

the Messenger

News from *Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV*

Fall/Winter 2015 Edition

MIU IV Implements Project MAX

In partnership with the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTaN), ten Intermediate Units, and two local school districts, MIU IV is an active contributor to a new statewide initiative entitled Project MAX.

The purpose of Project MAX is to increase the capacity of Pennsylvania schools to provide all students, including those with complex instructional needs, with maximum access to the general education curriculum and the Pennsylvania Core Standards. Students with complex instructional needs include a heterogeneous group of students who comprise approximately one to three percent of the total student population in Pennsylvania schools. These students often require significant adaptations and modifications to the general education curriculum, have difficulty reading and accessing grade level texts, demonstrate a pattern of inconsistent progress on academic and functional skills, have difficulty expressing themselves, and may require augmentative communication or assistive technology to make progress in learning.

"The over arching message of Project MAX is that educators presume competence and raise expectations for all students, even those with the most complex needs," said Dr. Amy Walker, MIU IV Educational Consultant.

In partnership with PaTTAN, MIU IV staff is providing professional development and coaching for teachers in Multidisabilities Support, Autistic Support, and Life Skills Support classrooms.

"We are working with teachers to ensure that their students with complex needs gain access to general education curriculum. Our team helps them make the most appropriate adaptations and modifications to teach this high level curriculum," Walker said.

In addition to professional development and coaching, MIU IV is providing a summer institute for parents, a library of reference materials for adapting grade level curriculum, and consultation and support in areas like assistive technology.

Project MAX is a federally funded project designed for implementation over a three year period. Pennsylvania was the only state to receive these funds. PDE and PaTTaN intend to reapply for funds at the end of the funding period.

Dear Friends,

A favorite Greek proverb of mine says, "A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." This saying typifies the spirit that permeates this Intermediate Unit, and it is our employees' common purpose. With recent governmental attacks on education, both financial and philosophical, it behooves us to guarantee two things to the public: 1) that we are doing all that we can do to run an efficient, cost-effective operation, and 2) that we always keep as our real bottom line the goal of helping children. The first one is good business practice, and as stewards of public money we take it seriously. The second is a philosophy upon which I would like to expound.

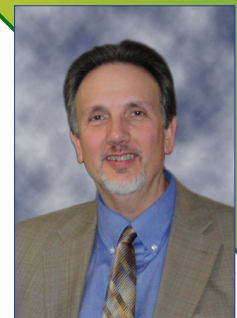
It is all very well for us to provide services to school districts, like hosting their Wide Area Network (WAN), or being a print shop for handbooks and schedules, or providing convenient fingerprinting for district personnel, but we lose sight of our purpose if we believe that these services are ends in themselves. The WAN is only a tool, the handbooks and schedules are a means to an end, and the fingerprinting only exists for a higher purpose. What all of these services have in common, along with everything else that we do, is that in some way they provide educational opportunities for children.

Those who bear this in mind, and live it out in their lives and careers are heroes to me. From our classroom teachers to our paraprofessionals, from our custodians to our secretaries to our administrative staff, each person can be a hero in education if we only remember the simple truth that we are not here to serve ourselves, but to serve others. Working at an intermediate unit, or indeed in any branch of education, is more than a job; it is a vocation - a calling.

Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." It gratifies me to know that by what we give at this IU, we not only make a living and a life for ourselves, but we also help to make lives for the children that we serve. When we see a non-verbal child begin to speak, when we see the light of understanding beam out of a child who had been labeled as unteachable, when a student with severe intellectual disabilities greets a classroom visitor with a handshake and self-introduction, we know that we are fulfilling our purpose.

So, yes, I like to see a new initiative bring in money that will help us to make next month's payroll. I am happy to talk with our legislators about the importance of funding education appropriately so that we can raise a generation of educated and productive members of society. But all of this is mere background to the real work that our intermediate unit does, which is to make it easier for school districts to fulfill their mission, to serve children. If you are reading this, then you are on this journey with us, and I am sure I speak for everyone at Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV when I say that we are grateful for your companionship and your support.

