

## Remember to Eat Your Veggies



For a second year now, Midview fourth-grade students are learning about nutrition by growing vegetables. Veggie U, a not-for-profit organization at the [Culinary Vegetable Institute](http://www.veggieu.org) designed "a curriculum teaching an Earth to Table™ concept aimed at fourth-graders" (www.veggieu.org). Last year teachers received a kit complete with seeds, soil, flats, root view boxes, grow lights, a worm farm, and curriculum for this hands-on study. This year's refill kits included seeds, soil, and worms. "These materials allow the student to see, hear, taste, feel and experience the process of planting, growing, harvesting - and eating the results!" The District Wellness Policy encourages all activities that address wellness and fosters good eating habits.

Physical Education/Health teachers visited the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and met with Tom Bills. As a result, teachers have accessed the resources available to educators and scheduled activities through the museum's out reach programs. Midview teachers are enabling students to develop the skills and attitudes necessary

## Quantum Learning

Last year, four principals and nine teachers participated in Quantum Learning (QL). This year 74 teachers and administrators are immersed in QL. The first principle of QL states that EVERYTHING SPEAKS from your classroom environment to your body language sends a message about learning. It is a five day seminar. Teachers attended two days in the summer and have completed two days during our fall waiver days. The last instructional day is April 9, 2008.



By employing Quantum learning techniques, teachers can:

- improve classroom behavior,
- build rapport and communication,
- support standards based curriculum,
- infuse joy into learning,
- accelerate learning,
- and make content more meaningful.

Research studies have concluded an increase in math and reading skills, both on standardized tests and class grades. Studies showed improved attendance and fewer discipline referrals, an increase in students passing math skills exams, and an increase of one grade point average by at-risk students.

### What do Midview teachers have to say?

"I invoke the "Illegal Response" rule every day with my classes. Students that are not able to conjure an answer are not permitted to simply respond with "I don't know." Instead they are permitted to check their notes, repeat the question, poll the audience, or ask a friend. This has proved to be a successful strategy because my students feel comfortable during open discussions and are not afraid to be called upon. I have noticed that as time has moved along they are more apt to ask me to repeat a question rather than simply query the ever apt to answer students!"

"Quantum Learning has given me a lot of insight as to how the adolescent brain functions. Because of QL, I can better understand the actions and reactions of my students."

"In our classroom we have taken the Brain Preferences Survey and used the data to compare our different learning styles. A large focus that I have tried to maintain with my students is the whole Response Ability approach (a.k.a. Living Above the Line) We have talked at great lengths about why it is so important to remember that we have the ability to choose our response not just as learners, but as people."

"I often refer to living "Above or Below" the "Line" in regards to literary characters in the texts we read. I use probing questions and guided discussions to help my students discover whether or not characters in our stories are able to make wise decisions based on that "line!"

"I have been given the necessary tools to develop positive teaching strategies that challenge my students."

### MIDVIEW LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Project LEAD THE WAY a hit at the high school
- Quantum Learning involves more than 100 teachers this year
- Deficit Thinking strategies help teachers rethink education
- PRO-Ohio puts emphasis on indicators
- Veggie-U helps 4th graders with nutrition

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# Curriculum Update

This publication is brought to you by Dr. Cathy Pugh, Director of Curriculum

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## Project LEAD THE WAY a Hit at MHS



Team work, public speaking, understanding the potential impact their ideas and products may have on society, going beyond the classroom for answers, and preparing for two-and-four-year college programs are just some of the skills Midview students are learning in Mr. Daley's *Introduction to Engineering Design* class this year. Project Lead The Way's curriculum makes math and science relevant to students.

"Great experience" resounded in the comments from the students. One went so far as to add, "To be completely honest, I love this class. I enjoy showing my parents all the different drawings that we make."

Students find the Autodesk Inventor software easy to navigate with well-planned step-by-step instructions. Although hard work, many students added that it was "also a lot of fun." "The Inventor program makes CADD [software] look like we were roaming with dinosaurs." Students went on to add that creating designs and problem solving held their interest. Students are learning the difficult process from a vision to the actual creation of the final product. One Midview student added that the "class showed me my life goal."

