

AAPSNews

News, features, profiles and activities in The Ann Arbor Public Schools

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Issue No. 24, November 8, 2010

Featured story

K-8 campus explored on east side

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Plans are being explored to create a K-8 campus between Mitchell Elementary School and Scarlett Middle School in Ann Arbor through a partnership between the Ann Arbor Public Schools and the University of Michigan School of Education.

A balanced school year calendar is being considered that could include a shorter summer break and “inter-session” breaks for academic enrichment or vacations at intervals throughout the year.

Parent information forums on the topic are scheduled for the evenings of Nov. 10 and Nov. 18 for those with children at Mitchell and Scar-

See Partnership, page 6



Several team members who have done preliminary planning for the Ann Arbor Public Schools and University of Michigan School of Education partnership at Mitchell Elementary and Scarlett Middle schools (from left): Ed Broom Jr., Kathy Scarnecchia and Gerald Vazquez of AAPS and Cathy Reischl of the U-M School of Education. The full team will present its findings to the Board of Education on Dec. 8.

Informational meetings

Forums for the parents from Mitchell, Scarlett and the feeder elementary schools of Allen, Pittsfield and Carpenter interested in finding out more about the program are scheduled for:

- 6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 10 at Scarlett Middle School, 3300 Lorraine St.
 - 6 - 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 18 at Mitchell Elementary School, 3550 Pittsview Drive (A spaghetti fundraising dinner is also scheduled on this night.)
- Scarlett and Mitchell schools are west of Carpenter Road, south of Packard in Pittsfield Township.

Mitchell teams with U-M in partnership pilot

Interns from the University of Michigan School of Education have joined the the Mitchell Mighty Mustangs after-school math enrichment program as part of a pilot partnership between the Ann Arbor schools and the U-M School of Education. The enrichment program not only helps students, but intern teachers as well.

For the story, turn to page 7.



Interns from U-M work with Mitchell Elementary students after school.

Class of 2011 first to graduate under new state curriculum

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Chelsea Cendrowski's sprint toward graduation in 2011 has been challenging, but the Community High School senior said she would have taken the same class load, regardless of changes in state graduation requirements that take effect this year.

"I figured it would be hard, but I didn't have anything to compare it to," she said. "High school is hard, but I don't think most students dislike the requirements. I guess I think it's a good thing."

Cendrowski and her senior classmates will be the first to graduate under the state's new Michigan Merit Curriculum, a set of tougher, more rigorous standards that have required Ann Arbor and other public school districts to reshape their curriculum.

The class of 2011 will be the first that must complete the new requirements including four years of math, three years of science, four years of English Language Arts, three credits in social studies plus additional credits in physical education and health, visual, performing and applied arts and an online class experience.

In all, the MMC requires 16 credits in specific subject areas to graduate. Before the changes were signed into law in April 2006, the state required only a ½ credit in civics to graduate from a Michigan high school.

By the time the Class of 2016 walks, a two-credit foreign language require-



Chelsea Cendrowski and Rachel Shevrin, both Ann Arbor seniors who will graduate under the new Michigan Merit Curriculum this year. Both said they would have taken a rigorous selection of classes regardless of the new state rules.

ment will also be in place – or equivalent experience over a student's K-12 career.

Cendrowski and her friend, Pioneer High School senior Rachel Shevrin, who also takes classes at Community, were surprised to hear that the state had previously required only the civics class to get a diploma. Both said they would have challenged themselves with a rigorous school plan, regardless of the change, to be sure they would get into a good college.

"College has been a driving factor since freshman year," said Shevrin. "My counselor asked me where I wanted to go (to college) my freshman year. College has been a factor as to which courses I take."

Cendrowski has her eye on a nursing career and Shevrin is leaning toward a study of social justice and the environment. Both do volunteer work in addition to their studies and say it is rewarding – and a necessity

for them as they begin applying to college.

Shevrin said she was given a "big book of charts" in the ninth-grade to make her high school plans and she noted that because she is enrolled in both Pioneer and Community "requirements are different when you're dualing (dually enrolled at both high schools,)" she said. "It was more difficult to get into classes."

