

**MISSOURI EDUCATION NEWS**  
**May 2007**  
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## Education News

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### Understanding Missouri High School Graduation Rates

Graduation rates are a fundamental indicator of whether or not the nation's public school system is doing what it is intended to do: enroll, engage, and educate youth to be productive members of society. In today's increasingly competitive global economy, graduating high school is a critical step towards securing a good job and a promising future. Yet nationally, one-third of our students—about 1.2 million each year—leave high school without a diploma, and graduation rates for poor and minority students are even lower. The failure to graduate every child prepared for the 21st century has serious consequences for both individual students and the rest of American society. Yet, the unacceptably low graduation rates of America's youth have been obscured for far too long by inaccurate data, misleading calculations and reporting, and flawed accountability systems.

Nationally, and for each state, *Understanding High School Graduation Rates* illustrates the discrepancies in graduation rates reported by government and independent sources, examines why this is important, and describes three core policy areas that are fundamental to calculating, reporting, and improving accurate graduation rates:

- Use of common, accurate graduation rate calculations
- Statewide data system that track individual student data from the time

students enter the educational system until they leave it

Policies that meaningfully holds high schools accountable for improving student achievement on test scores and increasing graduation rates so that low-performing students are not unnecessarily held back or encouraged to leave school without a diploma.

**To see Missouri report:**

[http://www.all4ed.org/publications/wcwc/Missouri\\_wc.pdf](http://www.all4ed.org/publications/wcwc/Missouri_wc.pdf)

## **Missouri Students in One of the World's Largest K-12 Science Competitions Envision Future Technologies**

Toshiba/National Science Teachers Association ExploraVision Awards Program, one of the world's largest K –12 science and technology competitions, today announced its first- and second-place national winners for 2007. *(Full list of winners attached.)* This year's winning student teams imagined amazing advancements in fields such as nanotechnology and polymer creation. They conceptualized future technologies ranging from innovative treatments for diabetes and kidney disease to a possible solution to the worldwide scarcity of drinkable water, a novel treatment for drug addiction, a potentially lifesaving fire extinguishing system, and an ingenious method for harnessing "wasted" energy from automobile use. There was even an idea for a special dental hygiene device that would brush all your teeth at once – and provide a song while doing it!

Three 8<sup>th</sup> grade students from St. Louis comprised the second-place winning team in the 7-9 grade category. Their project, "**PureWater**," could help save lives and solve one of the world's most pressing environmental problems—the scarcity of drinkable water—by providing individuals with a portable solution for removing contaminants from polluted water.

**2007 Second Place Winners - Grades 7-9**

John Burroughs School, St. Louis, MO

## *PureWater*

*An efficient, low-cost individual water purifying tube that uses virus-fighting polymers and molecular imprinting technologies to kill pathogens and filter toxic metals such as arsenic in water to provide safe drinking water in areas where millions of people suffer from waterborne diseases and metal contamination. The PureWater drinking tube has an environmentally-conscious design that can be recycled for use as a structural base in the construction of homes.*

## **School Music Programs Get the Gift of Music**

NOTION Music has begun the process of donating more than 600 copies of its music composition software to high schools and colleges across the country.

The contribution, valued at approximately \$244,000, is being distributed over the next few weeks to music departments that have experienced recent budgetary restraints or have other needs that the software will address. The first round of schools to benefit from NOTION's donation include:

- Clayton High School, St. Louis, MO
- Hazelwood West High and Middle Schools, Hazelwood, MO

NOTION software combines the best players, the finest instruments and the latest recording technology. It was developed by recording the instrumental sounds of London Symphony Orchestra at the legendary Abbey Road Studios. NOTION Music makes software that is used by professional and hobbyist musicians around the world allowing anyone, anywhere to write, record and play music as if working with a full ensemble of musicians.

NOTION still has a limited quantity of software available for school music departments. To nominate a school, please send an email to: [notationmusic@fleishman.com](mailto:notationmusic@fleishman.com).

## **Blue Springs School District Guaranteed to Cut Energy Use by More Than 35 Percent**

### ***Missouri School District Expects Big Savings from Fast-Track Facility Improvements***

To better manage rising energy and maintenance costs, Blue Springs School District leaders recently approved a 15-year performance-based solution with Siemens Building Technologies, Inc. to improve the energy and operational efficiency of the system's 23 schools and other buildings. Equivalent energy cost savings for the school district are projected to reach more than \$600,000 annually and generate approximately \$370,000 in annual operational savings from reduced maintenance and repair expenses.

These projected cost savings will come as a result of a comprehensive program of facility improvements that encompass mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, lighting retrofits, plumbing fixtures and building automation control upgrades. The entire retrofit and upgrade project is scheduled to be completed over the course of one summer break. The condensed nature of the project alone will save the school district an estimated \$450,000 in avoided construction costs and deliver a greater amount of energy savings faster—something that will deliver significant cost savings earlier in the project's timeline.