Midview believes it is important to add rigor to our high school programs. Forming a partnership with *Project Lead the Way* and Lorain County Community College (LCCC), Midview students now have the opportunity to study pre-engineering principles and computer aided design beginning in their sophomore year of high school. Students will complete three pre-engineering courses on our campus:

Introduction to Engineering, Principles of Engineering, and Digital Electronics. Students will then take a fourth course at LCCC to begin looking at a more concentrated area such as chemical, mechanical or electrical engineering. Pathway options include an Associate of Science degree, Associate of Applied Science, or a Certificate of Proficiency. Students can choose an engineering school of their choice. Those who choose to attend LCCC take their freshman and sophomore courses on the LCCC campus. LCCC has also formed a partnership with Ohio State University. At Ohio State, students complete years three and four of their studies to graduate with an engineering degree from Ohio State University.



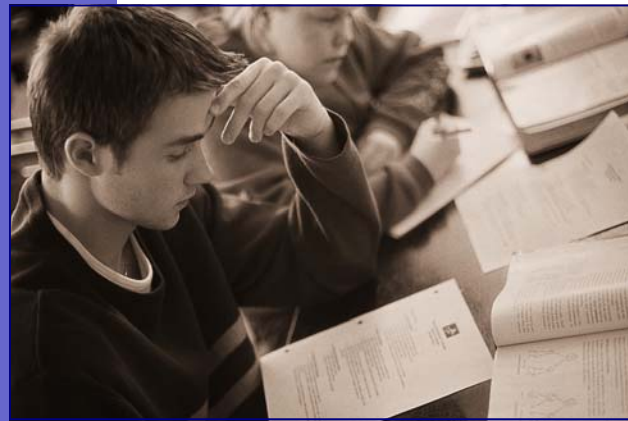
Support from two local funders, The Nord Family Foundation and the Stocker Foundation, made Project Lead the Way possible at Midview. Above, new computers and software were purchased through grants from these two organizations.

We are living in a world that is changing rapidly due to dramatic developments in several fields such as communications, energy, transportation, consumer electronics and biotechnology. Technology impacts our daily lives in a profound manner. In order to successfully meet the challenges in the years ahead, it is very important that we encourage students to pursue careers in science and technology. PLTW helps to make that possible for our students.

# Deficit Thinking

Lois Weiner's article "Challenging Deficit Thinking" published in *Educational Leadership*, implored administrators and teachers to reevaluate the assumption "that when students misbehave or achieve poorly, they must be 'fixed' because the problem inheres in the students or their families, not in the social ecology of the school, grade, or classroom" (2006 p. 42). "Deficit thinking" is the unspoken assumptions we make to explain why students don't learn. Take for example the hyperactive child who is referred for testing. Does the child need medication or more opportunities for physical activity?

Weiner concludes "assumptions reinforced by school practices, traditions, and political and social conditions initially obscures both teacher and student strengths. Weiner challenges teachers to find solutions inside the classroom that will foster student achievement before assuming "student and family deficits as the cause of poor achievement. Teachers often find this version seductive because it locates responsibility outside their classroom." (p. 45). Teachers can make powerful changes when they choose to break through the "deficit thinking" and recognize their untapped strengths and the untapped strengths of their students.



*Professional Learning Communities at Work* by Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker was last year's professional reading for Midview administrators. The following is an excerpt from pages 59-61. In addition, I have laced in links from this year's reading by Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Gayle Karhanek, *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn*, pages 30-32.

Below are descriptions of four schools that operate under very different assumptions. Even though the educators within these schools would contend that they believe 'all kids can learn,' they would respond to students who are *not* learning in significantly different ways.

## We believe all kids can learn...

**...based on their ability.** The extent of students' learning is determined by their innate ability or aptitude. This ability is relatively fixed, and as teachers, we have little influence over the extent of student learning. It is our job to create multiple programs or tracks that address these differences in ability in our students and then to guide students to the appropriate program. This ensures that students have access to the proper curriculum and an optimum opportunity to master material appropriate to their abilities.

(The first school views failure to learn as an indication that the student lacks the ability or motivation to master the content. Here DuFour et al. contends that teachers believe aptitude is relatively fixed and that they [teachers] have little influence over the extent of student learning. The authors titled this the Charles Darwin School.)