Her online requirement turned out to be a summer blended personal fitness course, which combines some online work with class site visits. "Personally, I didn't care for it (the online.) But, now it works for me to dual."

Multi-year class review

Although Ann Arbor school officials said the district's standards have always been higher than the state's basic requirement, the new

See Curriculum, page 8

Michigan Merit Curriculum

In April 2006, new statewide graduation requirements called the Michigan Merit Curriculum (Public Acts 123 & 124) were signed into law. This year's class of graduating seniors, the Class of 2011, is the first that must meet the new standards.

The Merit Curriculum requires 16 credits for graduation including:

- **4 Credits in Mathematics** including Algebra I; Geometry, Algebra II (one course must be taken during senior year.)
- **4 Credits in English Language Arts**, with one class taken each year.
- **3 Credits in Science** with use of labs including Biology and Chemistry or Physics.
- **3 Credits in Social Studies** including .5 credit in Civics; .5 credit in Economics; as well as credits in U.S. History & Geography; and World History & Geography.
- **1 Credit in Physical Education and Health.**
- **1 Credit in Visual, Performing and Applied Arts.**

Additional requirements: Students must take an on-line course or learning experience or have it incorporated into the required credits of the Michigan Merit Curriculum. Beginning with the Class of 2016, students will need to complete 2 credits of a world language in grades 9-12 or have an equivalent learning experience in grades K-12.

Credit may be earned through alternative course work, humanities, career and technical education, industrial technology courses or vocational education. Credit can be earned through accelerated course placement, advanced placement, dual enrollment or an international baccalaureate or early college program.

Parents may request a "personal curriculum" in conjunction with counselors for students who seek to exceed Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements or for students with disabilities who need special accommodations.

Source: Michigan Department of Education

Personal training: One option for starting a lifestyle of fitness



Editor's Note: One in an occasional series of stories about fitness and recreation programs in the Ann Arbor Public Schools Community Education and Recreation Department, also known as Rec & Ed. This story focuses on Mark Harris, a personal trainer and fitness instructor who shares a lifetime of fitness experiences and why he feels having a fitness routine is important.

Fit & Fun



Featured classes and activities in AAPS
Community Education and Recreation

By Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

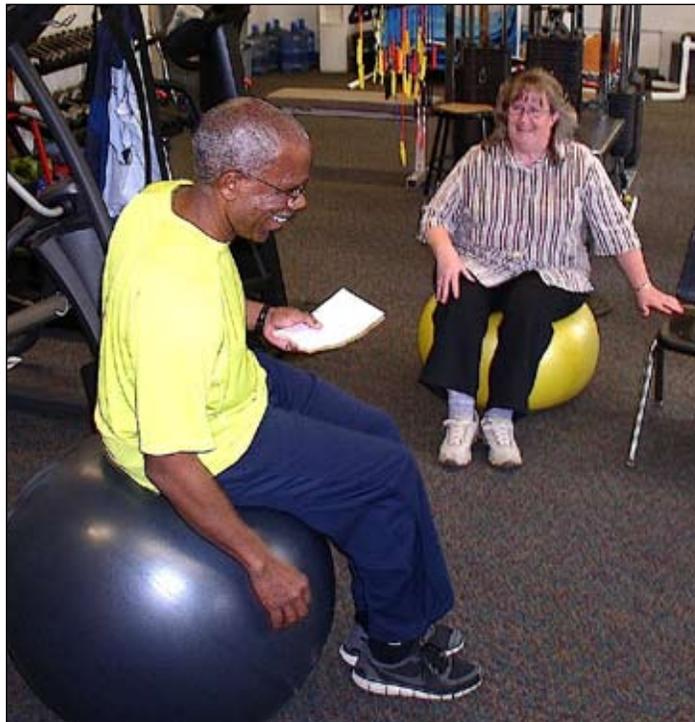
Personal trainer Mark Harris says getting in shape and staying fit is no more difficult than any other goal in life: take it in small bites and eventually, you will make it to the finish line.