Killmeyer's



Korner

MIU IV's Executive Team Welcomes New Director of Business Services



MIU IV has hired Patricia Connolly as the new Director of Business Services. Ms. Connolly was hired with a unanimous vote by the MIU IV Board of Directors at their September 23, 2015 meeting. She took the post on October 14.

Ms. Connolly joins the MIU IV team with a wealth of education and experience in the education finance industry. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, a Master of Arts in Human Resource Administration from St. Francis College of Loretto, and a Master of Science in Education from Wilkes University. In addition, she is a Pennsylvania Registered School Business Official (PRSBO) and holds certification as a Professional in Human Resources from the Human Resource Certification Institute.

Connolly has spent the last 14 years at the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) as the Supervisor of Fiscal Services, Acting Assistant Director of Finance, and Title VII/IX Officer. In these roles, she was responsible for fund allocation, fiscal management, and data collection. Additionally, she provided oversight in many areas of AIU's business office including invoicing, program planning, data submissions, and child accounting. Prior to her employment at AIU, she was the Administrative Assistant to the Senior Program Officer for the Program for Students with Exceptionalities and a Personnel Specialist for the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education.

"With her background as a school and Intermediate Unit business official, Ms. Connolly will be a fantastic addition to the MIU IV team," said MIU IV Executive Director, Dr. Wayde Killmeyer.

"She has a proven track record of success in both a public school and an Intermediate Unit setting. She possesses a deep understanding of how Intermediate Units work and the unique nature of our programming and finances."

Connolly will focus on collaboration as she begins her work at MIU IV. "I truly believe in fostering collaboration and partnerships with school district and community stakeholders," she said.

"We share many commonalities including doing more with less. The Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV pulls ideas, talent, and resources together to support Butler, Lawrence and Mercer Counties. It is an honor and privilege to be part of this team."

MIU IV Board Member Receives Award for Advocacy by PA School Boards Association

MIU IV Board Member Lynn Foltz is the winner of the 2015 Timothy Allwein Advocacy Award presented by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA). Foltz received the award at the 2015 PSBA and Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) Annual Conference on October 14, 2015 in Hershey, PA. The Timothy M. Allwein Advocacy Award was established in 2011 by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association and may be presented annually to an individual school director or entire school board to recognize outstanding leadership in legislative advocacy efforts on behalf of public education and students that are consistent with the positions in PSBA's Legislative Platform.



Ms. Foltz shares her advocacy and passion for public education in many different ways. First, she is an active and dedicated board member in the Wilmington Area School District, Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV, and regional PSBA. Next, she is the coauthor of a daily e-mail blast that reaches thousands of stakeholders outlining the latest news and issues in education. In addition, she actively uses social media to advance the cause of public education through Twitter chats, Facebook updates, and live media feeds.

"It is a pleasure to work with a board member like Lynn Foltz," said MIU IV Executive Director, Dr. Wayde Killmeyer.

"She knows the issues in public education, knows the challenges in public education, and knows ways in which we can meet those challenges in order to fulfill our mission. She is a tireless advocate for public education, a fearless champion for children, and an extremely dedicated board member and public servant. I nominated her without hesitation."

In addition to Killmeyer, Foltz was nominated by several school boards collectively, individual school board members, and school administrators from throughout the region. Dr. Michelle Miller, Superintendent of the Wilmington Area School District, was among her supporters. Miller praised Foltz's advocacy in her nomination letter.

"Lynn's influence is unparalleled. She is deeply networked with legislators, PSBA staff and fellow representatives, state and national public education advocates, as well as fellow region and state school board members," Miller wrote.

"At our board meetings she provides a detailed report of the on-going work of Pennsylvania's legislative body. She reviews House and Senate bills and shares PSBA's stance on each of them. She has made several trips to Harrisburg to advocate for public education. There is no other advocate that I have met more worthy of the Timothy M. Allwein Advocacy Award," Miller said.

