

[Success Talent & Education](#) — 16 November 2011



**FOURTH-GRADE TRIFECTA:** Fifth-grade students at Godwin Heights garnered swept their division in Bridge Magazine's Academic State Championships for the 2010-11 school year. Godwin Heights won in 4th Grade Reading, Writing and Math for Division 2. (Bridge photo/Lance Wynn)

**By bridgemi/Bridge staff**

Sixty Michigan public school districts claimed at least a tie for a championship in one of eight academic categories in Bridge Magazine's Academic State Championships. Champion districts are listed in alphabetical order, regardless of division.

**(BRIDGE DATABASE: See how your district is doing)**

**(BRIDGE GALLERY: Images of success)**

#### **The champions**

##### **Adams Township School District (8th Grade Science, Division 8; Overall Champion, 8th Grade Science)**

Enrollment: 433

Percentage of free lunch: 41 percent

Key to victory: "We have place-based education, with our curriculum centered around a nearby lake," said Mike Benda, assistant principal at Jeffers High School. "We put curriculum in a setting that is enjoyable."

##### **Alba Public School (4th Grade Math, Division 8; 8th Grade Reading, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math; Overall Champion, 8th Grade Reading)**

Enrollment: 170

Percentage of free lunch: 58 percent

Key to victory: "We're a family-friendly building, with parents in and out. And we have a dedicated faculty that believes all students can learn, and provides opportunities for students to be successful. So, when family and the public school are on the same page, value education and believe students can be successful, then you achieve success," said Superintendent Richard Saterlee.

##### **Ann Arbor Public Schools (College Readiness, Division 1; 4th Grade Math, Division 1; 4th Grade Writing, Division 1)**

Enrollment: 16,500

Percentage of free lunch: 20 percent

Key to victory: "The Everyday Math program is a hands-on, developmentally appropriate curriculum which spirals instruction across core mathematical content strands and is connected with relevant and real life experiences," said Superintendent Patricia P. Green, Superintendent. "(On writing), foundational skills are assured through the implementation of a K-2 phonics program. Lucy Calkins Units of Study for the writing workshop are implemented in all grades, K-5 in addition to supplemental district writing units."

**Ashley Community Schools (8th Grade Math, Division 7; 8th Grade Science, Division 7)**

Enrollment: 325

Percentage of free lunch: 38 percent

Key to victory: "I think it starts in the elementary, which has been exceptional, as well," said Superintendent Tim Hughes. "We've been focusing on continual improvement, looking at different initiatives and how we're engaging students in the learning process. We recently installed interactive projectors that technology allows a better way of engaging students who are all so digital-proficient now."

**Atlanta Community Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 300

Percentage of free lunch: 62 percent

Key to victory: "We utilized the service of a math-content specialist last year to realign to all our curriculum," said Superintendent Teresa Stauffer.

**Bloomfield Hills School District (College Readiness, Division 3; 8th Grade Reading, Division 3; Overall Champion, College Readiness)**

Enrollment: 5,654

Percentage of free lunch: 9 percent

Key to victory: "We try to maintain small class sizes," said Superintendent Rob Glass. The district offers an International Baccalaureate Program. Among students, the question is which college they are going to, not whether they are going.

**Boyer Falls Public Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 210

Percentage of free lunch: 42 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Karen Sherwood said the district sets high standards and target students who are struggling in math. "We try to do that early and get extra support for the classroom," Sherwood said.

**Brimley Area Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 7; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 491

Percentage of free lunch: 36 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Rod Goehmann attributed the district's success to its third- and fourth-grade teachers who are covering all of the grade level content expectations. "Also, the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District has formed curriculum review teams that have impacted test scores across the Eastern Upper Peninsula," Goehmann said.

**Carson City-Crystal Area Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 1,019

Percentage of free lunch: 44 percent

Key to victory: "There is a high level of rapport between the teachers and the students," said Interim Superintendent Duane Ellis. "We dignify errors and re-engage the student. We laugh a little bit. We have the academic part, now we're working on the heart."

**Caseville Public School (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 265

Percentage of free lunch: 52 percent

Key to victory: "One of the big things contributing to our success is that for the last three years, we've been active participants in the Huron County Student Achievement Model, and we've put a great deal of emphasis on three specific school improvement goals, and that was to improve our scores in reading, writing and mathematics," said Superintendent Ken Ewald. "A great deal of interventions has been implemented to help our students in these areas, and that hard work is beginning to pay off."