He suggests that people just start at the beginning and move at their own pace. But, getting started is what's important. "People are always looking for an excuse: It's raining out. It's Tuesday," jokes Harris.

But on a serious note, Harris said he works hard to help his clients build the confidence they need to get started and keep going with a fitness program. "A person wants to feel confident in what he does," Harris says. "We're all in the same boat. You are what you are, you do what you can and you take these steps and you get better."

"Everyone has a comfort zone – to improve, you have to go out of your comfort zone," he added.

Harris owns MAH Fitness and does personal training sessions for Ann Arbor's Community Education and Recreation Department and is also known around the area as a fitness instructor for



Personal Trainer Mark Harris works with Community High School staff member Chris Hicks in the school's workout room. Above right: Harris always uses exercise balls with his clients to teach them balance.

Washtenaw Community College programs, as well, teaching at a number of senior and community centers.

On this day, he is working at Community High School, where staff member Chris Hicks has signed up for three personal training ses-

See Personal Training, page 8

Fitness wisdom from Mark Harris:

"We all need to work out. It should be like taking a shower or brushing your teeth, like breathing and eating."

His motto is: "Life's a journey – travel well." Harris applies the analogy of moving a mountain one stone at a time to reach the goal. "It's okay to start small," he says.

"Learn who you are and work with what you have. Be honest with yourself. If there's a goal you want to get to, work toward it."

Don't look at what others are doing – don't compete and compare, Harris says. "You have to learn how to pace yourself. Do what you can realistically. The thing is to get going. Keep going."

"Everything comes from the core... You strengthen that core and you will be set."

AAPAC helps families of special needs students

Editor's note: First in a series of articles about school-related community groups that are approved by the Ann Arbor Board of Education. Today: The Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education.

By Casey Hans
AAPASNews Service

Once upon a time, parents in public school settings felt alone as they navigated the often-complicated process of helping their children with special needs.

About 10 years ago, a group of Ann Arbor parents of children with autism banded together and found support in numbers. They began educating themselves, helping each other and working with the Ann Arbor schools on issues of special education and support services.

The Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education, or AAPAC, formed in the spring of 2001. Today, they have representatives at each school building and a governing board that meets regularly with parents and school administration.

"By talking to each other, we were able

to affect change," explained Barb Byers, one of the organizers of the group who is an AAPAC officer. "We've made progress over the years."

Byers said the group "advocates for the kids with the most needs. We're all members of the community – and some of us need more than others."

The AAPAC is one of several district-approved committees that are active at the board level, presenting regular updates at board meetings.

The group encourages programs between special and general ed students, such as an interactive theater program at Clague Middle School, an adaptive physical education class at Forsythe Middle School and a reading buddies program at Haisley Elementary. They also offer workshops for parents, sponsor annual disability workshops for fourth-graders and often support each other by attending Individualized Education Plan, or IEP, hearings, serving as independent listeners.

When merited, IEP contracts are written for individual students that set goals, lay out

See AAPAC, next page

County faces special ed millage renewal in 2011

Those involved with special education services in Ann Arbor are concerned with an upcoming special education millage renewal. They note if it is not renewed, districts will have to use General Fund dollars to meet these special education mandates.

In Michigan, public schools are required to provide special education services for children from birth through age 26, or until they graduate from high school. Ann Arbor homeowners pay a special education millage through the Washtenaw Intermediate School District as part of a countywide levy.

The current approved Special Education millage is 4.5 mills, which supports programming for the more than 7,000 students in the 10 local school districts in the county including Ann Arbor. This special education millage can be renewed, returned to the original levy level or increased by voters.

Declining property values create a problem, said Deb Mexicotte, a founder of

the Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education and current president of the Ann Arbor Board of Education. Lower values mean less taxes are collected that can be used for these mandated services.

Special education services draw out of the general education budget, then are reimbursed through this county millage. Mexicotte said Ann Arbor now receives about an 80 percent reimbursement for special education services. Declining property values will see that percentage decrease, even if the millage is renewed at the current rate.

