

# The St. Ignace News

and Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave



## Two K-8 Teachers To Receive Special Training; Math Classes May be Added

By Paul Gingras

Two St. Ignace teachers will go on paid leave next winter semester to receive special training in mathematics and science, to assist the district in meeting the state's curricula mandates in the elementary and middle schools. Superintendent Mike Springsteen told school board members Monday, January 14, that a state grant will pay for the instruction and the cost to hire substitute teachers.

The teachers will be selected by the end of the school year, he said. Their training will be provided by Lake Superior State University and the University of Michigan.

The new elementary and middle-school curricula that has been implemented over the past three years is much more difficult than before, Mr. Springsteen said, and having teachers with specialized training will help students and teachers adjust to the new content. The trainees will help their peers design lesson plans and will be an integral part of the Mathematics Curriculum Review Team, an intermediate school district body that helps area schools design mathematics curricula and keep them up to date.

Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District (ISD) Superintendent Pete Everson, who attended the meeting, noted that having curriculum review teams in place is "one of the most important things we do."

There are curriculum review teams for all major academic disciplines.

The Mathematics and Science Center, a division of the ISD that works with Lake Superior State

University, applied for the grant. The district has not received the precise amount of the grant, but Mr. Springsteen said it will cover the cost of hiring long-term substitute teachers to run classes next winter, the trainees' education and transportation, and once they are trained, the district will receive \$10,000 for materials to help implement the curriculum, he added.

The board of education voted to use \$23,800 from the Michigan Department of Education to continue its participation in the Community Action Head Start program, a preschool program designed to prepare students for kindergarten.

The district received the funding as part of the Michigan School Readiness Program, which is designed to give four-year-olds with special needs a half day of instruction to prepare them for regular classes.

By using the funding for Head Start, more students benefit than if the district were to operate its own program, Mr. Springsteen said.

"It is a boost," he said, noting that all research shows that this type of support helps students when they get to kindergarten.

The board discussed requiring a third year of mathematics for high school students, beginning with the class of 2010, this year's sophomores. Action on the matter is expected at the February board meeting.

Although this year's freshman class will be required to take 3.5 credits of mathematics by the time they are graduated, owing to new graduation requirements beginning with the class of 2011, the district does not want to wait to

require additional mathematics for its sophomores, explained High School Principal Don Gustafson.

Juniors are now required to take the American College Test (ACT) in their junior year. It includes a mathematics portion designed for students who have taken three years of mathematics.

Currently, high school students must take two years of mathematics, so, to better prepare them for the ACT, the district is considering adding the third year, which is important to students who wish to go to college, and to the district, which is judged on how well it is educating students, in part, via ACT scores, Mr. Springsteen said.

Last year's ACT scores revealed a deficiency in mathematics.

Ten of the 66 juniors who took the ACT were not in a mathematics class that year, in part, because it was not required. None of them scored satisfactorily on the test, Mr. Gustafson said, noting that the 10 students amounted to 15% of those who took the exam.

The rest of the students scored low in mathematics, however, so the district has been working to augment its mathematics curriculum, Mr. Gustafson said. If the school board votes to require next year's juniors to take math, they will receive the benefits of the improved curriculum, he explained.

The first time students were required to take the ACT was last spring. At LaSalle, 30% scored satisfactorily in mathematics, compared to 42% in the Eastern Upper Peninsula and 46% in Michigan, Mr. Gustafson said.

Schools that have consistently

low scores are sanctioned by the Michigan Department of Education, Mr. Springsteen said. If this were to continue in St. Ignace, the department would bring in state officials to make a plan to bring local scores up. St. Ignace Area Schools is trying to bring student scores up on its own initiative, he added.

Requiring more mathematics in high school is one part of a two-part method to raise test scores, said Mr. Gustafson. The second is to more closely align the mathematics curriculum with ACT standards, he added.

The ACT is designed to test students who have taken algebra I, algebra II, and geometry. In the past, students who struggled in mathematics sometimes took lower-level courses, such as pre-algebra or applied algebra.

These are no longer high-school classes, so to help high-school students who are struggling, LaSalle's mathematics teachers have been available three times a week at an after-school mathematics laboratory, Mr. Gustafson said.

Teachers contracts expire this summer and the school board went into closed session to discuss strategy for negotiations with the St. Ignace Education Association (SEA).

Mr. Springsteen reported that a hearing regarding unfair labor practice has been canceled because lawyers for the Michigan Education Association (MEA) and the St. Ignace Area Schools agree on the basic facts of the case.

The dispute involves the laying-off of tenured fifth-grade language arts and social studies

teacher Jennifer Powell in 2004. Mrs. Powell contested the ruling on several fronts and insisted she should have been allowed to take over a physical education or music teaching position, in part, because her teaching certificate qualified her to teach all kinder-

garten-through-eighth-grade subjects.

A judge for the Michigan Education Relations Commission (MERC) will review briefs by both lawyers and is expected to rule on the matter in three to six months, Mr. Springsteen said.

## Dance Game Is Popular at School



Thursday, January 3, students at St. Ignace Area Schools entertain themselves with a popular video dance game at the end of the school day. Pictured are (front, from left) Joseph Kelly, Ellis Graham; (middle) Sierra Metz; (back) Richard Bentley.

