

the Nessenger

News from *Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV*

Spring 2014 Edition

MIU IV to Launch Keystone Project Based Assessment Service

Every school district will soon have students who have been unsuccessful in their attempts to demonstrate proficiency on the Keystone Exams. These students are now eligible to demonstrate their proficiency by completing a Project Based Assessment. For most students, this will occur after their second unsuccessful attempt on a Keystone Exam. Students with an IEP are eligible after one attempt if their IEP team recommends this route. In either case, school districts are now in the position of having to provide a Keystone Project Based Assessment (PBA) for these students. In response to this need, MIU IV has created a new Keystone Project Based Assessment Service to ease the minds and workloads of school district administrators.

MIU IV is ready to help schools with the administration of the Keystone PBA. During the school year, school districts will be asked to provide a place for students to work (with internet access and a "test monitor") and MIU IV will do the rest. MIU IV will supply the state-mandated, properly certificated, Project Tutor. The Tutor will track students' progress, validate that their project pieces fit the PDE guidelines, and will submit students' work to the authorities at the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In the summer, MIU IV will also provide the site and the monitor.

"Communication is the key to everything, and in addition to being properly certificated for the Modules that he or she oversees, our Tutor will be a master communicator," said MIU IV Executive Director, Dr. Wayne Killmeyer. "Whether interacting with students, their parents, or a district Assessment Coordinator, the Tutor will be the go-to person for information on how students are progressing in their completion of a Keystone Project Module. To make this possible, MIU IV pledges to keep a low student-Tutor ratio, never higher than 20-1."

The Spring Cohort will begin on May 12 and continue through May 30. Registration for the Spring cohort opens on April 23. School district assessment coordinators may register online at www.miu4.org. A summer session is planned for July 14 through August 1. Visit www.miu4.org to learn more about the summer registration window and future cohort schedules.



The MIU IV Keystone PBA service is available state wide. Dr. Cathleen Cubelic is available to answer questions about the program at 724-458-6700 ext. 1227.

Dear Friends,

This is an exciting time for on-line activities at Midwestern IU IV. Our department directors are always trying to stay ahead of the curve in terms of their offerings. We have several interesting new programs, either going live now, or in our immediate future, of which we can be immensely proud.

One of these programs that is coming in the near future will involve the replacement of our long-standing, and popular, student and financial tracking software (Smart Student and Smart Finance) with new, improved, software sporting 21st-century-friendly features. Our goal is to partner with a software developing company who will work with us to make as smooth a transition as possible from the old to the new. These software transitions are always difficult, so we want to help our districts to do it painlessly and seamlessly. This new launch will be a collaborative effort of all of the major departments of the Intermediate Unit.

A second program that has been on the market for a year now has been our wildly successful partnership with EduLink, another software developer, to market a piece of software called PA-ETEP. This software, in use in over 300 schools now, guides the user through the commonwealth's new teacher effectiveness evaluation system. New modules are being written, even now, to create the ability to do principal evaluations, and specialist (librarian, art, music, guidance counselor) evaluations. With the powerful combination of our technology department and our curriculum department behind it, this software is recognized as the best one on the market and is in use statewide.

Finally, a new program that is kicking off in April is our Keystone Project Based Assessment (PBA) Service. One element of Pennsylvania's Keystone Examinations is the guidance of what must happen with students who have been unable to demonstrate their proficiency through the regular tests. The answer is that these students must be given the opportunity to complete a Project Based Assessment. The PBA has been designed by the Department of Education and consists of modules that students work through to demonstrate that they understand the content being tested. MIU IV has developed a service whereby we can take "ownership" of a district's students and take them from start to finish through on-line completion of a PBA. Many districts have already made plans for how they will deal with their PBA students, but many have not. We know all too well what happens with even our best-laid plans. Special cases invariably appear that don't fit the standard solution. This is where MIU IV steps in. We provide the state-mandated tutor, we approve the projects, and we submit them to PDE. This program, too, was the result of excellent collaboration between the technology, curriculum, distance education, communication, and business departments. When all of these talented individuals put their heads together, the result was a great product that we hope will follow in the footsteps of PA-ETEP and make its way into a majority of districts in Pennsylvania.

There are many other exciting things taking place at Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV. Watch this space in future editions of our newsletter for more of my own news and observations. Thank you for your interest and support!

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25th Annual Very Special Arts Exhibit Set For April



Pictured above: Self portrait created by Grove City School District student, Joshuwa Kellar entitled "J.J. Myself"

Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV (MIU IV) is proud to present the 25th Annual Very Special Arts exhibit. From April 7 through April 16, 2014, the gallery at the Pew Fine Arts Gallery at Grove City College will be filled with pieces of art created by students with special needs from school districts in Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties. Sponsored by MIU IV and hosted by Grove City College, this exhibit is supported by the MIU IV Education Association and Midwestern Arts and Humanities Foundation.

On April 13 from 2:00pm until 4:00pm, Pew Fine Arts Center will be crowded with the young artists, their families, teachers and friends gathered to celebrate the artistic achievements of the entrants at the annual artist reception. A panel of judges selects pieces of art for the

show and categorizes them into Juror's Choice, Group, and Honorable Mention.