"The drop in values has a big impact," she said. "We will face a drop in reimbursement. These mandated services will dip into general education dollars."

Voters will face a ballot issue relating to special education services in the coming calendar year. WISD officials must determine their approach and put a special education renewal before voters by November 2011.

Workshop for parents

■ **What:** "Content of IEPs and 504s: Dude ... Where's My Signature Page?" A free workshop for parents, staff and caregivers to explain the Individualized Education Program and 504 plans for children and youth who receive special education services

■ **Who:** Sponsored by the Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education, or AAPAC

■ **When:** 7-9 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 18, 2010

■ **Where:** Washtenaw Intermediate School District Teaching and Learning Center, 1819 South Wagner Road, Scio Township (between Liberty Street and Scio Church Road)

■ **Speaker:** Kelly Orginski of Michigan Alliance for Families (www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org) discusses understanding the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance statement; writing measurable goals and objectives, support services and plan implementation and recent changes to the IEP form.

■ **Details:** RSVP via e-mail to Melany Raubolt: mraubolt@hotmail.com



New head of SISS

In August, Elaine Brown joined the Ann Arbor Public Schools as the assistant superintendent for Student Intervention and Support Services.

She has worked in the special education field for 33 years, most recently as a supervisor in the Southfield Public Schools. She also worked in the Oak Park and Detroit school districts.

She lives in Farmington Hills and is married to Darryl Brown; they have two daughters: high school senior Kristen and Danielle, who has a bachelor's degree in clinical psychology and is working on her master's degree.

AAPAC, from previous page

how to assist the student and make appropriate accommodations for his or her learning. "All is individualized to the child," explained another officer, Melany Raubolt. "We get together to talk to each other. We're there to help parents understand the process at the school."

Scott Zeleznik, co-chairman of the AAPAC board, moved to Ann Arbor from California, where he said most families hired attorneys to navigate the system for their special needs children. It's not that way here, he said. "The environment here is much more collaborative."

Deb Mexicotte, the president of the Ann Arbor Board of Education, was one of the founders of AAPAC. The parent of an autistic son who was 9 years old when she got involved, Mexicotte said parents at that time were frustrated with both local and county systems.

"There was a history of an adversarial relationship with parents," Mexicotte recalled. "When the group formed, we arranged to be an association of the school board so we could just get the voice out there. Now, we are light years ahead of where we were. What we've really done is make special education an integral part of every conversation we have."

Mexicotte said the group has served as a network for parents and a catalyst for ongoing discussion. "We owe each other the respect to carry through with these struggles," she added. "We have to be willing to listen and also question. That's what we're getting better at."

In 2003, the AAPAC encouraged Mexicotte to run for the school board. Although she now deals with broader district issues, Mexicotte said the group felt it was important to have someone serving who understood the system. She was re-elected to the board last week.

Newly appointed Assistant Superintendent for Student Intervention & Support Services Elaine Brown came aboard in August. In addition to their own monthly member meetings, AAPAC officers meet monthly with Brown and quarterly with the superintendent to share concerns and have an open dialogue.

Brown said she appreciates the AAPAC's efforts. "I get a chance to know what the issue are and be ahead of things," she said. "They really are a good group of people and I enjoy working with them. They keep the administration informed of parent issues and concerns. They also help parents to understand the special education process."

The AAPAC group has been instrumental in working with SISS staff and the superintendent keeping open the flow of communication and moving toward more integration of special needs students to general ed classrooms. "We want an inclusive environment as much as possible – we're trying to have these conversations so parents, staff and the district are in alignment," Brown said.

She said one of her goals is to improve technology in classrooms so that students with special needs have better access to general ed curriculum. The district is also working to become a better gatekeeper of IEPs, tracking of the process for each student. Co-teaching between special ed and general ed teachers has also begun and the district will do more training in that regard, she said.