New Castle Area School District Superintendent, John Sarandrea, and business manager, Joe Ambrosini, also commended Foltz for her knowledge and advocacy.

In their collective nomination letter, Sarandrea and Ambrosini said, "Mrs. Foltz is always abreast of the most recent legislative issues relative to education and keeps our area informed of pending issues affecting us and the students we serve."

Foltz resides in New Wilmington, PA and is employed by Westminster College.

Cubelic Featured On Panel of Regional Experts at RAND Corporation's Policy Circle Event

MIU IV's Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Dr. Cathleen Cubelic, served on a panel of experts at the RAND Corporation's Policy Circle Event entitled, "Education Policy: Challenges in Implementing New Standards and Assessments." The event was held on October 8, 2015 in Pittsburgh, PA.

The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer, healthier, more secure, and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

The RAND Policy Circle is a community of philanthropic individuals committed to supporting objective research and analysis that lead to smarter decisions and better outcomes. At their event, Dr. Cubelic was invited to share her perspective on the implementation of new academic standards and assessments, teacher effectiveness, and strategies that educational stakeholders can use to overcome challenges to improve student achievement.

Cubelic joined Laura Hamilton, a behavioral scientist from the RAND Corporation, Alison McCarthy, executive director of curriculum and instruction for the Pittsburgh Public Schools, and Stanley Thompson, director of the Heinz Endowment's Education Program. Community stakeholders from throughout Western Pennsylvania were in attendance.

"As a panelist, I was able to engage in a highly productive discussion with business leaders, researchers, public educators, representatives from higher education, and grantors about the tireless work the educators are currently doing and the direction that we need to go to continuously improve," said Dr. Cubelic.

"I was proud to represent Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV at this juncture. It gave us incredible exposure and allowed me to share the work that schools

in Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties are doing to provide the best education for our students."

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Early Intervention Paraprofessional Honored with 2015 Spirit Award

Debbie Totin was honored at the November 18, 2015 Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV (MIU IV) Board of Directors meeting as the 2015 recipient of the Spirit Award. Mrs. Totin has been employed by MIU IV for 11 years as a classroom paraprofessional in MIU IV's Early Intervention Program.

This award, presented by the Intermediate Unit's Labor & Management Committee, was created to recognize a support staff individual who exemplifies excellence on the job, caring involvement, and involvement in the community. Mrs. Totin was nominated by several employees from the organization as well as parents and community members. Recipients are chosen by a selection committee representing all areas of MIU IV.



Debbie Totin

"Deb goes above and beyond the call of duty each day to make a positive impact on her team, the students, and the educational environment," said MIU IV Special Education teacher, Valentina Kiser.

"There was a short period of time, about 2 weeks actually, that Deb was not in our classroom. I can honestly say that after 30 years of teaching, I felt lost! The room runs so much more smoothly because of the very important things that she does each day. She does her job so well."

As a paraprofessional in MIU IV's Early Intervention Program, Deb is responsible to assist the classroom teacher with educational lessons and activities, students' files and records, maintaining a consistent classroom routine for students, and assisting children with special needs with activities such as feeding, personal hygiene, and self-care. She prepares the room for student arrival, snack time, circle time, center activities, and departure. With guidance by the classroom teachers and therapists, she works one-on-one with students to help them achieve their individualized educational goals.

In introducing Mrs. Totin to the MIU IV Board of Directors, her Supervisor Dr. BethAnn Glew said, "Deb is beloved by her students, parents, and colleagues. She makes a difference in so many lives every day through her hard work, compassion, and passion for working with young children. We are so fortunate to have her on our staff."

Mrs. Totin lives on her family's farm in Mercer, PA with her husband Michael, father Robert Brautigam, and her two sisters. She has two grown daughters Linsay Totin and Nicole Craker.