**Chassell Township Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 7; 4th Grade Writing, Division 7; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Writing)**

Enrollment: 263

Percentage of free lunch: 33 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent/Principal George Stockero said that, last year, a teacher, now retired, focused on writing, and instruction is continuing in that subject this year that involves "a lot of going back and correcting." Chassell Township Schools staff, he said, are looking more at how students process math, or more specifically,

“What do they think about when they do math?”

**Clintondale Community Schools (4th Grade Reading, Division 5)**

Enrollment: 3,601

Percentage of free lunch: 56 percent

Key to victory: “Just because I might not learn it as fast as you learn it, doesn’t mean I can’t learn it,” explained Karen Hessler, curriculum coordinator for K-8 education. “We learn their challenges and implement interventions where teachers work one-on-one.”

**Comstock Public Schools (College Readiness, Division 5)**

Enrollment: 2,155

Percentage of free lunch: 40 percent

Key to victory: “We were able to achieve our college readiness success through our dedicated staff’s commitment to quality instruction and a rigorous ACT prep program,” said Superintendent Todd D. Mora. “These factors combined in a synergistic fashion to help the Comstock Public Schools’ achieve a College Readiness level much higher than outsiders would have expected.”

**Crestwood School District (Graduation Rate, Division 5)**

Enrollment: 3,343

Percentage of free lunch: 48 percent

Key to victory: I was disappointed (with our graduation rate). I thought we should be higher,” said Superintendent Laurine VanValkenburg. “That’s the characteristic for the district. We want to do better.” One key was switching to trimesters from semesters, giving high school students more opportunities to take classes. “That way if they hit a bump, they can retake a class,” VanValkenburg said.

**Deckerville Community Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 622

Percentage of free lunch: 53 percent

Key to victory: “We are very fortunate to have a dedicated staff at Deckerville Elementary. They are willing to do whatever it takes for our students to achieve. This includes going above and beyond the normal working hours and breaking down traditional barriers to see that students meet benchmarks that are set for them,” said Deckerville Elementary Principal Allen Hosler.

**East Jordan Public Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 1,041

Percentage of free lunch: 44 percent

Key to victory: “It is a result of our intentional focus on raising student achievement in the areas of reading and math, and a focus on professional development and the hard work our teachers have done,” said Carla Winteringham, principal at East Jordan Elementary.

**Edwardsburg Public Schools (8th Grade Math, Division 4; 4th Grade Math, Division 4)**

Enrollment: 2,700

Percentage of free lunch: 28 percent

Key to victory: “Among the keys to our victory is making sure that our written and taught curriculum is aligned, that we are using assessments to inform our instruction, and having a staff that is committed to continuous improvement,” explained Myra D. Munroe, assistant to the superintendent for instructional services and accountability.

**Ellsworth Community School (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 235

Percentage of free lunch: 40 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Lynn Spearing said the district uses the Delta math program, which involves online assessment tools. The district, according to Spearing, uses a three-tiered approach to math: individual attention, meeting in groups and students falling behind meeting after school. “Then we hired certified teachers to hone in on those areas of deficiency,” Spearing said.

**Ewen-Trout Creek Consolidated School District (4th Grade Math, Division 8; 4th Grade Reading, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Reading)**

Enrollment: 243

Percentage of free lunch: 46 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent/Principal Paul Healey said that results in math are due simply to teachers “doing a good job,” while students spend 90 minutes a day in a reading block. “That’s probably where most of that gain is coming from,” he said.

**Fairview Area Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 320

Percentage of free lunch: 48 percent

Key to victory: “Good intentional instruction. Teachers really honed in on the glitches and made sure their instruction was intentional, maximizing the resources we have. We have a lot of parent/ community support.

We have a lot of parents willing to volunteer. If we ever need anything, they are there to help,” said

Superintendent Robert Ricketson.

**Forest Hills Public Schools (8th Grade Math, Division 3; 4th Grade Math, Division 3; 8th Grade Science, Division 3)**

Enrollment: 10,185

Percentage of free lunch: 8 percent

Key to victory: “Our students’ success has to do with the work of our teachers and the support of our parents. Our teachers are focused on developing thinking skills as opposed to simply slogging through math problems and concepts. We want students to be able to construct mathematical questions and discover patterns based upon deep thinking, and have the time to experiment with various forms of mathematical reasoning,” said Superintendent Daniel Behm.

