On behalf of all our staff and our Board of Education, I want to express our thanks to the greater Cass County community for your continued support. We are pleased to serve as the educational service agency for our schools and community. Please know that as we go about our business of serving the essential needs of our local school districts, we recognize there is no more important function than to support learning for ALL.

Our general education support and professional development initiatives look to be our best effort at student achievement for ALL. We promote a research-based, best practice approach, steeped in the effective schools research that will help our schools maintain the highest quality instruction and a focus on student achievement for the long term.

Our involvement with Career and Technical Education for high school students in the county allows us to maintain a level of relevance in a rigorous core curriculum keeping options and opportunities open for all types of learners and all career pathways.

The single largest responsibility of Lewis Cass ISD is serving our special needs students and their families. Our special education staff provide services to hundreds of learners from birth to age 26 with varying degrees of unique needs.

This is just a peek at what Lewis Cass Intermediate School District is all about and the things we do. Please have a look at our website to learn more of the specific educational initiatives that we promote on behalf of all learners in the county. Together, we commit ourselves to a mission of "Providing Services Today for a Better Tomorrow".

Sincerely,
Robert E. Colby,
Superintendent

The Instructional Services department promotes the achievement and success of all the students in Cass County by assisting our district educators and challenging our students directly. We plan and host activities to enhance the professional growth of our teaching and administrative staff focusing on: leadership, teaching skills, and curriculum development. Lewis Cass ISD’s “Leadership for Achievement” program just concluded a six part series on the best approaches to increasing student achievement taught by six of our nation’s most prominent school improvement experts. This year’s English Language Arts Series featured two national experts in educational content and delivery for reading, writing, speaking and listening. Schools from our county are joined by districts from as far away as Northern Michigan and the thumb area.

A Tradition of Promoting High Achievement

As a county, we have the distinction of having no State of Michigan “Priority” or “Focus” schools. We have numerous “decorated” schools, and everyone of our county’s elementary systems rank in the top 25% of Bridge Magazine’s Academic Champions List. We take pride in providing professional development activities to help support our local districts.

Challenging our Students

We also provide activities to challenge our county’s many talented and highly motivated students by hosting student programs like the Spelling Bee, which is in its 32nd year. This year, after 65 rounds, we crowned co-champions for the first time in our history. Martha Schaller, in 6th grade from Dowagiac and Maddie LaPiere, in 7th grade from Edwardsburg could simply not be stumped!

Congratulations girls!

The next week we held our Elementary Science Olympiad and Math-A-Rama. These activities emphasize teamwork in challenging students with science activities and mathematical problem solving. On May 11, LCISD will host a 3 county Middle School Math Meet featuring five person teams in grades 6-8 from Cass County and 15 neighboring districts. The next day LCISD hosts Young Writers’ Day for grades 2-6. Young authors will write and illustrate their own books under the direction of a nationally recognized author, illustrator and storyteller.

Most Intermediate School Districts do not host the range of activities and opportunities that Lewis Cass ISD provides. This has been a long standing tradition of LCISD, and we are proud to be a part of the high standards of educational excellence in Cass County.
One of the primary functions of Lewis Cass Intermediate School District is to provide special education programs and services to the students of our four local districts. To achieve this, we provide programs for students with low incidence disabilities in classrooms located on site at Brookside Learning Center in Cassopolis, North Pointe Center in Dowagiac, and in 6 classrooms located in Cassopolis Public Schools. We also provide the following services to county students within their local schools: School Psychology, School Social Work, Occupational therapy, Physical Therapy, Hearing Impaired, Visually Impaired, Speech and Language, Early Childhood Special Education, and Infant/Toddler services. We serve students from birth to age 26.

**Transition**

**LCISD Collaborates with Woodlands + SMC**

Beginning in January 2015 Lewis Cass ISD and Woodlands Behavioral Healthcare Network, our Community Mental Health agency, have teamed up to offer an Employability Class for young adults in Cass County. The class is being held on Friday’s throughout the spring and rotates through different service agencies in Cass County including Woodlands, Lewis Cass ISD, and Southwestern Michigan College. The goal is to provide education in a collaborative community setting that will help bridge the gap between school and the world of work.