Midwestern IU IV's Early Intervention Makes the Right Connections: Adalynne McGhee's Story

A profile in the PAIU series, "Early Intervention Changes Lives: Pennsylvania Families and the Intermediate Units that Serve Them"

By Diane McCormick

Adalynne McGhee loves to color. She likes to pick up books and read, and she adores playing with her baby dolls.

Plus, the 4-year-old who could hardly speak a few words at 2 years old is now speaking full sentences. Since she joined Midwestern IU IV Early Intervention when she turned 3, Adalynne has "grown leaps and bounds," says her mother, Amanda McGhee.

Adalynne, who has also received behavioral health therapy, has conditions that affect her lungs, ears, and speech. When she was on a liquid diet for more than six months, her Early Intervention teachers would always "go with the flow," says McGhee.

"They're very knowledgeable," she says. "If something's wrong, they call. I can't say enough about the school. Amazing."

Now enrolled in Head Start, Adalynne continues to receive Early Intervention services. Her EI specialists go out of their way to work with Adalynne's teachers and find any resources the family needs.

"If it wasn't for her behavioral health therapy and IU IV, we wouldn't be where we are," says McGhee. "I tell everybody that. If you have a problem, you call this number. They will get you to who you need to see."

Midwestern IU IV: A continuum of services

Midwestern IU IV Early Intervention strives for continuity, helping families easily access services as their children grow and needs change.

Key elements include:



MIU IV teacher, Val Kiser, with EI students.

- Multiple entries into the system. Children can come to Early Intervention through Head Start screenings, Infant/Toddler Early Intervention with guidance from a staff coordinator, or through toll-free calls to Preschool Connections, an information, referrals, and services link for families concerned about their child's development. The sooner a child receives services, the stronger the impact, says Special Education Supervisor, Early Intervention, Dr. BethAnn Glew.
- A school social worker, to direct parents toward resources, and a parent-connection liaison, who links parents new to the system with parents already involved. "These are new waters, and having someone who can guide you through that process is really helpful," says Glew.
- Transition to kindergarten. IU IV Early Intervention works with 27 school districts to help determine whether continued services are required and to ease children smoothly into school. "This is the beginning of their educational experience," says Glew. "Some of them may be in school until they're 21. You really want to make it as positive as possible because there's a long road ahead."

Spotlight

on Services



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Spotlight on Services

Spotlight



Cyber Service Offers Improved Elementary Online Curriculum

MIU IV's Cyber Service program has implemented a new online curriculum for elementary students. Accelerate Education is the new curriculum provider for students in grades K-5. (Students in grades 6-12 will continue to use the Edgenuity curriculum in the 2015-2016 school year.) The new curriculum has expanded the course offerings and improved the quality of online instruction for younger children.

The new elementary program is designed to serve students who need independent, self-paced, standards-based courses. The program uses sound pedagogical practices to deliver instruction to students while engaging them with video and multimedia, instant feedback on multiple formative assessments, and flexibility to work from any location at any time. In addition, students are provided with real-time weekly or bi-monthly live sessions with certified teachers.

Along with the high-tech design of the courses, the lessons are structured to increase student achievement and foster student success. Each lesson utilizes Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction and includes formative quizzes, summative exams, and end of semester tests. Language Arts courses include teacher-graded, writing assessments.

The Accelerate Education elementary program focuses on early literacy skills including writing, speaking, and listening. The courses teach and assess comprehension, fluency, grammar, and phonics.

"Research has told us time and again that literacy is a key component to early learning and to achieving long term success in school," said Lisa Peduzzi, MIU IV's Distance Education Coordinator.

"One of the things that impresses me the most about the Accelerate curriculum is the literacy component and its use of Raz-Kids to reinforce early literacy skills," Peduzzi noted.

Raz-Kids is an award winning, research-based, online reading education program. It contains a library of interactive, e-books for independent, leveled reading practice and assessment.