Although it's been years since she has led the AAPAC board, Mexicotte still finds herself using the term "we" when discussing it. "We've become an integral part of the conversation and have had an excellent relationship with the administration while speaking the truth," she said. "We have gotten not quick, but lasting results. It's brought people together to understand – it's brought understanding and civility to the discourse," she added.

White set to return, Woodworth to retire

Staff in the Spotlight

Carlina Duan
AAPSNews Service

Michael White is expected to return to his principal's role in January, to replace current principal Tamber Woodworth in the second semester of school.

White, who was principal of Pioneer from 2007-09, was unexpectedly called for deployment in January 2010 to Fort Benning, Georgia and left the halls of Pioneer to serve with the U.S. Army Reserves. White has spent the past year at Fort Benning training infantry soldiers and preparing them for battle, working as a drill sergeant for the 3/300th Infantry Battalion, 4th Brigade.

Woodworth, a Pioneer assistant principal, replaced White in the last half of the school year. "The latest news is that (Mr. White) is really excited to come home," she said. "I talked to him (recently) on the phone and he is full of energy."

Upon White's return, Woodworth said she plans to retire. "I'll have an extended retirement," she says, "It's my intent to retire." Woodworth had originally scheduled her retirement for last summer until White asked her to take over his position upon his absence.

In terms of school policies, Woodworth said she has tried not to stray too far from White's original goals. "Mr. White had a definite direction he wanted to go in," Woodworth explained, "I have kept it as true to his path as I could."

Students agree, saying that there



Michael White, left, training recruits at Fort Benning, Georgia. He has been deployed there since January and will return as Pioneer principal in the second semester. (Photo courtesy, Michael White)

has not been too drastic a change of policy since White's absence. "I honestly haven't noticed much of a difference," said senior Margaret Burns. Sophomore Maggie Campbell agreed. "(Mr. White) wasn't here that long, so it's not much of a difference to me."

Students also are expectant of White's return. "I'm happy he's coming back because he did a great job turning our school around," said senior Charlie Held. "But at the same time, I'm sad because Ms. Woodworth has done such a good job and always has a smile on her face."

As for anticipated changes upon White's return, Woodworth said, laughing, "I think you're going to hear a different voice on the announcements."

Carlina Duan is the editor of The Optimist, Pioneer High School's student newspaper. This article is reprinted from a fall edition of The Optimist.

Corbitt retires from Bryant

Luther Corbitt, has retired from his post at Bryant Elementary School. Teacher Roberta Heyward has been appointed as interim principal for the rest of the 2010-11 school year.

According to an announcement from Interim Superintendent Robert Allen, Corbitt has been an educator of 44

years and is one of the longest-serving principals in Ann Arbor. "It was due to his efforts and passionate belief in the importance of early literacy development that the Bryant/Pattengill Literacy Endowment was created," Allen said.

Corbitt came to Ann Arbor as co-principal at Tappan in 1993 and moved to Bryant in 1996.

Partnership would bring balanced calendar to Scarlett and Mitchell

Partnership, from page 1

lett, as well as other elementary feeder schools including Allen, Pittsfield and Carpenter. Parents may attend a forum at either school:

■ 6:30-8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 10, Scarlett Middle School, 3300 Lorraine St.

■ 6-8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 18, Mitchell Elementary School, 3550 Pittsview Drive (A spaghetti fundraising dinner is also scheduled here on this night.)

Scarlett and Mitchell schools are located west of Carpenter Road, south of Packard in Pittsfield Township. (Enter south off of Packard at the traffic signal at Fernwood Avenue to reach both schools.)

Scarlett Principal Gerald Vazquez said the forums are expected to offer basic information on the partnership and encourage discussion in small groups to generate ideas and raise pertinent questions. "We want parents to know that we are working on this as a process and we want them involved in the process," he said.

Those working on the partnership say it would allow staffs from Ann Arbor and U-M to collaborate through innovative programs that serve students and families, as well as nurture the professional growth of new and experienced teachers.

Although the program has been generically referred to as a "lab school," organizers have not yet determined a permanent name for the proposed new, combined campus.

