

KCIS Connections

Kalamazoo Communities In Schools Newsletter

July/August 2009

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From the Executive Director

by Pam Kingery

In his recently published book The Outliers, Malcolm Gladwell convincingly makes the case that the achievement gap is strongly impacted by how students spend the summer months. A gap between students who spend at least twelve weeks of the summer engaged in reading, writing and math programs and those who don't becomes especially pronounced at the fourth grade level. Because the gap in access to summer programming is largely determined by socioeconomic status, providing access to students of all backgrounds is an essential strategy to bridge the gap. As Gladwell argues, superstars are not born, they are developed through systematic opportunities for stimulation, exploration and practice.

This summer, Kalamazoo Communities In Schools is addressing this achievement gap by playing a role in providing four summer enrichment opportunities for students.

The federal stimulus package and the generous assistance of many community members is enabling KCIS to sponsor an incredible group of forty talented and energetic Americorps VISTA Summer Associates. Twenty of the VISTAs are working with first grade students attending KPS summer school to develop literacy and math skills. Nine VISTAs are working with eighty students in the Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools program, a literacy-rich program featuring a model curriculum for reading enrichment, youth leadership development, cultural enrichment, parent empowerment, civic engagement, and social action.

Eleven VISTAs are working with fifty students from Edison and Spring Valley, in a KCIS-run program called All Stars. VISTAs with this program are working with KPS students and their families to sustain student progress in reading, writing, math, attendance and behavior. Throughout the summer, students will also be traveling to various community resources for "field lessons" twice a week, including the Kalamazoo Public Library, the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, the Kalamazoo Valley Museum, and the Kalamazoo Nature Center.

In addition, 100 participants from the KCIS 2008-09 after-school program, funded by the Michigan Department of Human Services, are able to participate in a variety of youth development experiences, including the Maple Street Arts Camp, Sherman Lake Camp, and the Civic Youth Theatre program. Through these programs, students who are transitioning to KPS middle school will have a special opportunity to learn and prepare for life as middle school students.

These programs are based around activities that many – but not all – of our community's children benefit from on a regular basis. These programs intentionally focus on benefiting all students, to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to explore their interests fully as they become good readers, good writers, good problem-solvers and good citizens.

KCIS, KPS Receive \$7.5 Million in Grant Funding

The Michigan Department of Education has selected two proposals submitted by Kalamazoo Communities In Schools (KCIS) and the Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) for \$7.5 million in grant funding to provide quality after-school and summer programming for students in ten schools over a five year period. The federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Center (CLC) grants begin in September 2009.

The grants will provide \$150,000 per year for each of ten schools, which will enable KCIS and KPS to benefit at least 1,000 students and families each year who may not otherwise have access to extended learning and support opportunities.

The after-school program will provide targeted services to students with identified needs in reading, writing, math, attendance, and behavior, to improve their academic achievement. Other aspects of the program will include the development of social-emotional learning and technical skills, such as digital media production, along with exploration of potential careers. The program will also offer a variety of learning opportunities for parents and families of participants.

The grants will enable KCIS to implement a more seamless support system in additional schools, so a greater number of students will have consistent access to critical community resources. The Community Learning Centers will contribute significantly to establishing the systematic means to follow students when they need continuing support as they progress through the school system.

The two CLC grants awarded to KCIS and KPS each have a different focus. One is directed to middle and high-school students at Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts, Milwood Magnet School: Center for Math, Science and Technology, Linden Grove Middle School, Hillside Middle School, and Loy Norrix High School. The second grant will reach students at five elementary schools: Edison Environmental Science Academy, Washington Writers' Academy, Lincoln International Studies School, Milwood Elementary, and Woods Lake Elementary: A Magnet Center for the Arts.

KCIS Hosts Second Annual Champ Celebration

On Friday, June 19, KCIS staff, board members, and members of the community came together to honor the achievements of the 2009 KCIS Champs. Champs are individuals and organizations whose inspiring work plays an instrumental role in ensuring that every KPS child is successful in school and in life.

The 2009 KCIS Champs:

James Heaton - Volunteer, Kalamazoo Central High School

Hannah Dulin - Tutor, Arcadia Elementary School



Bill Goodman and Holley Lantz, volunteers with People's Church.

