



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

JEREMY M. HUGHES, PH.D.
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

April 25, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Jeremy M. Hughes, Ph.D., Chairman

SUBJECT: Update on Activities at the Michigan Schools
for the Deaf and Blind

The Michigan Schools for the Deaf and Blind (MSD/B) have a long history of educating students in this state. The Michigan School for the Deaf (MSD) provides education in a total communication environment that honors a child's first language (American Sign Language). The focus at MSD is on academic achievement with a particular emphasis on literacy and social-emotional health. The school also provides outreach services to students, families and schools across the state which include Sign Language Proficiency Interviews and a captioned media lending library.

The focus for the Michigan School for the Blind (MSB) is on low incidence outreach services to students, families and schools. This includes: evaluation, program consultation, orientation and mobility training, skills of daily living, provision of Braille and large print services, technology training, and technical assistance in the use of specialized materials including Nemeth code (math) and tactile graphics for the sciences. The MSB is also the link to the American Printing House for the Blind (federally sponsored) and serves as a lending library for materials and assistive technology devices. The MSB does not have a day school or residential enrollment at this time. If a child were in need of a residential placement, as determined by an Individualized Education Planning Team (IEPT), a placement would have to be identified.

In 2002 the administration of the MSD/B was assigned to the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS). At the same

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808 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
www.michigan.gov/mde • (517) 373-3324

MEMORANDUM

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time, state appropriations for the MSD/B were eliminated. The necessary redesign and renewal for the schools and their missions has been both challenging and rewarding. Funding has been shifted to a combination of tuition (from the state aid foundation grant to local schools) and federal funds under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Targeted use of federal resources has assisted in the improvement of curriculum and instruction, outreach services, and support for children with complex behavioral challenges. Both schools provide services that address very specific needs of children and of local school districts. The ultimate goal is to assure that children who are deaf or blind (and who may have other disabilities as well) have necessary supports to achieve academically and have the opportunity to become productive citizens as adults.

An Annual Report from MSD for 2003-04 is found in Attachment A. The Annual Report for 2004-05 will be available no later than October 2005. An overview of MSB is included in Attachment B. A review of Facility Resource Requirements and necessary improvements are provided in Attachment C. This is an area of significant concern as there are no state funds currently available to maintain or improve the physical plant on the Flint campus. Health and safety concerns for citizens and their children who access services at the campus, as well as asset protection for the State of Michigan, are in need of support by the State Board of Education.

Attachments



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

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JEREMY M. HUGHES, Ph.D.
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT
OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Dear Friends of Michigan School for the Deaf,

Thank you for your continued support for the Michigan School for the Deaf. We continue our commitment to Deaf and Hard of Hearing children across the State of Michigan. This report helps us to share our growth, our improvement and our vision for the future. We are pleased to present the MSD Annual Report for 2003-2004.

This annual report includes highlights of our school year, staff and student accomplishments, as well as the professional development initiatives which will continue for several years.

We never lose sight of the fact that education is a "team" process. We consider members of MSD's team to be: parents, students, administrators, teachers, professional support staff, Residential Care Aides, classroom aides, the Michigan School for the Deaf Alumni Association, the Deaf Community, and the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services. We value the support you have given us and look forward with great anticipation to next year.

Sincerely,

Cecelia A Winkler, MA
Principal

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Annual Report 2003-2004



Michigan School for the Deaf

Established 1854

Vision Statement:

It is the vision of the Michigan School for the Deaf to be the leader in educating Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Michigan and providing services to their families.

Mission Statement:

It is the mission of the Michigan School for the Deaf to provide a safe environment, rich in communication that is most conducive to learning, thereby maximizing each student's individual potential educationally, socially and emotionally.

Belief Statements:

- ✓ We believe education is a responsibility shared by the students, home, school and community.
- ✓ We believe treating people with dignity and respect is essential to a healthy and productive environment.
- ✓ We believe a full signing environment enhances the quality of life for the students, family and staff of MSD.
- ✓ We believe that balanced accountability, with a three pronged approach, ensures student outcomes and that is the key to a successful school program.
- ✓ We believe that development of the whole person socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally is imperative to success.
- ✓ We believe exposure and experience with Deaf Culture enriches the lives of students and their families.
- ✓ We believe a school environment that recognizes, values and accommodates students' unique abilities and interests provides the opportunity for development of maximum potential.