**Fowler Public Schools (Graduation Rate, Division 6)**

Enrollment: 537

Percentage of free lunch: 10 percent

Key to victory: “We identify children who are at risk and work with them and their families. We stay after school with them and practice,” said Superintendent and Principal Neil Hufnagel. “There are kids every year who transfer in from bigger districts as seniors, just so they can get our help to graduate.”

**Frankfort-Elberta Schools (4th Grade Writing, Division 8 )**

Enrollment: 530

Percentage of free lunch: 44 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Tom Stobie said, “We just have teachers that work extremely hard and spend a lot of time preparing, and preparing students.” Stobie said an emphasis has been placed in the area on writing, with support from the Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District, which provided consultants to work with Frankfort-Elberta staff.

**Godwin Heights (4th Grade Reading, Division 2; 4th Grade Writing, Division 2; 4th Grade Math, Division 2)**

Enrollment: 2,159

Percentage of free lunch: 69 percent

Key to victory: “Just because our kids are poor doesn’t mean they can’t learn,” said Mary Lange, principal of North Godwin Elementary. “Everyone believes that here. The staff holds each other accountable.”

**Grand Haven Area Public Schools (4th Grade Reading, Division 4)**

Enrollment: 5,974

Percentage of free lunch: 24 percent

Key to victory: “Our students are assessed as soon as they get into the door. I think our success in grade four is reflective of our K-3 program. Our program is built on the reading workshop format we use called Good Habits Great Readers. ... It provides mini lessons, provide correctives where students need help. We help the kids who need extra help and kids who master the work, we provide alternative experiences for them,” said Melinda Brink, assistant superintendent of instructional services.

**Harbor Beach Community Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 7; 4th Grade Reading, Division 7; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Reading)**

Enrollment: 549

Percentage of free lunch: 35 percent

Key to victory: “Mrs. Nancy Bucholtz is entering her 10th year as our fourth grade teacher and she has done a wonderful job,” said Superintendent Lawrence R. Krowek. “She has adhered strictly to Research Based Best

Teaching Practices and has always used quality assessment data to inform and consistently improve her instruction. It is directly because of her hard work, diligence and caring that our students have had this kind of success.”

**Haslett Public Schools (4th Grade Reading, Division 3)**

Enrollment: 2,686

Percentage of free lunch: 15 percent

Key to victory: Community support of a districtwide mandate to read 20 minutes a day has been a key for the district, said Judy Tegreeny, principal of Ralya Elementary. “It’s that whole partnership. Our scores have always been in the 90s (percent proficient) in reading.”

**Holland Public Schools (College Readiness, Division 2)**

Enrollment: 4,080

Percentage of free lunch: 58 percent

Key to victory: “Strong instructional leadership combined with weekly professional learning communities provides the opportunity for all staff to review data to inform instruction practice,” said Superintendent Brian Davis. “While we are achieving growth, we still have much work to do to ensure that all students are college capable and career ready.”

**Houghton-Portage Township Schools (College Readiness, Division 6; 8th Grade Math, Division 6; 8th Grade Science, Division 6)**

Enrollment: 1,331

Percentage of free lunch: 19 percent

Key to victory: “If you’re not a smart kid, you don’t feel comfortable here,” said Kass Simila, principal of Houghton High School. “It’s high expectations.”

**Lakeshore Public Schools/Berrien Co. (8th Grade Reading, Division 4; 8th Grade Science, Division 4)**

Enrollment: 2,931

Percentage of free lunch: 21 percent

Key to victory: Angie Johnson, media arts specialist at Lakeshore Middle School said maintaining trained media specialists in school libraries has been a key, along with reading competitions.

**Lakeview School District/Calhoun Co. (Graduation Rate, Division 1)**

Enrollment: 3,883

Percentage of free lunch: 33 percent

Key to victory: “We truly have a focus on all students; we have a long tradition of excellence and high achievement and are never satisfied with the status quo. The award comes as a shock, as we are not satisfied with our performance and are focused on much higher student performance,” Superintendent Dave Peterson.