Chuck Tansey - KPS Principal, Edison Environmental Science Academy

People's Church - Partner, Lincoln International Studies School

Marilyn Breu - Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentor/Tutor, Lincoln International Studies School

Portage Chapel Hill United Methodist Church - Partner, Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School

Pam Henshaw - KPS Teacher, Kalamazoo Central High School

Julie Davis - KPS Secretary, Arcadia Elementary School

State Farm Insurance Company - Partner, Literacy

Patricia Carlin - KPS Teacher, Kalamazoo Central High School

Family & Children Services - Partner, Health/Mental Health

Gryphon Place - Partner, Social-Emotional Learning

Jessica Chatman - Site Coordinator, King-Westwood Elementary School



Jessica Chatman, Site Coordinator at King-Westwood.

LeeAnne Ciluffo - Tutor, Milwood Magnet School: Center for Math, Science & Technology

Charles Parker - KPS Behavioral Specialist, Edison Environmental Science Academy

Jane Lloyd - KPS



The 2009 Champs, left to right: Shirley Freeman (Chapel Hill United Methodist Church), Sue Beadling (Chapel Hill), Charles Parker, Holley Lantz (People's Church), Rina Battani (Family & Children Services), Pam Henshaw, James Heaton, Jessica Chatman, Julie Davis, LeeAnn Ciluffo, Bill Goodman (People's Church), Marilyn Breu, Patricia Carlin, Hannah Dulin, and Susan Douglass (Gryphon Place).

KCIS Board Members Honored

At the 2009 Champ Celebration, Pam Kingery, Executive Director of KCIS, took a moment to honor the achievements of two KCIS Board Members.



Former Board President Stephen Denenfeld accepts a gift in honor of his achievements from Pam Kingery

Stephen Denenfeld served as President of the KCIS Board of Directors from 2007 through 2009. During that time, Steve provided strong leadership throughout a time of rapid growth and many changes. He has set a high standard for future leadership to live up to, and has demonstrated his deep commitment to the community.

Steve was presented with a framed picture made by Ben Schreck, a Milwood Magnet School student, in recognition of his achievements. Though he will no longer be president, he will continue to serve as a member of the Board and the Executive Committee.

KCIS would also like to recognize the service of Mollie Peterson, who recently completed a 3-year term on the KCIS Board of Directors on behalf of the Kalamazoo Public Schools. She served on both the Scholarship & Grant-Making and the Program & Evaluation Committees. Throughout her term on the board, Mollie has shared her passion and understanding of the critical role parents play in the education of their children.

Grant Highlights

KCIS recently awarded a Jack Hamilton Memorial Grant and two Clara Harbeck Memorial Fund Grants to three valuable KPS programs.

The Jack Hamilton Memorial Grant Fund for the Performing Arts

The Jack Hamilton Fund for the Performing Arts, established in 1977 in honor of former KPS Director of Elementary Education Jack Hamilton, supports the delivery of quality performing arts programs that bring music, drama, literature, or art into KPS elementary school classrooms. This year's Jack Hamilton grant recipient was El Sol Elementary School. The grant provided for a performance by the Ballet Folklórico Mexico, as part of the Día del Niño ("Day of the Child") Celebration. The celebration, held on April 30, was the culmination of a month-long project that integrated music, literature, arts projects, and writing to teach students about the 1989 United Nations Declaration regarding children's rights.



Edison Environmental Science Academy hosted a Book Fair as part of a project funded by the Clara Harbeck grant.

The Clara Harbeck Memorial Fund

The Clara Harbeck Memorial Fund was established in 1988 by the family of Clara Harbeck, former KPS teacher and administrator from 1962 through 1986. Clara Harbeck grants are open to all KPS teachers and administrators, and are to be used for projects that directly involve students in the areas of school improvement, including academic achievement, classroom management, curriculum enhancement, or community and parent involvement.

Edison Environmental Science Academy and Loy Norrix High School received a 2009 Clara Harbeck grant for a program that connects fourth graders with high school students in the PeaceJam program in order to improve reading skills. The Loy Norrix students learned reading techniques from one of the school district's literacy coaches in order to each work for several months one-on-one with a fourth grader. The high schoolers also organized a book fair at Edison for the fourth graders. The program's goals were for the fourth grade students to experience supplemental reading instruction and to develop a love of books, as well as for the high school students to learn reading skills and techniques from a district reading/literacy coach.

Phoenix High School received a 2009 Clara Harbeck grant for a program that recognized and celebrated student achievements. A wide variety of student behavioral achievements were highlighted and students received rewards such as roller skating events, movies, gift cards, community activities, and performing arts activities. The program aimed to address the established connection between academic skills and behavioral skills.

