge and integrate ideas:** In-depth word learning happens when students actively

construct relationships between words and concepts. Link the meaning of a new word with a word that they already know. What other words are similar in meaning? How does the word “big” relate to “enormous?”

4. **Meaningful practice:** Since it takes multiple exposures to a new word to firmly establish the meaning, it is important to have a great deal of practice in using the word. This does not mean writing the word over and over. Meaningful practice involves multiple exposures to the new word in a variety of contexts over time (Beck, Perfetti, and McKeown, 1982; Nagy, 1988; Stahl, 1986). The best practice involves expanding the concept over time, rather than all in one day, or even one week.

So how can words change our lives? Think about this research from Hart & Risley, 1995.

- The average 4-year old, figuring 100 hours a week from birth, heard 30 million words addressed to them.
- Children in low-language families heard 13 million words addressed to them by age 4.
- Vocabularies of children in poverty began and stayed relatively small and of poor quality.
- Vocabulary use at age 3 was strongly related to reading comprehension scores in the third grade.

Vocabulary development is important at all ages, but particularly in the first three years of life to establish language and vocabulary foundations. Remember, no matter what age you are words “broaden” our thinking which can lead to a better life both economically and socially.

## ESY SUMMER PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, CONT.

The Rochester School Department has developed and implemented several “Extended School Year” programs for students with disabilities. During the summer months, as many as 275 students participate, depending upon the population and the needs of the students. How do you know if your child qualifies? It is the IEP Team’s responsibility to meet and determine eligibility for ESY (summer) programming. IEP Teams base their determination of eligibility for ESY summer services upon reliable and comprehensive information about the student(s). In general, students with a multiplicity of handicaps or a relatively severe educational handicap are more likely to meet eligibility criteria for “summer” extended school year programs. However, it is the responsibility of the IEP Team to determine, on an individual basis that the services are necessary for the child to receive FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education). Typically, IEP Teams review data indicating that a student will suffer “severe regression” of skills learned during the previous school year.

Many opportunities are available for students over the summer. The Rochester School Department provides summer ESY special education and related services to students, ages 3 to 21, who are found to be eligible. Programs may focus on academic skills (including scientific, research-based interventions in Reading and Mathematics), social skills, behavioral skills and/or recreation. For more information regarding ESY (summer) eligibility, contact your school or Special Education Coordinator.

# EMPLOYEE of the MONTH

MARCH 2009

**Vicki Grant**

Teaching Assistant  
Rochester Middle School

**Nicole Bandera**

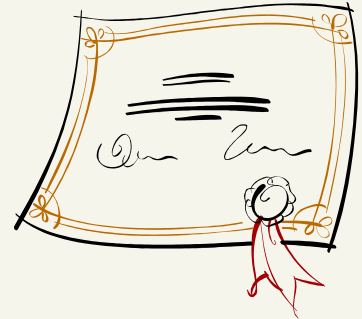
Social Worker  
Spaulding High School

**Laura Scott**

Secretary  
Wm. Allen School

**Jo Whitney**

Special Education Secretary  
Central Office



## M<sup>3</sup> MAKE MATHEMATICS MATTER, CONT.

A supportive family is one of the most important factors in the intellectual success of the children. This means that parents who model positive feelings about math, even if it was not one of their favorite subjects in school, help their student build a positive attitude toward learning math. Share real mathematics with your student whenever possible; it is all around us. Looking for patterns is a great place to start, and they come in all shapes, sizes, and arrangements. You'll find them on clothes, in music, during sports, and even in human behavior.

Help your student see that mathematics is more than completing workbook pages. Card, dice and board games can be enjoyed at all different levels of ability; and playing them builds terrific number skills. A recent

article in *Education Week* (Apr. 30, 2008, Vol. 27, #35, p. 10) stated, "Playing board games can produce large and lasting gains in students' understanding of numbers." Here is a list of commercially available games that develop and reinforce a whole list of mathematics skills: Sorry, Trouble, Uno, Guess Who?, Rummikub, Tangrams, Battleship, Checkers, Clue, Connect Four, Jenga, Mancala, Othello, Mille Bornes, Chutes & Ladders.

Be sure to check in with your student about math homework. Even if the content is such that you may not be able to assist, expressing interest and encouragement are important for any age student.

Last, encourage your student to concentrate and persevere when working on mathematics problems. In this day-and-age of instant gratification, the notion of patience and persistence when working on mathematical problems can be lost. Try suggesting to your student who may be experiencing frustration with finding a solution, that they try another strategy or path. Applaud them when they find an answer they feel confident is correct as well as makes sense.