Overview of MSD

The Michigan School for the Deaf has served Deaf children and their families in the State of Michigan since 1854. With the change in administrative oversight, and the direct connection to the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services being strengthened, the opportunity for professional development and access to support services and personnel significantly improved. Support service personnel added include a mental health therapist, a school psychologist and a transition coordinator. In addition, the school improvement team switched focus to become specifically a curriculum team with the focus specifically on literacy.

MSD serves a population of students with hearing loss from the ages of 3 to 26 years of age. An added benefit is small classes of approximately 7 students per teacher. Elementary classrooms have an aide assigned to each room. The middle school shares two aides between 4 classrooms. The High School also shares two aides to provide assistance to teachers and students to maximize the classroom experience. In addition, skilled signers in each classroom provide the best education in the first language of the children who attend this school.

School Improvement

MSD's school improvement plan was based on research amassed by Dr. David Stewart, Michigan State University, and others regarding the reading levels of Deaf students across the State of Michigan and the country. Our own test data, both formal and informal showed that our students who were not fluent both in English and American Sign Language from an early age, presented with significant delays in their comprehension and expression of written English. During the school year of 2003-2004, Beth Steenwyk, Deputy Director of Special Education, shaped School Improvement to focus on three areas: Inputs and Processes, System Requirements, and Student Performance (see Table 1). It was her vision that as the MSD put resources in these three areas that student outcomes would dramatically increase.

In addition, critical support staff was recruited and hired. Specifically a mental health therapist, a school psychologist, and a transition coordinator were brought on staff to provide the services needed for a comprehensive education program.

Professional Development

In order to ensure success in the school improvement initiatives, we began with targeted training on Individual Educational Planning Team (IEPT) processes, current best practices with regards to Present Levels of Educational Performances (PLEP) and identification of what data is relevant, how to gather and record data, and how to use that data to verify success in academic instruction.

Assessment

The MSD participates in all state-wide tests such as MEAP and MI-Access. We are designated as an ACT testing site and offer that service to any Deaf or hard of hearing student who needs direct communication with skilled signers to successfully access the test. Our "district" test is the Stanford Achievement Test, scored at Gallaudet University, thereby allowing our results to be normed against both hearing students taking the test, and their Deaf peers. In addition we provide Vocational testing to all 9th grade students, or students newly entering the MSD. Students new to the MSD also get a Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) to establish a measure of their skill in receptive and expressive skills in American Sign Language (ASL).

Accreditation

The MSD has held North Central Accreditation (NCA) since 1998. Our curriculum consultant, Dr. David Stewart had headed the NCA process and had identified the goal of improving literacy among the students that we serve. We have held NCA accreditation since that time. All of our staff must take a Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) per our Communication Policy. Staff must be at a designated level or will be assigned to a sign language class that meets their level. Any staff hired after 1985 are given a limited opportunity to improve. Staff hired prior to the 1985 inception of the Communication Policy are still remanded to Sign Language classes, but are not faced with the limited time to improve. All full time state employees are certified teachers of the Deaf or certified Vocational Instructors. Contractual employees such as long term substitutes are certified to substitute by obtaining a certificate from the Genesee Intermediate School District.

Student Achievement

Due to the small number of students taking each test, data cannot be disaggregated. The MSD does adhere to testing mandates and offers the MEAP, Mi-Access, the SAT-HI, and the ACT. The SAT is sent to Gallaudet University so that it can be normed on both Deaf and Hearing students. It is the data that we use to measure the amount of educational growth in one year's time.

Collaborations

The MSD has formed partnerships or collaborates with other programs and universities to serve as a teaching facility for new teachers, interpreters and others entering the field of deaf education. Some of the established links are with Michigan State University, Kent State University, Michigan Department of Career Development, Madonna University, Mott Community College and Gallaudet University. The MSD also collaborates with community agencies, including Communication Access Center, Deaf C.A.N.I., Community Mental Health, Flint Community Schools Language Exchange Program, the Close-Up Foundation, the Michigan State Grange, AAA Insurance Agency, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Deaf-Blind Central.

