

# news

**JULY 2025**

**“If I had my way, I’d remove January from the calendar altogether and have an extra July instead.”**

**-Roald Dahl**



## From the Top

Dear Board Members and Academy Leaders,

Welcome to the July edition of our newsletter!

As we move into the height of summer, we're excited to bring you important updates from our office including the low down on upcoming events, as well as new opportunities for collaboration and engagement. I'm especially looking forward to seeing you at our July Administrator's Retreat, taking place in Bay City on July 22--23. A special thank you to Bay City Academy for generously hosting us again.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, we are excited to welcome juniors and seniors attending one of our LSSU authorized academies to Great Lake State Weekend. This fun filled event offers a fantastic chance for students, parents, and staff to experience LSSU firsthand, learn more about our academic programs, and engage with the campus community. Check out page 10 of our newsletter to learn more.

While summer brings its own kind of busyness, I hope that you're also able to enjoy some well-deserved rest and renewal.

Warm regards,

*Chris Oshelski*

Executive Director

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# 2025 Change Maker



**Shanina Draughn**

Head of School

Macomb Montessori Academy

We would like to offer a hearty CONGRATULATIONS to Ms. Shanina Draughn, Head of School at Macomb Montessori Academy, for being selected as our 2025 Change Maker.

## What is a Change Maker?

A Change Maker is an individual who is innovative, creative, goes above and beyond, and demonstrates tenacity for their students, families, and communities. This individual actively promotes positive change that leads to improved student outcomes.

We are so very proud of Shanina. LSSU authorized academies are staffed with the BEST of the best.

"Ms. Shanina is a strong leader who focuses on improving student learning and creating a positive school environment. She possesses strong leadership skills, builds relationships with staff and students, and effectively manages the school's resources and operations. She also prioritizes communication, collaboration, and continuous professional development for herself and her staff. She goes that extra mile to ensure that the students and staff are getting what they need to succeed. It has been an amazing journey to watch her do what she does!" - Dominica Banks, Teacher

"Shanina is our Head of School. She is always trying to make our school better. She really cares about our school, staff, students, and parents. Since she started three years ago, she has made several changes to the school. She has provided the school with proper furniture, flooring, and even a playground! Since she has become our Head of School, our students academic scores have increased. She has the best interest of our school at heart."

- Lauren Aggeler, Instructional Coach



"We are the change that we seek"  
Barack Obama

# 2025 Unsung Hero

Congratulations to Martita Wells, Food Service Director at American International Academy for being selected as our 2025 Unsung Hero. We know that hungry kids cannot learn and appreciate all that you do to fill the bellies of the students you serve. They are so very fortunate to have you.

## What is an Unsung Hero?

An Unsung Hero is an individual who may not always be in the spotlight but plays a vital role in positively impacting the academy. This individual could be a support staff member, lunchroom worker, custodian, or volunteer who make a real difference in the lives of students and families. While they may not receive many accolades, their contributions are invaluable to the academy community.



**Martita Wells**

Food Service Director  
American International Academy

“Let food be thy medicine and  
medicine be thy food.”

-Hippocrates



“Mrs. Wells is an Unsung Hero at American International Academy where she is the Food Service Director. Mrs. Wells has been dedicated to AIA for over ten years. She goes above and beyond to make sure that our students have healthy meals everyday. She has worked to ensure that students have breakfast, lunch, snacks, and dinner (if they stay after school).

Mrs. Wells makes sure that the students’ voices are heard when it comes to selecting meals to be served. She made sure that all students were fed during covid and beyond. She works hard behind the scenes to make sure that we stay in budget and that the food experience is a positive one for our students, Mrs. Wells works with the staff and students providing a loving support system. Mrs. Wells has done whatever is needed to help both the students and the entire AIA community grow. She is indeed an Unsung Hero and is a very important leader at American International Academy.

-LaQuanda Nevins, Chief Administrative Officer



# Charter Week at the Capitol



On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025 charter supporters from across Michigan came together to celebrate Charter Day at the Capitol. Despite the rainy weather and lack of cooperation from Mother Nature, the positive energy of the crowd was palpable. Attendees were entertained by top notch performances.



LSSU CSO staff were especially delighted to watch the marching band and dance troupe from American International Academy. There was something so powerful about watching the drummers beat their drums as the water splashed off of them and the dancers spinning in the rain.