## Planners Debate Artificial Siding for Buildings on Island

By Karen Gould

A hole found in Mackinac Island's historic district ordinance sparked debate during the January 8 Planning Commission meeting and had members agreeing to tap into state resources for advice on the use of artificial siding on Island buildings. Commissioners questioned whether the use of fiber cement siding, which looks like wood, is acceptable in historic districts.

The city's ordinance distinguishes between siding on commercial and residential buildings, yet makes no other siding requirements for buildings in the historic

district.

The subject came up during a review of construction plans submitted by city architect Rick Neumann about the siding proposed on the old medical center building on Market Street.

The structure was built in 1956 and is a non-contributing building to the Island's National Historic Landmark designation. The building is, however, located in the historic district and the city is spending \$300,000 to remodel it and convert it to police housing. The construction project includes replacing the vinyl siding with fiber cement siding.

This was the second proposal received. As Mr. Neumann noted in his review, the city initially planned to replace the old vinyl siding with new vinyl siding. Following objections from planners, the city modified the plans to include fiber cement siding.

Mr. Neumann's review addressed the change from vinyl to cement siding, although he did not mention the potential use of wood, said commissioner Trish Martin.

The only guidance planners have from the city ordinance is the requirement of wood siding on the first floor of commercial buildings. The ordinance reads, "All

exterior wall surfaces on the first floor of buildings accessible to the public shall be clad in wood to reflect a traditional/historic appearance."

The architectural review process also lacks specifics and requires "that the majority of all exterior wall surfaces shall be covered with materials that provide the appearance of wood shingles or horizontal lap siding."

During the meeting, some commissioners said the fiber cement siding has the same appearance as wood and the ability to retain paint. Paint loss is a problem faced by some Island buildings, including the library and Stuart House. Other commissioners support the use of wood and said it should be required in the historic district.

Dennis Dombroski, city building inspector, said commissioners could see an example of the fiber cement siding in the Millennium addition on the east side of Grand Hotel, and the front of the Jaunting Cart on Market Street, which is also in the historic district and which was approved last year.

While voting to place Mr. Neumann's architectural review of the structure on file, Commissioner Mary Dufina said she is against the use of fiber cement siding and that the city has an opportunity to set an example.

"It seems to me the city has a chance to show its colors as to historic treatment," she said. "I think this is something the planning commission should look at and then make some sort of recommendation to the city."

Commissioner Kay Hoppenrath, who owns the property next to the police housing structure, said the fiber cement board may be an improvement as the city continues to struggle with keeping paint on buildings.

"I would far rather see this board go on this building, considering the history of the city main-

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## This Year's Snowsfest To Have Caribbean Theme in Hessel

The Les Cheneaux Chamber of Commerce will host the 2008 Snowsfest in Hessel Friday, February 15, through Sunday, February 17. This year's event will have a Caribbean theme.

Early planning predicts some new events this year, including moving the traditional snowman burning from Friday night to Saturday morning to give more children the opportunity to participate in the bonfire. Other additions to this year's schedule of about 20 weekend activities include a new biggest fish contest, "pirate games," a shanty judging contest, and a Snowsfest Pub Shuffle Friday night. A new, two-person, nine-hole golf scramble on ice will be offered Sunday.

The Great Lakes Boat Building School is planning to host pirate-themed activities to complement the children's games Saturday. A boat pulling contest, tug of war, and eye patch sling-shot contest are some of the games planned.

Anyone ice fishing in the Les Cheneaux Islands can enter the biggest fish contest, and yellow perch, walleye, and pike will be judged. The contest will begin the week before Snowsfest.

Judges will visit registered shanties, and creativity and construction will be among the judging criteria. Register at the Les Cheneaux Welcome Center in Cedarville, or by calling 484-3935.

The Snowsfest Pub Shuffle will give local tavern patrons the opportunity to vote for their favorite bartender, Caribbean drink, and Caribbean decorations

Friday night. Ballots will be at participating taverns and can be turned in Saturday, at the Snowsfest tent.

Snowbuddies will be available again this year. Snowbuddies are wooden snowmen that can be decorated and placed at homes and businesses. The Snowsfest committee is offering the opportunity to decorate them as an alternative to making traditional snow sculptures, since snow accumulation has not been reliable this year. Residents and business owners can still build snow sculptures and decorate windows, and may enter one or more of the three available contests.

Snowbuddies can be purchased for \$10 at the Welcome Center. Profits from the sale of Snowbuddies will help pay for Snowsfest activities. Snow statues, window decorations, and Snowbuddy entries should be registered at the Welcome Center.

Snowsfest entry buttons are also available now at local businesses and the Welcome Center, and can be purchased for \$4 each. Proceeds from the buttons help cover the cost of activities and prizes over the weekend. Grace Dunn of Cedarville, a Les Cheneaux Elementary School student, won this year's button design contest for her picture of a snowman lounging in the sun.

Participants are asked register early to ensure space in the events and enough prizes, but people are also welcome to register at the events. Poker run registration will be at the Snowsfest tent in Hessel.

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