The Year in Review 2003-2004

- The Student Body Government resurrected
- Sex Education Curriculum written by an outside consultant
- The MSD hosted the Central States School for the Deaf Volleyball Tournament
- The MSD students corresponded with servicemen and women over seas
- American Sign Language panels in the Dorm hosted by Deaf Adults
- School drama "A Foreigner is Born" is performed at MSD and for the MDE at the State Library
- Cash Match agreement for transition services with the Michigan Department of Career Development
- Governor's Vision and Values sessions held on campus
- Children of Uganda came to perform at the MSD
- Book Fair hosted. More than \$200 in free books donated to MSD Library.
- Data Collection training for staff
- Meet the Principal Meeting held in March
- Staff attended Love and Logic seminars
- The Michigan State Grange held a Christmas party and "adopted" approximately 25 children
- Veteran of Foreign Wars hosted an Easter party for the elementary school
- West Flint Optimists hosted a Volleyball night for the High School
- West Flint Optimists hosted a male and female athlete of the year for all of the Flint area including the MSD
- Kent State University interns in Education and interpreting come for a one week placement
- Tom Watkins came to host a pizza party for the student cast of "A Foreigner is Born"
- April 28th the 150 year celebration banner was delivered to MSD gym in preparation of next year's celebration. Approximately 30 Deaf Alumni came to host the assembly and talk to our kids about their legacy
- Principal and Asst. Principal attend Gallaudet Leadership Institute (GLI) at no cost to the school
- Collaborated with Commission for the Blind regarding job opportunities
- Collaborated with Deaf-Blind Central to bring John Lee Clark to Michigan.
- Mobile Dentist came to evaluate our kids
- Maurice Moses comes in on April to work with us regarding Positive Behavior Support
- Janet Scheetz begins to mold our IEP process
- Mike O'Leary begins some training on Present Level of Educational Performance
- May 5th a UM Asthma doctor came to speak on childhood asthma per a parent contact

Parent Participation

The MSD holds two evening parent conferences a year. Approximately 50 parents took advantage of the opportunity to visit with their children's teachers. The MSD staff also keeps in contact with parents via student planners (agenda books) and email. A weekly newsletter, *The Parent Connection*, is sent home every Friday. Some highlights of the Parent-Teacher-Houseparent (PTHO) organization are:

Parent Teacher Houseparent Organization 2003-2004 Table 2

Activity	Benefit to School program
Purchased school calendars to be given to the MSD staff and parents	Helped to encourage pride in our school and recognize staff contributions
Purchased therapy equipment for MSD Counseling Department (\$450.00)	Allowed Counselors to deal with younger and non-verbal children to identify problem areas and remediate
Helped cover the cost of transportation for the Bowling with Santa party sponsored by the Yearbook (\$65.00)	Allowed children without funds to attend the function and reduced the cost significantly for others to attend.
Donated books to the Accelerated Reading Program (\$250.00)	Books used across grade levels to improve literacy.
Sponsored Scholastic Book Fair	Donated \$600 in books to MSD library
Sponsored Santa's Workshop (\$250)	Students purchased gifts at reduced prices
Bought a yearbook ad (\$150.00)	Reduce the cost of yearbooks
Sponsored Honor's Dinner at the Superintendent's Cottage hosted by our principal in April, 2004 (\$400.00)	Allowed academic achievement to be recognized in all classes in the high school, and to honor parents for their contribution.
Helped with 4 th Annual Pig Roast to benefit the Athletic Department (\$400.00)	Promoted a feeling of community and helped support the Athletic Department
Purchased cup cozies for Staff Appreciation Day and the Joseph F. Arbini Gold Memorial Day (\$500.00)	Help to promote pride in our school and recognize staff contributions. Also to support the fundraising efforts of the Arbini Family, which supports MSD.
Hole Sponsor at the Arbini Golf Memorial in 2004 (\$100.00)	Golf outing from the previous year purchased audio equipment for the Gym and auditory trainers for elementary school children.
Purchased stoles for the graduation gowns worn by the class of 2003 and 2004 and for many years to come	School pride and Academic Achievement
Purchased savings bonds for two graduating seniors	Encouraged academic excellence and to help fund post secondary education

