

# ISD to close high schools, create career academy

■ *Students enrolled in alternative education will have a new school*

By **ROSEMARY HORVATH**  
*Daily News staff writer*

STANTON — A revolutionary new alternative education program will enroll students from Montcalm County's seven-school district in August.

The Montcalm Area Intermediate School District officials making the announcement Tuesday were Bradley J. Hansen, superintendent, and Jay Marino, director of instruction and technology.

The ISD is merging its current

high schools and creating a new high school in renovated rooms at the Montcalm Area Career Center in Sidney.

The Montcalm Career Academy — a school within a school — will provide a strong school-to-work curriculum emphasizing technology and vocational programs, Hansen said.

Academy students will have access to programs already being offered at the career center.

The curriculum will follow the state's Career Pathway model emphasizing real-life learning applications and career-oriented instruction.

Existing programs at Harold O. Steele High School in Fenwick and North Montcalm High School in

Six Lakes will merge, affecting about 150 students.

The ISD will move out of the Fenwick building, which it rents from Montabella Community Schools.

It owns the Six Lakes building, where it could locate a different program eventually, Marino said.

"We've been planning this since around Christmas, but we wanted a solid educational program in place before announcing anything," Marino said.

The program is a collaborative effort among the ISD, Montcalm Community College and all seven public school districts.

Ken Gorlewski will be principal of the career academy. He is principal at H.O. Steele High School.

Paula Fortino will remain principal of the career center.

Alternative education students will have "easy access to cutting-edge technologies and instructional techniques that motivate learning at the highest levels possible," Marino said.

The ISD will spend more than \$200,000 on extra technology.

Every building within the ISD has been equipped with a wireless local area network.

Students will use laptop computers and PalmPilots.

"They can take a virtual class without ever plugging into the building," Marino said. "A laptop

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## Academy

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computer will have a three-hour battery life. It will provide an 'anytime, anyplace' concept to learn."

Student transportation won't be a problem because school districts already bus students to the career center.

And with MCC close by, students can use its climbing wall, library, gym and swimming pool facilities. Dual enrollment coupling high school and college

courses is another option. Also, they can participate in online courses offered through the Michigan Virtual High School.

"Basically, the academy will offer a general education program that will help students meet a local district's requirement for graduation. In addition, students will have a career pathway, diploma, possible work experience, and possibly certification from a vocational program at the career center," Marino said.

The academy's teaching staff

will have significant staff development this summer, including Michigan Curriculum Framework, Career Pathways, and brain-based, project-directed instruction.

Academy juniors and seniors will have a vocational program based on their individuals interests and aptitude.

The goal has been to create a program "students will be excited" to attend, Marino said.

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