

POSITIVELY EDUCATION – January 16, 2010

Children and Families Are Our Business

We, in Michigan, have suffered through one of the worst economic times since the Great Depression. There are glimmering signs of hope that the recovery has started. However, we know that the recovery will be a slow one, at best. During this time schools have faced stagnant or reduced budgets like many of you have endured. But rather than focus on the negatives, our educators in St. Joseph County have continued their focus in our classrooms where the focus needs to be.

The Michigan Kids Count Data has just come out on January 12th and it shows the positive work being done in our county. From 2000-2007, our county improved scores on the fourth grade MEAP test by 65% and the eighth grade by 47%. During this same time the Michigan rate only increased by 12.1% at the fourth grade level and 25.5% at the eighth grade level. Also during the same time period the drop out rate in our county reduced by 6%.

This has occurred by cooperation rather than competition. Our county is known for its collaboration and cooperation in our Human Service Commission and in education it is no different. Our school boards and administrators have sought shared services before the state even considered it. Our districts and ISD work cooperatively on curriculum planning and instructional improvements rather than be competitive with one another. As you can easily see from our results, this cooperation has provided the children of St. Joseph County with tremendous growth at a time of significant economic challenges.

As we strive to be even better at sharing services and leadership within our county to survive the challenges we face economically, I was very pleased to see our academic successes. This proves that working together works. This has been our theme and the basis of success for many years in St. Joseph County. I applaud all the students, parents, community members, and particularly our educators in beautiful St. Joseph County for their hard work on these achievements.

Lloyd Kirby
Superintendent
Colon Community Schools