**...if they take advantage of the opportunity to learn.** Students can learn if they choose to put forth the effort to do so. It is our job to provide students with the opportunity to learn, and we fulfill our responsibility when we attempt to present lessons that are both clear and engaging. In the final analysis, however, while it is our job to teach, it is the student's job to learn. We should invite them and encourage them to learn, but we should also honor their decision if they elect not to do so.

(The second school considers failure an important part of the learning process. To ensure that this important lesson is learned, teachers must allow students to fail. DuFour et al call this the Pontius Pilate School that holds the student accountable for not doing what was necessary to learn by failing the student. The hope is that a student who suffers the logical consequences of irresponsibility (that is, failure) will learn the error of his or her ways and become more motivated in the future.)

**...and we will accept responsibility for enduring their growth.** Certainly it is our responsibility to help each student demonstrate some growth as a result of his or her experience in our classrooms. But the extent of that growth will be determined by the combination of the student's innate ability and effort. It is our job to create a warm, inviting classroom climate and to encourage all students to learn as much as possible, but the extent of their learning depends on factors over which we have little control.

## Deficit Thinking continued...

(The third school is prepared to accept responsibility for helping each student demonstrate some growth but is unwilling to establish high standards for all students. Here, too, the faculty members contend that they have little influence over the extent of an individual's learning. Titled the Chicago Cub Fan School, DuFour et al, view the priority in the school as ensuring students feel good rather than ensuring that they have learned.)

**...and we will establish high standards of learning that we expect all students to achieve.** It is our job to create an environment in our classrooms that engages students in academic work that results in a high level of achievement. We are confident that with our support and help, students can master challenging curricula, and we expect them to do so. We are prepared to work collaboratively with colleagues, students, and parents to achieve this shared educational purpose (DuFour, 1997a).

The first three approaches may have been acceptable in the Industrial Age when students had ample opportunities to pursue occupations that did not require intellectual ability. In today's Information Age society, however, educators must operate from the premise that it is the purpose of schools to bring *all* students to their full potential and to a level of education that was once reserved for a very few. DuFour et al. calls this the Henry Higgins School. Henry Higgins never considered Eliza's ability to learn. He was so confident in his ability to teach that he knew he would work with her until she had done so.

Teachers must challenge themselves to answer the tougher questions that address the very heart of the purpose of schooling:

What is it we expect our students to learn? (Not the book—the indicators)

What will we do when students don't learn? (This is a building decision)

This year administrators and staff involved in the Tier 2 Professional Learning Community Team are reading the book *Whatever It Takes*. Staff on the Tier 2 PLC Team includes Jill Ward, Ann Marie Eakins, Andrea Roldan, Linda Rivera, Kelly Groomes, Vicki Aring, Marsha Pavlenda, Judy Skoczen, and Cathy Pugh. "The most important resource in every school will continue to be the professionals within it" (DuFour et al, p. 37).

To the question, "What will we do when students don't learn?" the authors responded:

In one classroom where a student is struggling, the teacher is likely to call for the students to be placed in a different, less rigorous program. In a classroom down the hall, another student with similar difficulty will remain in the class and receive a failing grade. In yet another classroom, the teacher begins to make concessions to the student's perceived deficiencies and adjusts his or her academic goals for the student. Finally, in even the lowest-performing schools, there are those teachers who continue to exert extraordinary effort to help students achieve at high levels. Every time we have posed this question, the audience of experienced educators has agreed: Students in the same school who experience difficulty in learning will be subject to very different responses based upon the beliefs and practices of the individual teachers.

In a professional learning community, the school has a plan for responding when a student is not learning.

## PRO-Ohio

I still hear teachers saying, "I can't stop and re-teach. I have to get through the book." At the beginning of this school year, teachers in grades 2-10 received, via PRO-Ohio, a list of indicators and an idea of what their students knew about the indicators from day one. It's not the book the students have to learn, it's the indicators. The book is just one of the many tools the teacher will use to teach the indicators.

With the onslaught of Value Added, PRO-Ohio is more for the teacher than the student. The short cycle assessments identify what students have learned and what they have not learned. This information will guide instruction.