"This project will cut energy use in an accelerated fashion and help us better manage associated costs well into the future," says District facility manager Dr. Bill Cowling. "The new, efficient equipment will also ease the maintenance burden on our staff and allow us to provide our students and faculty with a more comfortable and productive learning environment. In these times of increasing energy costs, global warming concerns and air quality issues, the reduction of energy usage provided by Siemens will also help us improve the environment and benefit our community as well."

The efficiency improvements and retrofits slated for the project have been designed to reduce electricity use, optimize cooling and heating energy demands and water usage. Once completed, annual energy and other savings are anticipated to reach

6,925,961 kilowatt hours of electricity, 13,304,000 cf of natural gas and 5,523 kgals of water. According to Siemens, over the 15-year contract period this will reduce emissions of typical greenhouse gases (CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> and SO<sub>2</sub>) by more than 100,000 tons(a).

Within the scope of the agreement Siemens will also deliver a variety of value-added services beyond the installation and integration of the energy efficiency technologies. For example, Siemens will train a District employee to become a Certified Energy Manager. This Nationally recognized certification provides a knowledge base so the District can independently develop and implement additional energy management strategies that are likely to result in additional energy savings. Siemens will also train a District employee to become a Certified Controls Technician which will help it better manage its new systems with its own staff moving forward.

In the spirit of public/private partnerships, and through its Building Education program, Siemens is sponsoring two High School-level "Project Lead the Way Labs" and the necessary equipment. Siemens is a leader in developing the Industry Council for supporting Missouri and Kansas Project Lead the Way K-12 initiatives. Siemens is also donating the time of two professional engineers (PEs) that work for the company who will participate in the District's Robotics Class Job Shadowing program. Siemens employees will interact with students in a variety of ways, delivering lectures, conducting classroom exercises and facilitating student projects.

## **Two Missouri Youth Honored for Volunteerism at National Award Ceremony in Washington, D.C.**

### ***Super Bowl MVP Peyton Manning Pays Tribute to Young Heroes as part of Four-Day Recognition Events***

Two Missouri students, Robert Schaaf, 18, of St. Joseph and Tessa Vellek, 13, of Columbia were honored in the nation's capital for their outstanding volunteer work during the presentation of The 2007 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. The two young people – along with 100 other top youth volunteers from across the country – received \$1,000 awards as well as personal congratulations from Indianapolis Colts

quarterback and Super Bowl MVP Peyton Manning at the 12<sup>th</sup> annual award ceremony and gala dinner reception, held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.

Robert and Tessa were named the top high school and middle level youth volunteers in Missouri last February. In addition to their cash awards, they received engraved silver medallions and an all-expense-paid trip with their parents to Washington, D.C..

Robert, a senior at Central High School, established a community garden that has produced more than five tons of fresh produce over the past two years for the Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater St. Joseph. While volunteering at the food bank during Christmas vacation in 2004, Robert learned that there was a desperate need for more fresh produce. "Pondering this fact while sorting cans, I recognized it presented an exciting opportunity," he said. "My vision: a charitable garden staffed by volunteers that would donate its produce to the food bank."

Robert, who had helped his grandmother in her garden when he was young, was encouraged to pursue his vision by the food bank's executive director. First, Robert persuaded Missouri Western State University to let him use a half-acre of its property for his "Never Grow Hungry Community Garden." He then recruited a dozen classmates and several adults to help; researched agricultural techniques; and obtained donations of seeds, straw, tools and advice from farmers and nurseries. After meeting regularly to plant and tend their crops, Robert and his volunteers collected the harvest and delivered it to the food bank, which distributed the produce to hundreds of hungry clients. The food bank named Robert its Humanitarian of the Year, the first time a minor had received this honor.

Tessa, a seventh-grader at Smithton Middle School, is conducting an ongoing drive that has collected more than 5,000 new and gently used books for schools and shelters, and also raises money to provide books for disadvantaged youth who lack reading materials at home. Tessa began her volunteer work after seeing needy children on visits to India and Kenya. "I came home and quickly realized that youth in my community had some of the same needs," she said. Believing that "education is the solution to many of the world's problems," she decided to focus on spreading her love of learning and reading to other young people in Columbia.

To support her book drive, Tessa makes flyers on her computer and distributes them to friends, neighbors, schools and businesses, and then recruits friends to help her collect, sort and deliver the donations. Sometimes she collects clothing, toys, food items and toiletries for local shelters, as well as books. For her "Books 4 Youth" project, Tessa solicits monetary donations that allow teachers to buy books and

other learning materials for disadvantaged students to take home. Five elementary schools have received funds from Tessa, and two have started summer reading programs with the money. In addition, Tessa organized a bike/walk event after Hurricane Katrina that raised \$71,000 for the American Red Cross. Tessa calls her activities "Euphoria," "because of the happy feeling you get when you give to others," she said.

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