The campus is being envisioned as a gathering place for families and as an incubator of new ideas and approaches enhancing teacher learning and teaching practices. Being discussed are different ways of organizing time to effectively support teaching and learning. This includes the possibility of expanding or reorganizing the school year, or making adjustments to the school day. One option being considered includes strategically placed "inter-sessions" throughout the school year that would provide targeted, academic support or enrichment opportunities for students and families.

"The lab school will be a place where teacher candidates, experienced teachers, administrators, and university faculty will work together to support student achievement," said Catherine Reischl, clinical associate professor of education for U-M who is on the project's organizing committee. "We see this as a huge opportunity to play an integral role in our community."

Vazquez said Scarlett and its feeder schools represent a unique opportunity for the program because of its diverse populations. "This quadrant of the city is different. It has different needs," he said, adding that the K-8 approach to professional development will offer more continuity for stu-

AAPS / U-M School Partnership at Mitchell-Scarlett

■ **What:** Plans are being explored to create a K-8 campus between Mitchell Elementary School and Scarlett Middle School in Ann Arbor through a partnership between the Ann Arbor Public Schools and the University of Michigan School of Education. This partnership would serve as setting for the development of new ideas and approaches to enhancing student achievement, teacher learning, and teaching practices. A balanced school year calendar is being considered that could include a shorter summer break and "inter-session" breaks for academic enrichment or vacations at intervals throughout the year.

■ **Where:** Proposed for students attending Scarlett Middle and Mitchell Elementary schools which are located next door to one another on the district's east side. Plans include creating an atmosphere designed to be a gathering place for families involved with the program and would serve as an incubator for teachers in training from U-M.

■ **When:** Planning is taking place during the current school year, with the program proposed to be launched in 2011-12 with plans for regular evaluation over an initial five year period.

■ **Timing:** Discussion about the program has been under way since the spring. Ann Arbor Board of Education committees have reviewed preliminary information about the program in September and the full board will consider the proposal on Dec. 8.

dents and support their academic achievement.

Mitchell Principal Kathy Scarnecchia said teacher collaboration at different levels would be "inspiring for professionals. This raises the bar for everyone," she said.

Schools with balanced calendars are not new. At Holt Public Schools near Lansing, Dave Hornak is principal at Horizon Elementary School, where grades K-4 attend school on a balanced school year calendar and have done so for 17 years. In Holt, students typically attend school for 30 days – about six weeks – then are on a break. Hornak said students have a six-week summer break, ending in mid to late June and starting a new year in early August.

He said the balanced calendar helps students maintain their learning. "We are not re-teaching in August and September to get ready for MEAP tests," he said. "We don't have that summer slide

(of knowledge.)"

Hornak said the school has more breaks than other schools in the district, but when they can they plan their "inter-sessions" around traditional breaks.

He said new families coming to the school get acclimated to the calendar pretty quickly. "Parents seem to be right on board," he said. Often, middle school students come by in August and offer to help. "They say 'I'm bored, can I help?'" he said. "They're ready to go back to school."

Hornak estimates there are only about 20 schools around the state using the extended, balanced calendar. He said the K-8 campus concept being considered in Ann Arbor is unique due to the university partnership.

This is the third major academic initiative developed between the Ann Arbor district and the U-M School of Education. The Summer Learning Institute brings U-M education students into Ann Arbor classrooms to teach each summer. The Ann Arbor Languages Partnership, a world language program launched in 2009, serves third- and fourth-graders and will expand to serve fifth-graders in 2011-12. In addition, teaching interns work with experienced teachers throughout the district.

A committee of stakeholders from both the Ann Arbor Public Schools and U-M School of Education has been working on preliminary plans over the past few months. During this school year, planning teams comprised of U-M faculty, AAPS administrators, teachers, and parents, will set goals, draft program structures and calendars and build a timeline to launch the program for the 2011-12 school year. Also this year, pilot efforts are planned, including an after-school math enrichment currently underway at Mitchell; embedded teacher education that will provide extra support for sixth grade math students this winter; and professional development for elementary teachers in the area of literacy instruction for English Language Learners.