Core Curriculum

The MSD School Improvement Team has taken the benchmarks identified at the state level, identified how specific benchmarks will be taught, and what will be measured to ascertain what mastery means. The focus is on literacy, and what a Deaf student needs to focus on consistently to make up significant documented deficits. In any child whose first language is not English, there are strategies needed to be put in place to allow children to code switch from one language to another. This has been done with other languages and bi-lingual children. With students whose first language is ASL (thereby being visual) there is a disconnect to written English. There is a lack of data gathered that provides guidance. To evaluate our program and its success we need more than a yearly test like the SAT-HI. The School Improvement Team is looking into other data gathering methods that will allow us more data derived from a battery of assessment tools.

Transition

The MSD provides vocational assessment testing during entry into the 9th grade or upon entry into our high school. We also provide a tour of the Genesee Area Technology Center (GATC) during the 10th grade year so that students can assess their needs and see what opportunities are offered at GASC. The MSD provides transportation to and from GASC, interpreters on site, and a teacher liaison who serves as the link between schools and provides the assistance students need such as tutoring, advocacy, and parent support. A transition coordinator was hired to fill in the program void, and to bring the MSD in line with state initiatives and both state and federal mandates.

Graduation/Retention

During the 2003-2004 school year 25 students left the MSD. Three students transferred to the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) in Washington, D.C. Six students moved out of state, and of those six, four are currently in attendance in other schools. Thirteen students transferred back to their local school districts. Two students met graduation requirements and exited per their IEP. One student dropped out of school and her whereabouts is unknown.

There were nine students in the 2003-2004 senior class. Of the nine, three were admitted to institutions of higher education. Two returned to the MSD for further transition services. One has secured full time employment in the area of his vocational training.

Extra Curricular Activities

The MSD fielded approximately nine athletic teams in addition to Drama and Singing Hands. The following table shows the number of students engaged in organized sports for the 2003-2004 school year.

