

# MCOE2020 discusses educational opportunities for area youth

Posted by Ken Grabowski on September 17th, 2014



*The MCOE2020 group has been meeting at the Manistee Intermediate School District .*

MANISTEE — Collaboration and expanding educational opportunities continued to be the focus of the MCOE2020 group on Tuesday morning at the Manistee Intermediate School District.

The group, which is comprised of educators from Manistee County and members of the community, is designed to find ways for cooperative ventures to benefit children's education. The group has been meeting for more than a year. The Manistee Intermediate School District has played host to this group, and it is done under the guidance of ISD superintendent Jeff Jennette.

"We have a lot of good things going on, and we want to do is keep that moving forward," said Jennette.

Reports on what was taking place throughout the county in those educational areas were given by Launch Manistee, the Little River Casino, West Shore Community College, MIWORKS Youth and in vocational education.

Mary Ann Behm, of Launch Manistee, described what they are trying to do in her organization.

"We are really kind of moving ahead with Launch Manistee and we have two goals with one being to increase the access to quality pre school for 3 and 4 year olds and the other is to increase the students who are going to post secondary program, so it is a cradle to career initiative," she said. "We are doing a lot of partnering with the early childhood groups and trying to look at pre school options."

Behm said hopefully next month they will be forming some action teams to work on the ground floor on areas like early childhood, post secondary readiness and some career readiness.

"They have great goals and a lot of synergy to get things going in Manistee County," said Jennette.

Manistee Area Public Schools superintendent John Chandler said he feels there is a real need for the area schools to work together on early childhood programs. He said in the past there has been problems in getting everyone in the county involved in early childhood working together.

"Whenever we bring up early childhood we bring up a lack of collaboration, and coordination between some of the major players," he said. "That needs to be addressed and discussed."

Jennette said that Cheryl Matson who coordinates the Great Start program has been working with FiveCAP and clearing up some of those problems from the past. He expressed hopes that it would be a smoother collaboration in the future.

Maria Maddox who is the career development specialist for the Little River Casino gave an update on adult education programs being offered by the casino.

"She works at the casino, but really believes in getting her employees trained in a wide area," said Jennette. "It is not just job training, but to improve them as a person."

Maddox said they are offering leadership classes from Baker College. They started with them and then it went to computer and math classes.

Jennette said they don't offer any classes to conflict with those offered at West Shore Community College. Tim Ervin and the Alliance for Economic Success approached Baker College with the possibility of leadership classes for township supervisors and other elected officials, because that population often runs for office without a lot of leadership qualities.

"They are looking at a combination of things to do and the public could take them," said Jennette. "It is really kind of exciting how they went from the leadership classes at the casino to a wide range of things."

Committee members were also given an update by West Shore Community College dean of student services Chad Inabinet on what the college is doing for area students. He pointed out that demand for the classes at the Manistee Center that is located at West Shore Medical Center is on the rise.

"This year we are offering 17 courses at the Manistee Center," he said. "That is almost double what we normally offer, as we would usually have about 10 to 11 classes. So, what we are trying to do is expand opportunities there."

Inabinet said Lynda Matson at the WSCC Business Opportunity Center does lots of leadership classes as well.

"We did it with our staff, and a couple of departments have done it, and found it worked well," he said. "I know she is always willing to provide that type of training."

Cheryl Wolfram of the MIWORKS! Youth program gave an update on what they are doing to benefit area youth.

"There is new workforce investment and opportunities and there are some changes in programming coming that I am not sure how it is going to shake out," she said. "We have a federal mandate to spend 75 percent of the funds on out of school students and a state mandate to run a soft skills program in the schools. I don't know how we are going to manage that at this time and it is called 'Jobs for America's Graduates.'"

Wolfram also gave an update on the Beaver Island program that MIWORKS runs for high school dropouts. It is an alternative education program on the island that has produced good results for the students who have taken part in it. They live on the island and receive personalized education programs.

Another item to come up for discussion at the meeting was the potential for a Early Childhood Education Center at the Little River Casino and Resort. Jason Cross of the casino, talked about the need for it.

He informed the group that Little River Casino and Resort is discussing several several early childhood programs.

"About a month ago I was in a meeting with our tribal council to discuss our strategic plan and in it is a child care center," he said. "We are hoping to hold it in the old casino building and what that would encompass is 24/7 daycare, Early Headstart, Headstart, Great Start Readiness Program and this would be community wide and benefit the people who work nights and shifts."

He said that there has been a great interest in it and they have applied for an Early Headstart grant and if it doesn't work out they plan to move forward with it anyway.

Committee members said they felt there was a real need and offered letters of support for the project.