**Topics include:**
- preparing for the workplace
- effective communication
- job search strategies
- resume building
- dressing for success
- applying for a job
- your first day on the job
- performing at your job

According to one of the attending students, Anthony Davis, “I’ve learned interview skills and did some role playing. The class prepares me for life after North Poine. It educates me on what employers are looking for.”

We are proud to be a part of this collaborative effort between Lewis Cass ISD, Woodlands BHN, and Southwestern Michigan College.

**Occupational Therapy**

Occupational therapy is a health profession which helps individuals participate in activities of daily living. For children and youth in schools, occupational therapy works to ensure that a student can participate fully in school activities—from paying attention in class; concentrating on the task at hand; holding a pencil, musical instrument, or book in the easiest way; or just behaving appropriately in class. Often occupational therapy is provided for students with disabilities, but occupational therapy can be made available to other children who are having specific problems in school. A common example of this is handwriting. In many cases this is a key “occupation” that students must master to succeed in school. Occupational therapy is also provided to pre-school aged children, from infancy on, in order to establish early motor and adaptive skills for school success.

Occupational therapy is usually provided in one of two ways, through direct service or consultation. In direct service therapy, a student is seen by the occupational therapist individually or in small groups to work on specific goals developed during the students annual IEP. Sometimes this service is provided directly in the classroom to help with carryover of the skills learned. In consultation, the therapist provides support to the teacher and education team, making recommendations for accommodations or adaptations that can help the student have success in the school environment.

The primary purpose of school based occupational therapy is to ensure the students successful participation in the school environment, but the occupational therapist strives to make therapy fun and engaging to the students. Often therapy looks like play, and the students are not even aware that they are building valuable fine motor and adaptive skills.
Career Technical Education
In Cass County

Career Technical Education (CTE) is a system that prepares students for a wide range of careers that may require varying levels of education—from high school to postsecondary certificates to two year and four year college degrees. Through the Michigan Merit Curriculum, Michigan now requires students to have a high level of skill in math, language arts and science. Career Technical Education programs bring relevance to students, teaching them the answer to the question, “what will I do with this?” CTE challenges students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills to complete real world projects vital to success in business and industry.

CTE serves 94 percent of high school students and 13 million postsecondary students in the United States and includes high schools, career centers, community and technical colleges, four-year universities and more. CTE is a major part of the solution to myriad national economic and workforce problems, such as high school dropout rates, a weakened economy, global competitiveness and massive layoffs. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly one-third of the fastest growing occupations will require an associate's degree or a postsecondary vocational certificate.

At a time when job opportunity is so critical, CTE programs in every community are ensuring students are adequately equipped with the skills to successfully enter the workforce.

Each year, the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District offers Career and Technical Education programs at Southwestern Michigan College to our four local Cass County districts. These programs are designed to prepare our youth for a broad range of employment and training services and are offered under the guidance of qualified teachers and counselors. The following is a list of academy programs offered this school year.

**Academy Programs**
- Automotive
- Health Science
- Business
- Precision Machining Technology
- Construction Trades and Green Technology
- Design & Graphic Arts
- Welding
- Mechatronics
- Criminal Justice

We are proud to provide these services to our four local districts in Cass County.

Camp Day

Every year in May, LCISD students attend a day camp at beautiful Camp Friedenswald to participate in a day of exploration. We enjoy learning experiences in a natural environment including crafts, science, recreation and team building. As some of our students explore science through dissecting owl pellets and frogs, others are fishing and canoeing on the lake. You can tell it was a successful day of learning and fun by the expression of joy on their faces and the tired look in their eyes as they board the busses at the end of the day.

Super Day for Special Kids

The Cass County Tractor Pullers annually sponsor a day of horse-drawn hay rides, food and the chance for students to explore tractors, an ambulance, fire trucks and race cars for the special needs students in the county. It all takes place at Brookside Learning Center in May.