The partnership idea came from discussions last spring between former Ann Arbor Superintendent Todd Roberts and Dean Deborah Loewenberg Ball of the University of Michigan School of Education. Two Ann Arbor Board of Education committees have reviewed preliminary information about the program and a proposal is scheduled to be taken to the full board for consideration on Dec. 8.

Speaking at a community event this fall honoring Roberts, Ball said the university and school district partnerships that developed under Roberts' watch are "unheard of elsewhere."

She said the university staff is excited about the lab school concept and called it a "model program that is a true partnership."

Mighty mathematics at Mitchell

Established after-school enrichment moves into a new era with addition of interns from U-M

From Casey Hans
AAPSNews Service

Say hello to the Mitchell Mighty Mustangs. They're in the saddle and ready to go, thanks to a partnership this year between the Ann Arbor schools and the University of Michigan School of Education.

This group of 36-plus upper elementary students stays after school to work on an intensive math program with the help of three staff teachers from Mitchell and U-M student interns who are earning their Elementary Masters of Arts with Certification degrees.

"They have the opportunity to learn through the doing of teaching," said Tim Boerst, U-M a clinical associate professor of education who works with the Mitchell program. "Depending on what the student is doing, they have to tailor their lessons. It's really alive – they have to be on their toes."

Ann Arbor teachers oversee the program and work with the U-M interns, while the U-M professors on site observe the interns and their lessons and interactions with students. The program meets four nights per week and U-M interns take their lessons from the School of Education right on site at Mitchell.

The Mitchell after-school pilot is trying out a proposed partnership



being considered between the Ann Arbor Public Schools and the U-M School of Education. The Mitchell Mighty Mustangs program is several years old, but this is the first year that U-M interns are participating, said Kathy Scarnecchia, principal at Mitchell.

The AAPS and U-M partnership would create a K-8 campus between Mitchell Elementary School and Scarlett Middle

School using a balanced school year calendar. The concept being considered would have a shorter-than-typical summer break and more breaks during the school year. The Ann Arbor Board of Education is scheduled to consider the partnership at its Dec. 8 meeting.

The Mitchell Mighty Mustangs program is funded with Title I grants and participating stu-



University of Michigan School of Education interns work with students at Mitchell Elementary School during the after-school Mitchell Mighty Mustangs program. U-M's involvement comes with a proposed partnership with the district that would involve both Mitchell and nearby Scarlett Middle School.

dents are also provided with dinner through a grant from Chartwells Food Service, the district's food service provider, Scarnecchia said.

An addition this fall to the Mitchell Mighty Mustangs program is an after-school Kindergarten Reading Club.

This club is funded through a grant from the Karen Thomas Fund of the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation.

Mitchell Elementary School

The Mitchell Mighty Mustangs program has been an after-school math enrichment since the beginning. This year, the school has added a Kindergarten Reading Club as part of the program. Here, kindergarteners interact during reading time. Afterwards, they did a craft related to the story and had dinner before going home. The Mitchell Mighty Mustangs

**VIDEO online at
news.a2schools.org**

program is funded through Title I monies; money for the reading club comes from the Karen Thomas Fund through the Ann Arbor Public Schools Educational Foundation. Chartwells Food Service provides funds for student dinners.



The Mitchell Mighty Mustangs - Kindergarten Reading Club, which started meeting this month.

Michigan Merit Curriculum changes take effect with Class of 2011

Curriculum, from page 2

state requirements have required a review of all classes, how they are taught and how they are assessed to ensure results.

Ann Arbor staff members have been working for the past four years in a detailed approach to adjusting standards, rewriting course syllabi and making the changes needed to ensure the new state curriculum is followed, said Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Joyce Hunter.

The process has involved teachers, counselors and administrators. "Work has been done at the district level through the buildings and all the way down to the classrooms," Hunter said.