**Les Cheneaux Community Schools (College Readiness, Division 7; 4th Grade Writing, Division 7; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Writing)**

Enrollment: 300.

Percentage of free lunch: 28 percent

Key to victory: “This school has done everything right. A strong focus on curriculum, instruction and assessment coupled with genuine educational leadership and an empowered, capable staff is an unstoppable force that is very good for students,” explained Michelle Ribant, general education director at the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District.

**Litchfield Community Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 337

Percentage of free lunch: 53 percent

Key to victory: “We have consistently improved, and without looking at only the proficiency level, you would find that we are improving in the non-proficient level. Our focus is not just hitting proficiency; our total focus is bringing every child up,” said Superintendent Anne Riddle.

**Mackinac Island Public Schools (Graduation rate, Division 6; Overall Champion, Graduation Rate)**

Enrollment: 84

Percentage of free lunch: 15 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent David Waaso attributed the district’s success to dedicated teachers, the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate District and kids themselves working hard. He also credited small class sizes. “It

gives the chance to ask more questions, maybe, and get more answers,” Waaso said.

**Mackinaw City Public School (4th Grade Math, Division 7; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 206

Percentage of free lunch: 32 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Jeffrey Curth said, “We just focused on the state curriculum and just ensured that K-12 staff is following the content standards. . . . We have a small class size. That does help.”

**Marysville Public Schools (College Readiness, Division 4)**

Enrollment: 2,687

Percentage of free lunch: 21 percent

Key to victory: “Students are the priority in Marysville and they come first in everything we do. This is illustrated by our commitment to a true PLC — or professional learning community model — at every level of our district that empowers teachers to focus on student learning outcomes and to tailor their instruction based on individual need,” said Superintendent Jamie Cain. “This may not seem like anything out of the ordinary, but it is a remarkable example of our collaborative strength.”

**Michigan Center School District (8th Grade Math, Division 5; 8th Grade Reading, Division 5)**

Enrollment: 1,373

Percentage of free lunch: 46 percent

Key to victory: “The improvements we’ve made and growth we’ve seen in the kids is based on the teachers’ and principal’s commitment to the school improvement plans we create based on the data that show the areas where our students are in need. They’ve done a great job of putting strategies in place to address those needs,” said Superintendent Scott Koziol.

**Mona Shores Public Schools (8th Grade Math, Division 1; 8th Grade Science, Division 1)**

Enrollment: 3,816.

Percentage of free lunch: 31 percent

Key to victory: “The teaching staff at Mona Shores Middle School has remained focused on our mission and vision of becoming the highest performing middle school in the county, state, and nation,” said Mona Shores Middle School Principal Greg Helmer. “The past three years, we have focused our efforts on determining the essential teaching standards, developing common course curriculum maps, and implementing common assessments. As a staff, we are pursuing the practice of formative assessment and using data to drive and inform our instructional practices.”

**Niles Community Schools (8th Grade Math, Division 2; 8th Grade Science, Division 2; 8th Grade Reading, Division 2)**

Enrollment: 3,688

Percentage of free lunch: 44 percent

Key to victory: “We loop with the kids — we go from seventh to eighth grade with the same teachers, so we don’t waste a lot of time getting to know the kids from year to year. We know them already; we know where we’re going,” explained Superintendent Richard Weigel. “And the teachers do a great job of following through with where their students were for the previous year instead of having to learn all over again. The second piece we’re using more and more effectively is we’re getting to know our data better . . . Our teachers get together and have conversations based upon the data of what their students are learning, and what we need to do to change so they are all learning at a higher level.”

**North Muskegon Public Schools (Graduation Rate, Division 4)**

Enrollment: 992

Percentage of free lunch: 20 percent

Key to victory: “The total North Muskegon community truly values education and sets an expectation of academic success for all of our students,” said Superintendent Curtiss Babcock. He pointed out that this begins as soon as they enter kindergarten and is re-enforced as they move through the school system. “Conversations with our students do not consist of ‘if’ you go on to a post-secondary endeavor, but rather ‘where’ do you plan to continue your educational growth after high school?” he said.