Equally inspiring was Macomb Montessori's second grader, Marcus Bell, who participated in the wax museum. Marcus dressed up as State Representative, Donovan McKinney and stated that he wanted to be a legislator when he grew up. How cool is that? Charters in Michigan strive to expose students to a variety of enrichment experiences that directly impact career pathways.

Executive Director of LSSU Charter Schools, Chris Oshelski, and part of his team thoroughly enjoyed their time at the Capitol. Thank you for MAPSA for graciously providing the rain ponchos, they were a life saver. Academic Assessment Specialist, Julie Buchholtz was grateful for wearing her rubber "dress" croc shoes.



If you haven't taken the opportunity to attend Charter Day, we encourage you to put it on your calendar for next year. Attending serves as a reminder to why we do the work we do....it is all for the kids and families that we serve.





# Financial Reality Fair

LSSU Charter Schools Staff were happy to volunteer on May 29<sup>th</sup> at a Financial Reality Fair held on campus. The Hub at LSSU (Limestone Federal Credit Union) coordinated this important event for students from Ridge Park Scholars Academy in Grand Rapids. Students had the opportunity to step into the shoes of a real life adult where they earned a salary, managed a budget, and made real life decisions. Comments heard throughout the event were, "Man, I'm broke," "life is expensive," and, my favorite, "I don't want to be a crazy, cat lady."

As you can imagine, Charter Schools staff had many chuckles. Our hats off to the Hub staff who did a great job organizing and implementing this event for our charter school students. We believe that learning about financial literacy early on can positively impact students later on in life.

Thank you Sabrina Oshelski and Team for this time well spent event.



"Life sure is  
**EXPENSIVE!**"

Ridge Park Scholars  
Academy student



# ACADEMY OPPORTUNITIES

## Fall 2025 Concurrent Enrollment - Course is Full

We are excited by the interest in this opportunity. Currently, the course is full. If you have students who are interested, please contact [Amanda Stempky](#). She will be in touch should openings become available.

Course: PY 155 Lifespan Development

Cost: \$65 per credit hour (\$195 total)

Schedule: M-F 8:15-9:10 (TWR w/professor, MF w/TA)

1st Semester: Weeks of Sept 2nd-Dec 15th

Michigan Transfer Eligible



## Spring 2026

We hope to continue to offer this opportunity. We will continue to share offering(s) for Spring 2026 course(s) when the information becomes available.

## LSSU Athletic Team 2025-26 Academy Visits

We are partnering with the Athletics Department to increase LSSU student-athletes' visits to our academies. Please let Tammy or Chris know who is the best contact person in your school or district to communicate with regarding scheduling student athlete visits.

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## 2024-25 Professional Development Opportunities

We are excited to share the following professional development opportunities for the 2025-26 School Year.

We are awaiting date confirmations for a few of the offerings. As soon as dates are available, offerings will be listed on the LSSU CSO webpage.

Please reach out to Tammy Bell at [tbell@lssu.edu](mailto:tbell@lssu.edu) with any questions as soon as possible.

## 2025-26 Professional Development Catalog

## Finance Corner

### HAPPY NEW FISCAL YEAR!

- 4th Quarter Financial Statement  
**August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025**



"The greatest wealth is to live content with little."  
-Plato



# Bay City Academy

## Keeping the Arts Alive: Bay City Academy's Growing Role in Local Theater

Bay City's high schools have long worked to keep the arts thriving, combining competition with a strong spirit of mutual support. Among them, Bay City Academy is the newcomer to the theater scene, but it's already making a big impact. Though small in size, our school has been building a state-recognized theater program that's drawing the attention of neighboring schools and inspiring opportunities for collaboration amongst our traditional public schools and other charter school neighbors.

At the heart of this is Sara Messbarger. Widely respected in local theater circles, Sara has demonstrated what passion, talent, and dedication can accomplish. Her leadership helped Bay City Academy earn 2nd place at the State One Act Play competition this year, an impressive feat, especially against much larger schools. She works tirelessly to give her students the training and inspiration to thrive in all aspects of theater.

