

# THE SCHOOL BELL

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## TEACHER TECHNOLOGY TRAINING AVAILABLE

The Ameritech Technology Academy is a great opportunity to learn more about technology and ways to use it in your teaching. The year-round program, available to all K-12 schools in Michigan, begins with a two-day workshop at the Novi Middle School in Novi, Michigan. Six workshops will be available there this summer during the period from July 8 through July 25.

The program is available to a four-person team from each building. The team is made up of at least two teachers, a principal or other building-level administrator and a fourth member who could be a teacher, a media specialist or another person chosen by the team. Following the workshop, each team receives ongoing support from local and regional follow-up sessions and online resources.

The month of March is the time to apply. Applications are taken only online at [www.ameritechacademy.org](http://www.ameritechacademy.org). There is no charge to make application, but each workshop is limited to 25 teams and a \$150 registration fee is required from each team selected. The fee is more than compensated for in software and other materials provided at the workshop.

This is the third year the Academy has been in operation. As measured by Eastern Michigan University's Institute for Community and Regional development, the summer workshops have received

a phenomenal nearly 99% excellent or good rating from summer workshop participants when asked about the training experience and the quality of instruction.

The Ameritech Technology Academy is funded primarily by SBC Ameritech, with additional support from others including Michigan Virtual University, MDE and MEA.

For more information and an application, go to [www.ameritechacademy.org](http://www.ameritechacademy.org) or call MACUL at 517.694.9756. This is a great opportunity to integrate the use of technology across the curriculum in your school building.

## EDISON SCHOOLS INC: EDUCATION'S ENRON

Gerald w. Bracey is an independent researcher and writer in Alexandria, Virginia. He is the author of the annual "Bracey Report on the Condition of Public Education" (Phi Delta Kappan, each October since 1991). His most recent book is *The War Against America's Public Schools* (Allyn and Bacon, 2001). A revised edition of *Put to the Test: An Educator's and Consumer's Guide to Standardized Testing* will be published in March, 2002 by Phi Delta Kappan International.

Edison Schools Inc. is the Enron of education. Enron used "aggressive bookkeeping" practices to paint a glowing picture and to inflate stock prices while hiding huge losses. So on these pages did Edison vice president, John Chubb, present a radiant accounting of Edison while referring to critics as "attackers" who "knowingly distort" Edison's record of achievement. But Chubb omitted many indisputable "losses" —facts about the Edison record that Chubb and Edison would prefer to keep off the public ledger.

For example, in its September 2001 Fourth Annual Report, Edison counted the achievement trends at two of its Wichita schools as "positive." Yet, on January 28, 2002, the Wichita Board of Education voted unanimously to cancel Edison's contract at both and might terminate all other contracts as well. Test scores were falling despite cheating: teachers ignored time limits, read questions aloud and even corrected student answer sheets. Former teachers said they had told Edison officials about the cheating. Edison officials denied they knew.

Of course, there is much more to a school than test scores. Both Wichita schools had plummeting enrollments (722 to 426 at one; 280 to 200 at the other) and had lost more than 50% of their teachers each year for the last three years. This defection in teachers and students hardly indicates “positive” trends, but such changes do not show up on the Edison books.

People can also manipulate test scores without actually cheating. Edison has been repeatedly accused of what one school of education dean called a “common trick:” admitting many students for the first year, testing them, then “counseling out,” low-scoring students. It’s a great way to get test scores up.

Edison schools also serve a much smaller proportion of special education students than do regular public schools. If Edison enrolls a disadvantaged population as Chubb declares, one would expect Edison’s average to be substantially higher than the national average. But Edison provides special education only in regular classrooms. At Edison Academy in San Francisco, where the city school board recently terminated the contract, Edison reported that 6.8% of the students received special education services in 1999-2000. The national average is 12.5%. The next year the figure plunged to only 2%. The proportion of disadvantaged students dropped as well, from 79% to 55%. Still, when California ranked the achievement of San Francisco’s 75 elementary schools, Edison Academy finished 75<sup>th</sup>.

The Fourth Report also refutes Chubb’s op-ed claims that fair evaluations must compare Edison to other public school systems. The report contends that such comparisons are inappropriate (pages 15-17). It contends that before-Edison and after- Edison comparisons are inappropriate. It contends that following the same students over time is inappropriate (in fact, this would be the best possible comparison). The report then concludes, “for all of these reasons the analysis of achievement trends presented in this report focuses on achievement with Edison schools.”

Dealing with Chubb’s claims that Edison’s gains are “3 to 5 times better than the average” would

require much more space than is available here and would require us to consider complexities about statistics and the properties of mathematical scales. Suffice it to say that no professional in the field of testing would accept Chubb’s numbers as meaningful. Some professors might laughingly use them in statistics classes as horrible examples of misbegotten procedures.