"The Raz-Kids e-books are carefully crafted to meet students' needs. They contain 29 different reading levels so that students can learn at the most appropriate level and pace," said Peduzzi.

Along with literacy and reading, teaching mathematics concepts at a young age is key to student success. Accelerate Education offers a comprehensive mathematics program that uses IXL Learning for math concept practice and mastery.

"IXL Learning is an industry leader in mathematics and instructional technology," Peduzzi said.

"I am confident that our students will receive a top-notch education with this product combined with the experience and expertise of our staff."

School district that are interested in enrolling students in MIU IV's cyber service program for full time, part time, or blended online learning should contact Peduzzi at 724-458-6700 ext. 1224.



Do you have news that you would like to share in an upcoming issue of *The Messenger*?

**Contact Director of Communications,
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Executive Director Testifies to Legislature About Substitute Teacher Shortage



Dr. Wayde Killmeyer

The Education Committees of the Pennsylvania House and Senate held a joint hearing on October 26, 2015 in Harrisburg, PA to discuss a critical, statewide shortage of substitute teachers. Educational leaders and experts from throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania were invited to provide testimony to help define and solve the problem. MIU IV's executive director, Dr. Wayde Killmeyer, provided expert testimony along with Pennsylvania's Secretary of Education, Pedro Rivera, and two other Intermediate Unit directors.

In preparation for his testimony, Dr. Killmeyer surveyed the 27 superintendents from school districts in our service area (Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties) for ways that they could foresee solutions to this substitute crisis and shared their responses with the committee. First, Killmeyer described the problems that many of our local school districts have experienced due to the substitute shortage. Next, he discussed the struggles that MIU IV's classrooms are experiencing while trying to secure substitutes in classrooms that serve children with complex needs. Finally, he discussed MIU IV's Guest Teacher program and the solutions it offers to provide well trained subs to schools.

Killmeyer emphasized the extreme importance of having trained substitutes in the classroom. "It is key that they [substitutes] are trained bodies, and not just bodies leading a classroom," Killmeyer said in his testimony.

One of the solutions that Killmeyer and others who testified proposed were to loosen the restrictions for retired teachers and their ability to serve as subs.

"Currently, there are restrictions on the number of days retirees can be used as substitutes. If they sub over an allotted amount of days, it will jeopardize their pensions. If the restriction on their use could be eased, we could get much more productivity out of retired teachers who are willing, and very able to serve as subs," Killmeyer said.

Killmeyer informed the committee that MIU IV will continue to offer Guest Teacher Training to provide trained subs in both MIU IV classes and in the school districts that we serve. The next training will be held in February, 2016.

Curriculum Director Honored with PASCD President's Award



Dr. Cathleen Cubelic

MIU IV's Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Dr. Cathleen Cubelic, was honored by the Pennsylvania Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (PASCD) with the 2015 President's Award. The President's Award recognizes a leader in the field for their contribution to the organization and public education. They presented the honor to Dr. Cubelic at their annual conference in Hershey, PA in November.

Dr. Cubelic has served at the helm of MIU IV's Curriculum Department since 2010. In this role, she supports school districts across Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties in the implementation of state initiatives geared toward improving student achievement. In addition, she serves as a liaison to the Pennsylvania Department of Education representing the interests of the school districts that MIU IV serves. Dr. Cubelic oversees many of MIU IV's Educational Consultants, the Cyber Service Program, the Entrepreneurship Academies in Mercer and Butler Counties, and Early Childhood Education professional development initiatives. She also leads MIU IV's Curriculum Advisory Council.

Cathleen has served in a leadership role with PASCD for many years. Most recently, she was named Western Region President and Supervision Committee Member. She plays an active role in the Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units Curriculum Coordinators Job Alike group.

Prior to joining MIU IV, she served as an elementary classroom teacher and principal in several school districts in Allegheny County. Additionally, she is an adjunct faculty member at Gannon University and Westminster College.

Cathleen earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Duquesne University. She earned her Doctorate at Youngstown State University.



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