

5/5/12

Dear Members of the RSU 18 School
Board and Concerned Parents:

We write to you as members of the RSU 18 faculty who want to express the feelings of so many who are afraid to speak up. We are sure many of you have been wondering how the schools are progressing under the newly adopted Mass Customized Learning (MCL) program and what viewpoints the faculty who teach the children has developed.

We must report to you that MCL has shaken this school system to its very core. It is clear to so many teachers that this program has created utter turmoil and has single-handedly destroyed a once functional, harmonious and effective educational program. Perhaps you have been told by central administration of the great gains that have been made in the last few months. Perhaps you have been provided with data that has shown growth in students since the school year began, and perhaps you have been told that things are just fine by the employees you have conversed with. We can tell you that you have been fed a fake bill of goods. So many of us at are discussing the ill effects of this ineffective program. We are afraid to voice our opinions. We know the repercussions that would occur if we voiced our real feelings to the administration. We wallow in sadness at the poor educational model that we are forced to subject the children to. It is the children of this district that are suffering the most.

The primary purpose of MCL is to provide personalized and diversified instruction to each child that can be measured through a system of standards. In theory it makes logical sense that a child would benefit from instruction that is personalized to each individual. To take this concept to an extreme, one could say that the best situation for a child would be to provide them with a one-on-one teacher who could devote their entire time to providing instruction and feedback to that one child. Funding does not exist to provide that level of service. The belief of MCL theorists is such a level of service can be provided by a classroom teacher of 15-20 students for each of their children. In theory, to provide "Mass yet customized learning". The problem here is that the only people that truly believe this can occur are theorists. When we say "Theorists" here, we really mean those who glorify it, but don't actually have to do it, such as our assistant superintendent. It is an impossible task to provide this level of instruction to each child. It is very possible, however, to sit behind a desk at a central office and create propaganda and a false sense of success.

So what has been occurring as a result of the MCL? Unfortunately, this program has created the opposite effect. Because this level of instruction cannot physically be done, alternative methods have been created. In many situations, students are being moved from one classroom to the next like a herd of cattle. Students leave one room and are shifted to another room for one type of instruction, then shuttled

somewhere else to receive fragmented instruction from another teacher. Children at this age level are far too young for this. Imagine a young 4th grader who no longer has a single teacher or a group of classmates to call "home". Instead of having a teacher who gets to know your child and establish a comfortable working relationship, that child is shipped from one person to the next, never knowing the comfort and stability of a true classroom setting. Another result is that no one person truly knows what each student is learning. Students are receiving a hodge-podge of fragmented instruction that is nowhere near the level they were receiving in past years.

Students are falling through the cracks as teachers scramble to put together shoddy MCL style instruction to satisfy deadlines and administrative expectations. Instead of personalized quality instruction as theorists explain MCL, students are receiving impersonal, rushed, superficial instruction because MCL deadlines need to be met and fake facades need to be created.

We are asked to attend an ever-increasing number of professional development days, continually taking time away from our classrooms and our students. Eight additional Early Release Days are in the works for next year's calendar! It is disturbing how much instructional time the students are being robbed of, as we sit around trying to figure out how to implement something that has no plan. These professional development days seldom focus on specifically how to instruct under this program. All you ever hear is "teach using the standards". This means nothing!!! This is a catch phrase. This basically says, "we don't really know how your supposed to teach reading, just look at a few general statements (the standards) then figure out how you are going to teach or present it to the students. Oh, and don't forget it ALL has to be "individualized." Now that most of the textbooks and past programs for teaching reading, math and science have been removed as sacrilege by Ms. Laughlin, we are left with nothing. New teachers run around confused, veteran teachers find ways to cope or, as you can see by the number of postings, many good teachers are leaving the district.

Instead of allowing teachers to instill a love for learning, we are relegated to an assembly line where we provide the bare minimum to large numbers of unknown faces. Our artistic craft that caused us to enter teaching has been minimalized to a spot on an assembly line. We are teaching knowledge for the sake of learning rather than for the love of learning.

If at all possible, we would ask board members to seek out people who will really tell them the truth about what is going on here. Find a veteran teacher that has developed mutual trust with you and ask. Please go beyond the "smoking mirrors" that the organizers has put up and look at what is truly happening in your schools. Even if this process stopped now, there is much damage that is irreversible, but we must begin to rebuild what has been lost for the sake of the students.