**Northport Public Schools (College Readiness, Division 8; 4th Grade Math, Division 8; 4th Grade Reading, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math, Overall Champion, 4th Grade Reading)**

Enrollment: 171

Percent of free lunch: 48 percent

Key to victory: “We’re a poor community,” said Superintendent Jeff Tropf. “Our families don’t have boats down in the harbor. Rather than take a look at the challenges, we take a look at the opportunities. Why can’t every kid be proficient?”

**Northville Public Schools (4th Grade Writing, Division 3)**

Enrollment: 7,008

Percentage of free lunch: 6 percent

Key to victory: Writing is incorporated into the entire curriculum in early elementary grades, said Bob Behnke, assistant superintendent for instructional services. “It’s not only an issue of a simple answer, but thinking critically and analysis of a problem.”

**Nottawa Community School (8th Grade Reading, Division 7; Overall Champion, 8th Grade Reading)**

Enrollment: 130

Percentage of free lunch: 36 percent

Key to victory: “I was reading the papers in Detroit about how teachers sometimes have 30-40 children in their classrooms. Well, let me tell you, nobody will succeed in that kind of situation. No child is going to succeed in that kind of setting. We can bring about miracles with children, but we need some resources,” said teacher Alice Wilson. “If I were to give someone advice, I would say, look at that student’s strength and work with their weakness. Reading is like riding a bike. The more you read the better get at it.”

**Pewamo-Westphalia Community Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 6; Graduation Rate, Division 6; Overall Champion, Graduation Rate)**

Enrollment: 710

Percentage of free lunch: 12 percent

Key to victory: “We are blessed to have high levels of parental support and involvement within our school system,” said Superintendent Jason Mellema. “This community believes in the value of education, and the expectation is that we will do everything we can to provide the best educational opportunities for our students. Building on that foundation is a staff and administrative team that enjoys the art and science of teaching, that pushes each other to do better, that is willing to communicate and collaborate with each other, and that takes a tremendous amount of pride in what they do.”

**Pinconning Area Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 1,465

Percentage of free lunch: 45 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Mike Vieau said the district has aligned its curriculum tightly to state standards and placed and focus on math as well as reading. But he also said, “It boils down to what we think is good teaching.”

**Port Hope Community Schools (Graduation Rate, Division 8; Overall Champion, Graduation Rate)**

Enrollment: 76

Percentage of free lunch: 54 percent

Key to victory: “The key is that we are a small school and our student to teacher ratio is small about 1 teacher to about 8-10 students. We are able to pinpoint the students who have trouble and give them the extra help they need to graduate. We give them the necessary intervention they need and give the appropriate interventions to help them succeed,” said Don Pitts, superintendent.

**Portage Public Schools (8th Grade Reading, Division 1; 4th Grade Reading, Division 1)**

Enrollment: 8,583

Percentage of free lunch: 20 percent

Key to victory: “We dedicate a lot of resources to K-3 reading,” said Superintendent Rick Perry. “Students who have the most need are taught by the most proficient reading teachers, not paraprofessionals. We’re still trying to improve. We’re not there yet.”

**Rapid River Public Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 7; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 390

Percentage of free lunch: 35 percent

Key to victory: “I know most teachers work very hard,” said Superintendent Henry Knoch. He added that teachers have worked with some students intensively to help them in math, and that effort is continuing: “There

was a lot of individual attention given to math in the beginning of this year,” he said, “and more so last year.”

**Rogers City Area Schools (Graduation Rate, Division 7)**

Enrollment: 750

Percentage of free lunch: 37 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Kathleen Xenakis-Makowski said, “I think it’s a concerted effort among teachers . All staff, actually, not just teachers.”

**Schoolcraft Community Schools (Graduation Rate, Division 3)**

Enrollment: 1,106

Percentage of free lunch: 13 percent

Key to victory: “We are a smaller community; the schools are the hub of the community. We have a lot of support from parents. We have a committed staff that helps to meet the student’s needs. We take pride in a small teacher to student ratio,” said Superintendent Wayne R. Stitt.

**Southfield Public School District (Graduation Rate, Division 2)**

Enrollment: 8,154

Percentage of free lunch: 48 percent

Key to victory: “We have layer upon layer of early warning systems so we don’t realize a higher failure rate,” said George Chapp, director of curriculum and instruction. “We have an aggressive intervention program for students at risk of dropping out, starting with freshmen with GPA below 2.0.”