This summer, Sara is expanding that impact even further. She's directing *The Lion King Jr.*—a community musical that brings together 40 students from 14 different schools across the region. Supported by assistant director Katelyn Czerwinski, a former Bay City Academy theater student, this project is uniting young performers from all backgrounds for a one-of-a-kind summer experience at our local community theater. Many times in our current education system, schools look to compete with each other and we now are looking to work together to give all students in our community the opportunity to be a part of something bigger.

Our school and community are incredibly proud of Sara and our students. The opportunity for young people from across the area to learn and grow under Sara's leadership is something truly special and a tremendous gift to our local arts scene.

Submitted by Ryan Boon, BCA Leader



Sara Messbarger  
Drama Teacher  
Bay City Academy





# North Central Academy

## Igniting Curiosity: Mr. Wagar's S.T.E.M. Leadership Where Students Become the Teachers

-by Jill Kettlewell, NCA Leader

When it comes to bringing science to life, few do it better than North Central Academy's Secondary Science Teacher, Mr. Caleb Wagar. Now in his eighth year at NCA, Mr. Wagar has built a reputation for being the kind of educator who sparks curiosity through creativity. Through his hands-on teaching style and his partnership with various programs such as LSSU's Center for Freshwater Research and Education, he's created a classroom culture where students don't just learn about science- they experience it.

This year, Mr. Wagar's S.T.E.M. Leadership class took their learning to a whole new level. Rather than stopping at mastering scientific concepts themselves, students in the class took on the role of educators. Their mission? Design interactive experiments on topics like light, electromagnetism, and chemistry-- and teach them to elementary students.

From building insulated ice cube containers to creating colorful chemical reactions, Mr. Wagar's students transformed basic science concepts into inventive and engaging science lab experiments. "It was exciting to see younger students so engaged," said Behavior Interventionist, Tara Zachmeyer. "The elementary students asked great questions which fueled the secondary students' enthusiasm and passion for science."

More than just a class objective, the initiative empowered high school students to lead, collaborate, and communicate complex ideas in creative ways. And for the elementary students, it was unforgettable introduction to the wonders of science- guided by role models just a few years ahead of them.

Mr. Wagar's approach proves that science education is most powerful when it's shared. Through his leadership and the enthusiasm of his students, the S.T.E.M. spark is spreading -one experiment at a time.



# Academic Updates

Is it just me or does summer seem to be flying by? I hope that you all have found some time to put your feet in the sand and dip your toes into the water. Remember, take time to unwind and relax a bit. You have certainly earned it!

We have been busy in the Charter Schools Office preparing for the 2025-2026 school year. You should have all received your Spring Public Act 48 Reports. In Michigan, Public Act 48 (MCL-388.1698b) of 2021 mandated the reporting of benchmark assessment data for students in kindergarten through 8th grade. In October of 2023, this law was repealed, however, the funding was still made available for those schools/academies who would meet the following requirements. 1. administer one of the state approved assessments (NWEA MAP, Smarter Balanced Assessment, i-Ready, or STAR), 2. administer the assessment within the first nine weeks of school and again by the last day of school, 3. report student performance on the assessment to parents or guardians within 30 days of the administration, and 4. submit data to the MiDataHub. As your authorizer, we provide these reports as a courtesy.

In the fall, I schedule a visit to each of your academies to present your annual academic report from the previous school year. This report measures the degree to which your students met their educational goals. I will be scheduling those visits this month and let you know which one I will attend. Your annual report will be sent to you prior to this visit. I look forward to seeing you in the fall.

-Julie Buchholtz, Academic Assessment Specialist



We are looking forward to seeing you at our LSSU/FSU Charter Schools July Retreat. The Retreat will be at the Bay City Double Tree on July 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. Thank you to all who registered and congratulations to Ryan Boon from Bay City Academy for being the winner of our \$50 Visa gift card. It's going to be a great event. See you in a few short weeks.

## 2025-2026 Testing Windows

Fall

September 8-October 3

Winter

January 5-February 6

Spring

April 27-June 5

If you require a modification from the proposed testing windows, you must contact Julie Buchholtz at [jhopper@lssu.edu](mailto:jhopper@lssu.edu) for prior approval.