Whether it's enjoying a grilled hotdog with a friend or talking to a local firefighter, it is a day of fun, excitement and learning for our students. This is yet another example of the spirit of help and collaboration among our Cass County residents. The staff and students of our four districts and Lewis Cass ISD are so grateful for your help and support.
PECS is a unique augmentative/alternative communication intervention. PECS begins by teaching the student to give (not point) to a picture of a desired item or activity (chips, tickle, etc) to a communicative partner who then immediately honors the exchange. The system then goes into traveling with the pictures. The student learns discrimination of various pictures and how to put them into sentences. Once a student has mastered this, they are taught to answer questions (yes/no, WH) and to comment (I see...). We have been implementing this process at Sam Adams Elementary school in Cassopolis in our ISD classrooms with students who have difficulty verbally expressing themselves. The amount of progress seen in such a short period of time is amazing.

Seeing a child with limited verbal skills hold a conversation for the first time is a truly exciting and rewarding experience for our staff and parents alike. It opens up a world of interaction and learning opportunities at school and in the home.

Midwest Energy
Strengthening Schools Grants Awarded

Each year Midwest Energy Cooperative awards grants to public schools in the area of up to $2,500.00 to support academic/classroom needs, special projects or supports for clubs and organizations. On January 19 Lewis Cass ISD was awarded $4,625.00 to support two grants written by staff members.

The first grant was written by Pamela Sova, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) teacher, to allow for the purchase of dramatic play materials for her classroom. Mrs. Sova wrote the grant for dramatic play materials because it is such an important part of preschool. In dramatic play, children assign and accept roles and act them out. Supplies used for dramatic play include kitchen sets, dishes, baby dolls and costumes. When we see children play we can no longer think of it as, “just playing.” They are making connections, developing skills and exploring roles in abstract thinking, literacy, math and social studies. Brookside’s ECSE classrooms believe that the work of childhood is play and Midwest Energy allowed Mrs. Sova’s classrooms the supplies they needed to realize the goal of developing more intentional dramatic play activities throughout the school day.

The second grant was written by Melissa Phillips, Speech Pathologist, to allow the purchase of a Tobi PC Eye Go system and software. This is a piece of equipment that allows for students who have difficulties moving and communicating to control a PC with their eyes. With a PC Eye Go connected to the classroom computer our students in the Severely Multiply Impaired (SMI) classrooms are learning how to express things that they have not had a way to express before.

Because of Midwest Energy’s Strengthening Schools Program some of our most impacted students have had a door opened to allow them to engage in school and play activities as never before. The support that we have received from Midwest Energy has shown that together we are able to accomplish our mission: “Learning for all, whatever it takes!”
Lewis Cass Intermediate School District is here to serve all community members by providing resources to the families of Cass County. In this section of the newsletter, we will be giving you information about services available through the Intermediate School District, information about other resources being offered to our families, and opportunities to volunteer with some of our activities.

Early On
If you are concerned about the development of your child, the Early ON Michigan program and the Build Up Michigan programs are available through Lewis Cass Intermediate School district for free screening assessments.

Early ON Michigan offers early intervention services for infants and toddlers birth to age 3. If you think your child’s learning, speech, motor skills, or social skills are not the same as other children their age, please contact Dawn Grant at 269-445-6245 for a free screening or evaluation to see if your child is eligible for services. You may also make a referral by completing an online form at www.1800EarlyOn.org or by calling 1-800-327-5966.

Build Up Michigan
Build Up Michigan (formerly Project find) also offers free screening assessments for children ages 3 through 5. If your child qualifies for services, which can include special instruction and related services, Lewis Cass Intermediate School offers a continuum of programs and services to all eligible children at no cost to their families. Lewis Cass ISD staff members are also participants in the sports programs in our community. Several activities are available to allow all our students a fun opportunity to exercise and to be on a team.

Please contact (269) 445-6260 with any inquiries.

Challenger Baseball
Little League Baseball Challenger division is also available for any child with a physical or developmental challenge. The child must be at least 5 years old to participate. Buddies are available as needed to assist the athletes in the areas of batting, base running, and defense.