A few years ago, New York Observer business writer, Christopher Byron, likened Edison founder, Chris Whittle, to Harold Hill, the flimflam artist of “The Music Man.” Readers can draw their own conclusions, but consider a few financial facts. Whittle, Chubb and other chief officers receive \$300,000 a year plus stock options. In March, 2001, just before parents voted to deny Edison access to New York City schools, Edison officers cash stock options worth more than \$30 million (note that unlike Philadelphia parents, New York parents got to choose). Whittle himself pocketed \$16 million. SEC form 14A, filed on September 26, 2001 shows that he still owns 4,935,236 shares. Even at the current value of \$13 a share (down from \$39), that’s a bundle.

Edison also established a “management agreement” with a Knoxville, Tennessee firm, WSI Inc. Between 1995 & 1998 Edison paid WSI \$1,848,742. In 2001, WSI owned 3,809,826 shares of Edison. WSI’s president and sole employee is Chris Whittle. Edison has also loaned Whittle, and other Edison officers millions of dollars at very favorable interest rates.

Although a publicly traded, for-profit company, Edison has never turned a profit and entered the 2001-2002 school year with cumulative losses of \$197 million. They have since grown to \$230 million. This in spite of the fact that Edison boosts its revenue by \$96 million a year by including as income money it never receives.

Through all these machinations, Edison officers have enjoyed windfalls in the tens of millions of dollars. One can be forgiven if one looks through John Chubb’s wounded rhetoric and sees something in Edison other than altruistic educational motives: It’s the money, stupid. Skilling, Fastow and Lay would no doubt approve.

### **Updated Training Schedule 2001-2002**

March 26, 2002	“Probationary Teacher’s Workshop”
April 23, 2002	“MEA Financial Services”
May 16, 2002	“Your Legal Rights (teachers).”

All trainings will be 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the MEA office in Three Rivers. Refreshments will be provided. The MEA in Three Rivers is committed to your professional growth and success. Don’t hesitate to

call with questions or for more information:  
616.279.5285. See you at the office!

**The Kalamazoo County Education Association  
Coordinating Council is sponsoring a workshop  
focusing on Special Education.**

When: Tuesday, March 19, 2002

Where: K/RESA  
Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency  
1819 East Milham Rd., Portage

Time: 4:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Cost: \$7.00 per person  
(includes workshop materials and light dinner)

Pre-registration is required. Space is limited. Reserve  
your spot NOW! Call Becky at 616-344-7428 to learn  
more and/or register.

**TOPICS include:**

New special education rules  
504 vs. special education  
behavioral & discipline issues  
interventions in general education

**STATEWIDE SCREENING AND  
RECOMMENDATION**

If you have concerns and/or recommendations  
about MEA's involvement in the primary election ,  
please contact a Screening and Recommendation  
Committee member listed below:

**Lu Battaglieri**, MEA President, Chair – V  
1-800-292-1934  
[Lbattaglieri@mea.org](mailto:Lbattaglieri@mea.org)  
P.O. Box 2573  
East Lansing, MI 48826-2573

**Linda Bottomley-Fink**, (2003 Southern Zone) - V  
1-517-351-9306  
12221 Onondaga Rd.  
Onondaga, Michigan 49264

**2001-2002 Charge:**

**Purpose:**

Screen and Recommend or not recommend candidates for statewide political  
office.

C. Statewide screening and recommendation procedures.

II. Statewide Screen and Recommendation  
Committee

A. A committee composed of the following persons is  
authorized to screen and recommend or not recommend to  
the MEA-PAC Governing Board candidates for the  
statewide political offices of governor and U.S. Senate and  
the screen and recommend or not recommend candidates  
for the statewide political offices of attorney general,  
secretary of state, state board of education, major  
university boards, and judgeships on behalf of MREA-  
PAC.

1. The MEA-PAC Chairperson (or designee);
2. The MEA-PAC vice chairperson;
3. Four (4) MEA-PAC Council delegates elected by  
the MEA-PAC Council, with no more than one  
(1) elected from each MEA Zone;
4. A person elected by the MEA Minority Concerns  
Committee
5. Two (2) MEA Board of Directors members  
appointed by the MEA president, subject to  
confirmation by the MEA Board of Directors;
6. The presiding officer of the MEA ESP Caucus,  
MAHE and MEA-R or designee serving ex  
officio, without vote;
7. The Educator Caucus chairperson of the two (2)  
major political parties or designee serving ex  
officio, without vote;
8. An MEA staff person serving as an ex officio  
member, without vote.