Work began on the changes at the end of 2005, she said, when it was apparent the curriculum would be changed. "There's been a lot of work across the district and in individual buildings."

The process integrates multiple standards and creates common assessments for classes and involves not only high school curriculum, but also how students prepare to enter high

school from earlier grade levels.

For example, the district has instituted foreign language in elementary schools through a partnership with the University of Michigan.

Next fall students in grades three through five will have language instruction preparing them to enter middle school where language electives are already offered.

The district is also considering an Algebra I requirement in the eighth grade – something that is now an elective. Mastering this gateway class earlier will help students prepare for high school and the additional requirements, Hunter said.

This year, the instructional staff has begun working on pre-Algebra trends and outcomes for elementary students, said Interim Deputy Superintendent for Instruction Lee Ann Dickinson-Kelley.

The district is preparing to adjust curriculum at both early and late elementary grades to prepare students and set the stage for the expected middle school requirement, she said.

A K-12 Math Summit is being planned for the current school year that will address

aligning curriculum and professional development toward the proposed math changes.

State change affects high school accreditation

In 2005, a state task force met to study education policies and consider more rigorous standards for Michigan. In the spring of 2006, the state legislature approved the new graduation rules and on April 20, 2006, Gov. Jennifer Granholm approved them.

The new rules also state that a high school may not be accredited unless it ensures that all students have access to all part of the curriculum and requires the state superintendent of schools to update accreditation standards annually.

Hunter said public school districts face several challenges, and not only with the revisions to local curriculum.

"We need to provide support for students who are taking some classes they never had to take before," Hunter said.

Counselors take on an even more critical role under the change, ensuring that students are on track to graduate starting with their first year, Hunter said.

She said there is some concern among counselors about helping students fit all of the necessary items into their schedules and still take some of the electives that round out their high school experience.

Students agreed, but said that technology has made communicating with their counselors easier and also given counselors tools for keeping an eye on student progress. "We do a lot of e-mailing – and they monitor what we're taking online," Shevrin said.

The district allows a "personal curriculum" which allows for deviations from the state standards for students who want to exceed the curriculum or for students with disabilities, Hunter added.

Information about the new high school graduation requirements, including downloadable PDF reports, can be found on the Michigan Department of Education website: <http://www.michigan.gov/mde>

Casey Hans writes and edits this newsletter for The Ann Arbor Public Schools. E-mail her at hansc@aaps.k12.mi.us or call 734-994-2090.

Personal training a popular offering through district's Rec & Ed

Personal Training, from page 3

sions with Harris.

Hicks works as the secretary to Community High Dean Jen Hein and she and Harris have a bit of camaraderie: He is a former Community High parent and Hicks knew him – and his daughter – when she attended there.

"I decided I'm getting too old to mess around anymore," says Hicks, who has come to Harris to get in shape and find a new fitness routine for her life; she is in her second of three sessions with Harris. "I'm pretty happy about it – it's putting me in the right direction," she says.

Hicks says she also has teamed up with a Community High senior and they work out together at school. "We plan to walk in the spring," she adds. "We're kind of encouraging each other."

As he does with all of his clients, Harris is showing Hicks how to work out on an exercise ball – all of his stretching exercises, and any "homework" he gives are done with this simple tool, which teaches strength, conditioning, flexibility and balance.

"I can work with a 92-year-old woman on the ball or with an experienced athlete," Harris says. "It's not complicated stuff."

"Your body has to find out what it can do. With the ball, the more you use it, the more your body will know what to do."

Harris grew up in household where his dad was a football and basketball coach and he was the oldest of five children. "Exercise was just part of our daily routine," he explains. "My goal with fitness is to teach people a physical activity you can do at home."

Personal Training is a popular offering through Ann Arbor's Community Education and Recreation Department. Rec & Ed offers the class for beginners through intermediate-advanced levels and makes it available for private, semi-private and in small groups of 3-4 people. The fee is \$149 for three sessions (\$179 for out-of-district residents.) visit www.aareced.com or call 734-994-2300 ext. 53233.