Next year, all of this will continue to spread to the middle and high schools. Ms. Laughlin will do everything in her power to make this program appear successful from a distance. How long will we allow one person to continue to destroy an entire school district that you have worked to build and support? Thank you for taking the time to listen to us.

Sincerely,
A group of concerned,
dedicated teachers from
RSU 18

One of my students handed me a very interesting blurb about parents taking action about MCL. As you can see I have sent this e-mail from my home e-mail address due to fear of reprisal and believe me all the teachers in this building are very afraid. Linda Laughling, Mark Hatch, have both told staff if you don't like MCL it is time for you to be looking for a different job. That being said, God love you for tackling this issue.

Before MCL, Messalonskee was a top rated school. The Governor's report card showed the type of work MCL has given to the community. We recently heard we have done terrible on reading & math scores, as in failing, after several years of improvement often by 2 grade levels or more. Mr. Hatch told us not to worry about it. Pardon my French WTF!!! As a teacher I am embarrassed; my reputation and my ability to teach is being questioned and manhandled.

When we have presented reasons why MCL isn't working, no one has answers. So what do they do? They implement "Habits of Mind" for us to teach. This takes away from Reading & Math and every other subject.

Just so you are aware:

1. We were told everyone in Alaska was using it and it worked 100%;

Alaska did away with it and it was only used in a couple of charter schools

2. Not all staff have been trained. They gave the training to just a few teachers, others received nothing. If this is mandated why hasn't the school district taken the first 2 days of school to train all the staff identically. They have done little to no training on the Educate program as well. Training is spotty or non-existent. Different quality of education for different classrooms.

3. No one knows how to implement MCL. Our goals keep constantly being moved. How can we hit a moving target? Have you had a straight answer from management yet?

4. Because students aren't coming to school with a lot of back ground knowledge we have to move away from MCL to accommodate old fashioned teaching. When we are observed we are being penalized.

5. The students that have never done work, continue to do nothing. There are no consequences for not doing their work. If we send them to the office they are allowed to play games on their cellphones to get away from the mean teachers who expect them to work. Mark Hatch isn't going to be keeping the kids in this building if they don't meet a bare minimum requirement. He'll push them along to the high school where they will be given new goals and never learn the basics. We have about a 50% rate on kids knowing their multiplication tables. for heaven sakes how do we expect them to do pre-Algebra etc. Oh wait it is called good "old-fashioned" teaching.

6. Kids this age need structure, not only at home, but here in school. If you learn a, it leads right into learning b. With no background knowledge the progression stops dead in its tracks. 22 students with 22 different needs the paperwork is overwhelming. Kids can't keep track of it, teachers are trying and feeling inadequate and the new Educate grading system is labor intensive.

7. We have heard Linda Laughlin plans on becoming a paid consultant using all staff designed work to accomplish her goals. Oh wait - stepping on the backs of the students, the teachers and the taxpayers? How interesting.

8. We have thrown out the baby with the bathwater. Drop good old fashioned teaching, your kids will learn on their own, the teachers will be punished if they say whoa, whoa, wait a minute.

9. Teachers are well educated with child development we do not agree with MCL. MCL doesn't even work in college. You are given a syllabus and told what is expected, then the teacher teaches to the material. Duh!

10. We aren't allowed to tell the Emperor (Linda Laughlin) she has no clothes. She is cramming this down everyone's throats on the basis of a couple of butt kissing teachers. The same teachers who get all the promotions and back pats. If Linda told these same teachers to jump off a bridge....over they would go.

11. Is this going to be another one of the trainings dujour, with our students' being made guinea pigs? We sent staff and Linda out to San Diego for Rigor & Relevance training, which has been dropped like a hot potato. Poor use of District Funds.

12. We have hired outside consultants for literacy when any self respecting teacher had the same training in undergraduate work, again Poor Use of District Funds.

13. The money that has been spent on MCL would amaze and astound you. Teachers being plucked from their classrooms, substitutes, never ending visits to the Central Office and other schools. Some teams are barely functioning because of the loss of teacher time, the same teacher over & over again(Bobbie Farrell who - wait a minute, is retiring this year and taking all her knowledge with her).....Say What? You mean the kids aren't learning on their own with MCL? The teacher with the most training in this is out of here ?

I am pro-student 100%, I am pro-good education 100%, I am pro-tax payer 100%. Get rid of Linda Laughlin. No one at the high school liked her, and according to the military.....pardon my French...fuck up move up.