Student Participation in Extra Curricular Activities 2003-2004 Table 3

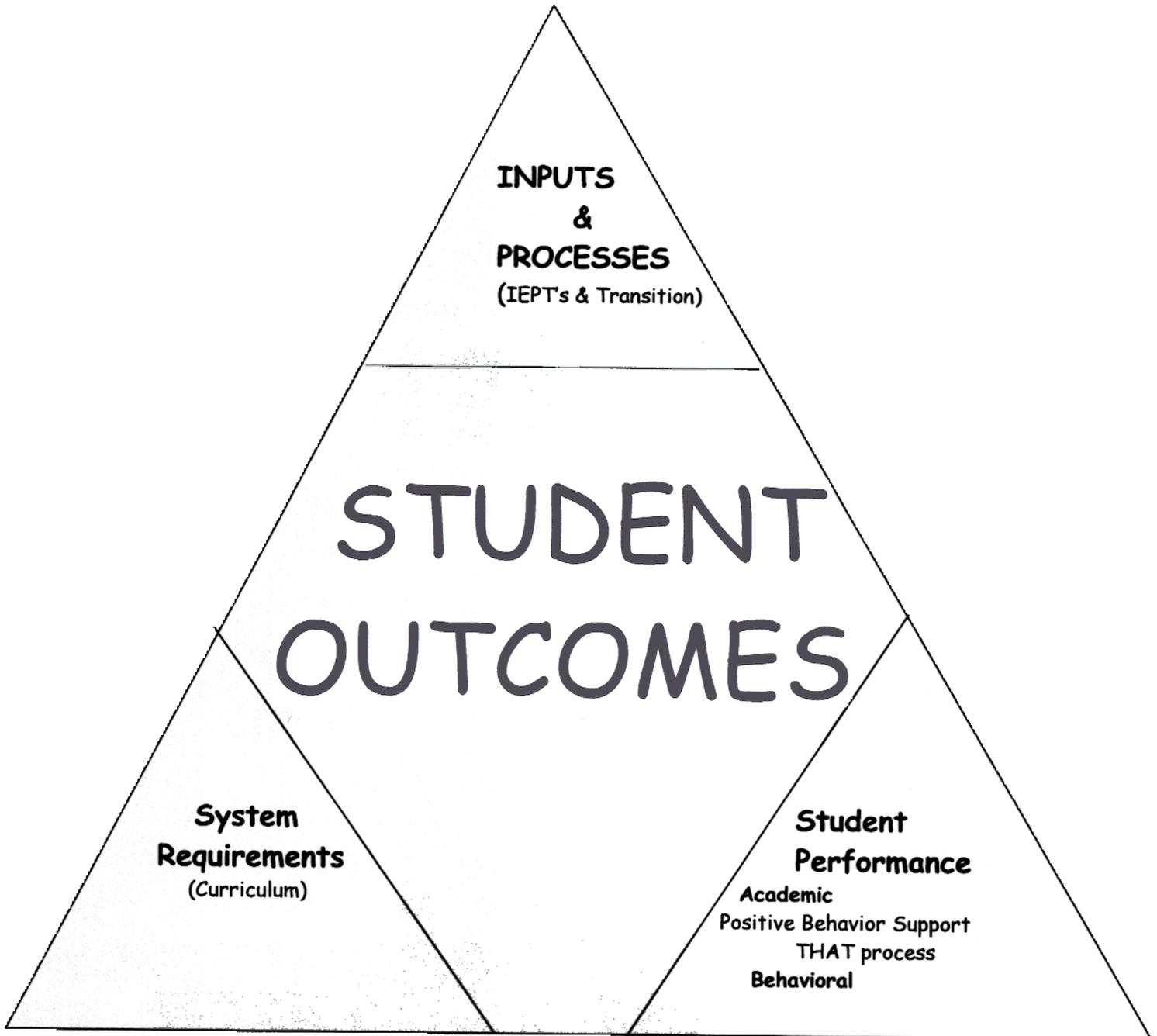
SPORT-Season	Number of students involved
Varsity Soccer	13 students
7/8 th grade Soccer	11 students
Varsity Boy's Basketball	10 students
Junior Varsity Boy's Basketball	8 students
Varsity Girl's Basketball	10 students
Varsity Girl's Volleyball	10 students
7/8 th Grade Basketball	8 students
4 th /5 th /6 th Grade Basketball	13 students
Cheerleading	5 students
Singing Hands	Approximately 60 kids
-	Approximately 15 kids

The MSD hosted the 21st Annual Central States Schools for the Deaf (CSSD) volleyball tournament in October 2003. Teams from Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota and Wisconsin competed in the event. We also traveled to Wisconsin in January of 2004 to compete in the CSSD tournament for basketball and cheerleading.

Table 1

MSD IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2003-2004



Overview of the Michigan School for the Blind

The Michigan School for the Blind was established under PA 50 of 1879. The original campus was in Lansing. A strategic plan for focusing on Outreach Services was implemented in 1993. In 1995 the school was moved to the Flint campus of the School for the Deaf.

The MSB currently provides services to students, families and schools through an array of outreach services provided in collaboration with intermediate and local school districts, professional organizations and parent groups.

Outreach services include:

- Training in Braille
- Orientation and mobility training
- Skills of daily living
- Technical Assistance in Nemeth code (math)
- Technical Assistance in tactile graphics (sciences)
- Assistive technology devices
- Evaluations
- IEP Consultation
- Lending library for materials and Assistive technology
- Linkage to federally-funded resources
- Linkage to national personnel development initiatives

Campus services include:

- Short-term learning opportunities at the Living Resource Center

Children and youth who are blind or visually impaired require specialized and intensive instruction to acquire the skills and knowledge that will assure success in adult life. Children and youth who are blind or have limited vision do not acquire the incidental learning that is typical for children with normal vision. Both federal and state statutes recognize the unique needs that must be met if children with disabilities are to be provided equity in public education, and the opportunity to achieve excellence. This includes a full continuum of educational services, programs and placements; the MSB is a resource to assure that such options are available.