Volunteers Bring College Awareness to Schools



Volunteer Judy Moore holds up the book *I Know I Can* as she reads to a 2nd grade classroom at Lincoln.

College Awareness Week, held from April 20-24, 2009, was organized by KCIS, with help from the American Association of University Women. The program was made possible by a grant from the Michigan Community Service Commission. College Awareness Week aims to inspire students attending Kalamazoo Public Schools to think about going to college.

During the week, 86 volunteers from the community visited over

1,000 students in 50 KPS second grade classrooms for a special reading and discussion of the book *I Know I Can*. Written by Wendy Rouillard, the book contains a story and activities that help children think about the future and gives them strategies for continuing their education. For information about upcoming volunteer opportunities, please contact Coco Cook, Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, at 269-337-1601 x218 or at ccook@kcis.us.

Parent Corner

A Parent's Experience at the KCIS Chase Publishing Center

A parent whose son has autism recently discussed the difficulties she faces because her son is not able to express what is bothering him, what he's worried about, or how she could help. She then described a book her son published through the KCIS Chase Publishing Center. In his book, her son wrote about missing his dad and the challenges of adjusting to a new school. "That book is his world," she said. "He carries it with him everywhere. The book told me everything he was feeling and going through."

Thanks to the work of many dedicated volunteers, the Publishing Centers successfully helped 997 KPS students at seven elementary schools edit their writing and make it into a "published" book, complete with illustrations.

A Parent's Thank You from Parkwood-Upjohn

A parent with two children attending Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary recently wrote to KCIS to describe how KCIS Parkwood-Upjohn Site Coordinator Jody Sikkema and KCIS Americorps VISTA Robynne Myles both went above and beyond to help her family during a time of need:

"As a concerned parent, I want to let all of your workers know how much I really appreciate them and all the work that they do. They deserve recognition."



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We're on the Web!

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Thank You, Guys Read Volunteers!

"Guys Read" is a program that connects groups of young male students with adult male mentors from the community to read and discuss books together. KCIS would like to take a moment to highlight our 2009 Guys Read volunteers. Interested in getting involved or learning more about Guys Read? Please contact Coco Cook, KCIS Director of Mentoring/Tutoring, at 269-337-1601 x218 or at ccook@kcis.us.

Gary Ossino, a City of Kalamazoo Department of Public Services employee, worked with a group of 10 sixth-grade boys on Tuesdays. He has worked with the same group for more than two years. He became famous for bringing treats nearly every week, including homemade cakes for birthdays and sugar cookies to decorate for Christmas. Each quarter, he also made sure to reward those who reached their reading goals with chicken wings and hot cheetos.

David Thomas and **Roy Spencer**, two Kalamazoo Public Safety officers, worked with 13 fifth grade boys over recess every Friday. For a special treat, at the end of the school year, they brought the crime lab van to school and gave individual tours during the end of year pizza party.

Brian Lam, of Lam & Associates, worked with a group of fourth grade boys. He helped many of them improve their reading skills, focusing on those who were really struggling. He also helped the students compose a letter to Kobe Bryant, and they are hoping to hear back this summer.

Department of Public Safety Detective **Mike Slancik** also worked with a group of fourth graders. He squeezed this group in at the end of the day. When the weather started getting nice, they even played some basketball. Mike arranged a tour of the station house near Lincoln school, and provided ice cream bars for his readers. His group consisted of both good readers and those who were struggling and he really made an effort to reach out to those who were struggling.

Rick Ostrowski, a student at Western Michigan University, came early on Thursdays to work with a group of students over breakfast, and then worked with additional groups of third and sixth graders. He started mid-year, but developed very strong relationships during that time.

Michelle Obama Visits CIS Partner School

From a National Communities In Schools Press Release

First Lady Michelle Obama recently visited with students at Ferebee Hope Elementary, a CIS partner school in Washington, D.C. The visit ended with a special surprise when Mrs. Obama dropped in for story time with 30 third graders at the school.

Before reading with students, Mrs. Obama addressed the Communities In Schools national board of directors and expressed her support for CIS' efforts to help students achieve in school and increase their chances of graduating on time and prepared for higher education.

Mrs. Obama is visiting with effective community-based organizations across the country. President and Mrs. Obama have voiced their strong support for improving the quality of public education and reducing the nation's dropout rate.