Practices and games start in the Spring and are held on Saturdays at the Dowagiac Little League field.

For more information to enroll a player or to find out how to become a buddy, contact Diane Schultz at 269-228-2267.

VIP Soccer
Dowagiac American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) has sponsored the development of a soccer team for children and adults with special needs. VIP Soccer is designed to give all participants a quality soccer experience. Each player is assigned a buddy who helps them maintain focus and serves as a prompt to participate effectively in the game.

Children and adults with any issues that may limit participation on a mainstream team are eligible to join. Practices are held two evenings a week during the fall and spring sessions at the Dowagiac AYSO field. Games are held on Saturdays.

For more information, to enroll a player or to find out how to become a buddy, contact Melissa Phillips, AYSO VIP Coordinator at (269) 414-9957.
Michigan Association of School Boards

As citizen leaders, individual school board members face complex and demanding challenges. They are alternately described as having the most important volunteer jobs in the country and facing the toughest challenge in elected American government. Yet school board members are just ordinary citizens with extraordinary dedication to our nation’s public schools. All Michigan citizens should recognize the vital contributions of these men and women and the crucial role they play in the education of our children.

Public education is the backbone of American society, and local school boards are deeply rooted in U.S. tradition. It’s the foundation on which our democracy was built. Today local school boards continue to do the most important work of their communities—that of educating our youth.

Their job is to establish a vision for the education program, design a structure to achieve that vision, ensure schools are accountable to the community and strongly advocate for continuous improvement in student learning. The job of a school board member is tough, the hours long and the thanks few and far between. Too often we’re quick to criticize school board members without really understanding the complex nature of their decisions. Now’s the time to thank them for their untiring efforts.

In-Home Family Services

The In-Home Family Services program is based on the belief that many families can enhance their well-being and improve safety of the children with the assistance of long-term in-home services.

In-Home Family Services is a resource available to families in need through the efforts of the Family Preservation Services of the Department of Human Services Community Support Division.

As a family preservation program, In-Home Services assists and supports “at risk” families in a non-traditional way. Moderately intensive, strength-based, solution-focused counseling and family preservation services are provided in the home.

Program Objectives:

- Develop structure for the safety of children and all members of the family
- Generate solutions to the problems faced by the family
- Identify strengths, assess and help the family develop goals for improving functioning
- Work with the family, to examine alternatives and determine options for working on treatment goals

Program Eligibility In-Home services are available to Parents or Primary Caregiver(s) who:

- Clients must have an open Prevention, Protective Services, Foster Care Reunification or Delinquency Services case; or
- Families with a child or children adopted through the DHS foster care system when adoption has been finalized and a need for post adoption services has been identified by DHS
- Relative caregiver(s) of minor children in an unlicensed DHS supervised relative care placement while the relative is in the process of obtaining a foster parent license, or
- Court appointed guardian(s) of a child who has been in DHS foster care
Lewis Cass ISD School Board Members

The Lewis Cass Intermediate School District is governed by a five-member Board. Our Board is representative of each of the communities of Cass County. We have a Board member from each of our four local school districts and one at-large member.

Our Board President, Mr. Donald Curtis is from Marcellus and has been on the LCISD Board for 15 years. Ms. Patricia Adams, a member for 14 years, serves as Vice President and resides in Edwardsburg. Mr. David Gordon, Board Secretary, has been on our board for 4 years and lives in the Cassopolis School District. Mr. Thomas Atkinson and Mr. Kevin Anderson, both of Dowagiac, have 3 and 2 years of service respectively and serve as Trustees of the Board.

These five individuals are committed to our mission of “Providing Services Today for a Better Tomorrow.” Their service as Board members is dedicated to ensuring Lewis Cass Intermediate School District is the educational service agency that our county needs.

Our Board of Education members are elected by the Boards of Education of our constituent school districts in biennial elections held the first Monday in June in odd numbered years.

President
Donald Curtis

Vice President
Patricia Adams

Secretary
David Gordon

Trustee
Thomas Atkinson

Trustee
Kevin Anderson

www.lewiscassisd.org