Academic Achievement at the MSDB: Facility Resource Requirements

"Facility condition may have a stronger effect on student performance than the combined influences of family background, socio-economic status, school attendance, and behavior.' This comment comes from a recent report evaluating school facilities in Milwaukee, completed by the Council of Educational Facility Planners International."¹

In a brief review of research and articles related to the impact of school facilities on learning and student performance it becomes clear that there is a direct link between school facilities and educational outcomes. This clear link brings the current situation at the Michigan Schools for the Deaf and Blind regarding facility funding into sharp focus.

The current lack of funding for facility maintenance and improvements at the Michigan Schools for the Deaf and Blind facility in Flint does not support the current expectations for education across Michigan. The maintenance projects requiring immediate attention deal with either the infrastructure of the facility (i.e., boiler repairs) or basic health and safety issues for students, staff and visitors to the campus. Funding must be in place to support facility maintenance beyond the "when it is broke it will be fixed" mentality to an organized approach in order to ensure a safe, clean and instructionally supportive environment.

Facility Statistics

The campus is 65 acres with thirteen buildings. MSD and MSB actively use seven buildings in the implementation of the current programming (by the fall of 2005, eight buildings will be used).

- A system of water pipes supply water to all buildings. The water supply system was put into place in the 1930s.
- There are 2.5 miles of roads, with 285 parking spaces.
- There are 2.5 miles of sidewalks on the campus.
- Heat and hot water for the facility are provided by a boiler located in the Power House. Heat and hot water are supplied to most buildings on campus via 30 miles of steam/water pipes.

Campus Use

The MSD currently has 139 students enrolled. The children's ages range from 3 years to 26 years. Eighty-six (86) of these students reside in the dorm from Sunday afternoon to Friday. Enrollment for the 2005-06 school year is anticipated to rise by 20 students. The MSB provides limited on-site services. The MSD also has training and technical assistance activities on campus.

¹John B. Lyons, CEFPI Brief on Educational Facility Issues, "Do School Facilities Really Impact a Child's Education?", 2001

As a typical school, MSD hosts a wide variety of extracurricular activities and events (Singing Hands, team practices, athletic games, etc.). These events bring family members, as well as members of the community, to the campus on a regular basis.

There are 88 Civil Service employees (serving both MSD/B) on campus daily during the school year. Of the 88, 16 work year around.

There are an additional 46 staff on campus daily (contracts and grants). Of the 46, six work year around.

Currently 15 contractors (facility related) are on campus on a regular basis.

Area Surrounding Campus

The east end of campus borders on an economically disadvantaged area of the City of Flint. In addition to the neighborhood, two vacant buildings are located adjacent to the campus. These buildings appear to attract a wide variety of individuals onto the campus. The presence of these individuals mingling with students and staff are a security risk.

The south side of the campus is bordered by a wooded park area.

Critical Facility Maintenance Requirements

The following maintenance projects need to be completed (there are no state funds to support these projects):

Fencing the perimeter of campus (security issues)

Repair and replace existing sidewalks (health & safety issue)

Replace 25,200 square feet of carpet with vinyl flooring (health & safety issue)

Boiler upgrade (infrastructure issue)

Appendix A identifies additional necessary facility projects. Please note that this list does not include any assessment and/or needed improvements in the areas commonly sited as crucial for learning environments. The critical areas include: indoor air quality, lighting, acoustics, building age and quality, and security.

In conclusion, the current funding leaves MSD and the MSDB facility vulnerable to health and safety risks, as well as potentially compromising the academic outcomes of students who live and learn at MSD. In addition, groups of children and adults who attend numerous functions on the campus face the same risks.

Appendix A

The following is a list of facility projects that have been identified for completion within the next three years. The list is organized in a priority order with an estimated cost.

1. Health and Safety/ADA
 - a. Standardize the lock systems campus-wide (\$15,000)
 - b. Add a handicapped accessible parking area and explore reconfiguring the building entrance to meet both accessibility and security requirements (\$50,000)
 - c. Add an elevator to access the swimming pool (\$130,000)
2. Boiler repairs (\$400,000)
3. Roof repairs on four buildings (evaluation to determine extent of needed repairs, \$5,000)
4. Replace underground valves in the water system (\$130,000)