# -Great Lakes Weekend-

## Charter Schools Exclusive Recruitment Event Updates



**Date:** Oct 23-24, 2025

**Start Time:** Thursday, Oct 23rd, 12:00-2:00 P.M. Lunch & Check In

**End Time:** Friday, Oct 24th, 4:00 P.M. or stay for free Laker Hockey

**Target Audience:** Juniors & Seniors of LSSU Sponsored Charter Academies. Students may attend with parents/guardians or as part of a school chaperoned group.  
Included: Free motel room for parent(s), lodging on campus for students and school group chaperones, all meals and events.

**Transportation:** CSO Office will assist with offset of transportation costs for school chaperoned groups. Please contact Chris for more information.

### Event Highlights:

- Exclusive recruitment event for LSSU Charter Schools
- Overnight campus stay for students to experience college life
- Meetings with faculty and academic departments
- Free access to all Great Lake State Weekend events, including an LSSU hockey game
- Opportunities to connect with admissions and financial aid staff

**Lodging Availability Update:** We have 7 motel rooms left for families. All attending parents/guardians will receive meals on campus and access to all events.

School Trips: Parents/Guardians are not required in order for students to attend. If you plan to attend as a school group and have not let Chris or Tammy know, please contact one of us with an estimated number of participants.

**Registration:** Whether attending with families or as a part of a school sponsored group, please have students complete the [Registration Form](#) to help us prepare for your visit and stay in contact in the months ahead.

**Junior Laker Scholarship:** LSSU offers a variety of scholarships for students from its affiliated public charter schools, including the Junior Laker Scholarship (brochure attached).

We also offer scholarships for incoming freshmen and transfer students.  
Learn more about scholarships here → [LSSU Scholarships](#).



## Great Lake State Weekend = Great Times



# Compliance Corner

## **-Reauthorizations-**

There are two reauthorizations for the 2025-2026 year. We have begun the process with those academies and look forward to receiving their applications by October 10, 2025.

## **-Governance and Compliance Reports-**

Reports will be emailed to Academy boards in August

## **-Professional Development Options-**

We will be offering professional development face-to-face training and virtual training again this year. More information will be sent out in the Fall Newsletter.

Enjoy the remainder of your summer.



## ANY QUESTIONS?

Please contact  
Jenny Peterman at  
[jpeterman@lssu.edu](mailto:jpeterman@lssu.edu)  
or  
906-635-2121



## Philosophy

*We believe in authorizing through the lens of an educator, realizing students are more than academic performance or financial incentives. True authorizing takes into account the whole child, whole academy, and whole community while recognizing the importance of increased performance and sustainability.*

## Mission

*To ensure quality oversight and support to our authorized charter academies resulting in students who are prepared for the next phase of life whether it be attending college, joining the military, or entering the workforce.*

## Vision

*We envision an educational system in Michigan that provides families with diverse educational opportunities that allow each child to flourish and find their place in the global community.*

# LSSU CSO Team

**TAMMY BELL**

**SCHOOL SUPPORT SPECIALIST**

**[tbell@lssu.edu](mailto:tbell@lssu.edu)**

**JULIE BUCHHOLTZ**

**ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT SPECIALIST**

**[jhopper@lssu.edu](mailto:jhopper@lssu.edu)**

**REBECCA CLAWSON**

**FINANCE & COMPLIANCE SPECIALIST**

**[rclawson@lssu.edu](mailto:rclawson@lssu.edu)**

**GARNET GREEN**

**FIELD REPRESENTATIVE**

**[ggreen3@lssu.edu](mailto:ggreen3@lssu.edu)**

**LYNN METHNER**

**FIELD REPRESENTATIVE**

**[lmethner1@lssu.edu](mailto:lmethner1@lssu.edu)**

**CHRIS OSHELSKI**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**[coshelski@lssu.edu](mailto:coshelski@lssu.edu)**

**JENNY PETERMAN**

**REAUTHORIZATION & COMPLIANCE  
SPECIALIST**

**[jpeterman@lssu.edu](mailto:jpeterman@lssu.edu)**

**JOE THIENES**

**FIELD REPRESENTATIVE**

**[jthienes@lssu.edu](mailto:jthienes@lssu.edu)**

**MELISSA WEISBERGER**

**LEAD FIELD REPRESENTATIVE**

**[mweisberger@lssu.edu](mailto:mweisberger@lssu.edu)**

**LAKE SUPERIOR STATE UNIVERSITY**

**CHARTER SCHOOLS**

**650 W. EASTERDAY AVENUE**

**SAULT STE. MARIE, MI 49783**