**Spring Lake Public Schools (4th Grade Reading, Division 6; 4th Grade Writing, Division 6)**

Enrollment: 2,500

Percentage of free lunch: 15 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Dennis Furton said that staff has tried to implement the best and most research-based curriculum for the students, which includes the Readers Workshop and the Writers Workshop. “We also screen all of our students three times a year to assess fluency and comprehension,” Furton said.

**Stanton Township Public Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 136

Percentage of free lunch: 48 percent

Key to victory: “It is due to our small class sizes. We are a learn-and-serve school and tie it to a lot of hands-on activities that are curriculum-based. We have a math series called Everyday Math that lets the children solve everyday problems. It is used by several schools in the U.P. It asks students to explain how they got the answers to the problems, and they have to explain why. This gives them a realistic view of how math ties to everything that they do. We have been using the program for eight to 10 years. It starts in kindergarten then advances to 8th grade,” explained Superintendent Mary Durocher.

**Swan Valley School District (4th Grade Writing, Division 4)**

Enrollment: 1,800

Percentage of free lunch: 26 percent

Key to victory: “In regard to writing, five or six years ago our K-8 staff received two years of professional development in implementing the 6+1 Traits of Writing program. This training included not only the normal components but also included a consultant who visited classrooms and worked hand-in-hand with the teaching staff in presenting and evaluating lessons. It is our belief that the 6+1 Trait Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment provides a common language for teachers and students to communicate about the characteristics of writing and establishes a clear vision of what good writing should look like,” explained Superintendent David P. Moore.

**Tekonsha Community Schools (Graduation Rate, Division 8; Overall Champion — Graduation Rate)**

Enrollment: 287

Percentage of free lunch: 54 percent

Key to victory: “We know all of our students and we keep close contact with them. I stay with them after school. We have parent connect and student connect (part of our student management) where parents can go online to see how students are doing in real time. If a student has a homework assignment the parents will know,” said Wendy Livingston, acting administrator. “We really instill in our students that they can succeed and graduate. Our class sizes are small (in the mid-20s). There are no surprises.

**Vandercook Lake Public Schools (4th Grade Math, Division 5)**

Enrollment: 1,285

Percentage of free lunch: 50 percent

Key to victory: “Our recent success is due to the alignment of the curriculum and staff working together,” said Superintendent Anthony Hollow.

**Wakefield-Marenisco School District (4th Grade Math, Division 8; 4th Grade Reading, Division 8; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Math; Overall Champion, 4th Grade Reading)**

Enrollment: 294

Percentage of free lunch: 42 percent

Key to victory: Superintendent Catherine Shamion said a focus was placed on students in kindergarten through sixth grade on reading. “We’ve instituted a mandatory uninterrupted 90-minute-a-day literacy block,” she said, which focuses on daily comprehension and fluency. Students in fourth, fifth and sixth grades, Shamion said, rotate to be taught by a single math specialist.

**Walkerville (8th Grade Math, Division 8; Overall Champion, 8th Grade Math)**

Enrollment: 319

Percent of free lunch: 79 percent

Key to victory: “There’s no magic pill, but it does take commitment from all stakeholders,” said Walkerville Middle School Principal John Adams. “It’s getting everyone to buy in to what we’re doing is important.”

**West Ottawa Public School District (8th Grade Science, Division 5; 4th Grade Writing, Division 5)**

Enrollment: 7,240

Percentage of free lunch: 43 percent

Key to victory: “Collaboration is the key to our success! Teachers representing each of the four core subject areas are members of District K-12 Core Curriculum Teams. They work to ensure that our curriculum is tightly aligned to (state standards),” said Suzanne Richards, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. “West Ottawateachers focus on student learning (not teaching) ... Our middle school science teachers teach students to ‘think like scientists,’ while learning the curriculum. They delve into community issues that focus on science topics to get a real world application of science concepts being taught.”

**Williamston Community Schools (8th Grade Reading, Division 6)**

Enrollment: 1,903

Percentage of free lunch: 16 percent

Key to victory: “Universal screening of all students in grades 6-8 occurs three times per year for both fluency and comprehension,” explained Kelly Campbell, Williamston Middle School literacy coach. “This allows us to monitor how students are progressing with basic reading skills. Students who fall well below grade level targets are provided with research-based reading interventions to accelerate learning and support success in core content classes.”