"The pieces of artwork that were selected this year are as creative, colorful, and diverse as the artists who created them," said Jill Manczka, Director of Communications at MIU IV and coordinator of the exhibit. The exhibit showcases the artwork of nearly 650 students, K-12, from 37 schools in 20 school districts including the 3 vocational schools.

VSA Arts (formerly Very Special Arts) is an international nonprofit organization affiliated with the educational programs of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. It was founded in 1974 by Jean Kennedy Smith to give children and adults with special needs the opportunity to learn through, participate in, and enjoy the arts. Very Special Arts is founded on the belief that the arts belong to everyone and everyone deserves equal access (www.vsarts.org).

The exhibit is free and open to the general public on weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and from 8:00am to 5:00pm on Saturday.

Celebrities with Disabilities Inspire Students At Neshannock Community School

The students at Neshannock Community School have been hard at work with a research project that teaches transition and social and emotional skills. Students conducted research about celebrities with disabilities and formally presented their findings to their classmates.

"The purpose of the assignment was to assess the celebrities' ability to make accommodations within their occupations," said Susan Pfahles, MIU IV Social Worker. "All of the students did an outstanding job researching and presenting their findings to their peers and teachers."

The learners created collateral materials and used technology to support their research. Students produced posters, power point presentations, and narratives to illustrate the strategies that the celebrities used to meet the demands of their careers.

"Not only did students write, present, and use technology, but they were also inspired by the subjects of their research," said Pfahles. "Students learned that the famous actor, Jim Carey lives with bipolar disorder. They discovered Rick Allen, a drummer for Def Leppard, who learned to play the drums with only one arm. They related to the challenges that the celebrities faced and learned that they, too, can be successful in a career. They discovered that accommodations are important and helpful."

Neshannock Community School serves students with emotional support needs from Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties. Currently, the site serves seven students.

Homeless Initiative Students Visit Chatham University

On January 21st, students from Region 5 of Pennsylvania's Education for Children & Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program (ECYEH) visited Chatham University to tour the campus and assist with a service project. This activity was organized by a formerly homeless student from Lawrence County, Ciarra Karnes, who is now a graduate student at Chatham.

During the day-long visit, students assisted Chatham volunteers in making blankets to be donated to area homeless shelters.

"Many of the participating students have lived in homeless shelters and benefitted from projects like this one," said Wendy Kinnear, MIU IV Coordinator of the Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program. "So, making the blankets for distribution to shelters was very meaningful and real to them."

Following their volunteer work, the students participated in a campus-wide scavenger hunt and ate lunch in the university dining hall.

"Often times, students that we service in the ECYEH initiative are not able to schedule or participate in college visits," Kinnear said. "This activity allowed them to experience first-hand what life is like on a college campus."

Operated by MIU IV, Region 5 of ECYEH initiative serves school-aged students in Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango, and Warren Counties. MIU IV's staff ensures that homeless children in the region receive an appropriate education.



Students display blankets they created during ECYEH's visit to Chatham University.

MIU IV Labor & Management Committee Presents Brenda Marino with 2014 Leadership Award



Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV presented Brenda A. Marino, Esquire with their annual Leadership Award. Marino was recognized on February 26 for her work as MIU IV's director of human resources.

This award, presented by MIU IV's Labor & Management Committee, was created to recognize an individual in an executive, supervisory, or management role who fosters and promotes the vision of a regional service agency. Ms. Marino was nominated by several employees from the MIU IV organization as well as members of the education and business communities.

"Brenda devotes large amounts of time, energy and talent to her job," said Dr. Wayne Killmeyer, MIU IV's executive director. "She has genuine concern for the well-being of the entire organization. She is a joy to work with and a true asset to the Intermediate Unit."

Prior to joining the Intermediate Unit in 2008, Brenda earned her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Westminster College and her Juris Doctorate from Dickinson School of Law. After earning her law degree, she practiced in Lawrence County as the Assistant District Attorney and a Special Master of Asbestos Litigation. In addition, she worked as an Office/Case Manager for Dallas W. Hartmann, P.C. where she was responsible for numerous human resources functions including hiring and evaluating staff, maintaining personnel data, and supervising day-to-day activities. Ms. Marino, a member of the Lawrence County Bar Association, taught undergraduate courses in Business Law, Sociology of Law, and Criminal Law and Procedure at Westminster College and ETI Technical Institute respectively.

"Brenda's legal background and teaching experience have proven to be valuable to MIU IV," said board president, Cedric Butchy. "She approaches all tasks methodically while remaining true to MIU IV's mission, policies, and procedures. At the same time, she fosters an environment of accountability and integrity among staff."

As human resources director, Ms. Marino is responsible for managing all personnel issues for MIU IV's 362 employees. She ensures that workers maintain appropriate background checks, state certifications, and continuing education hours. In addition, she manages hiring, benefits, retirement, job descriptions, worker's compensation, leave, and personnel records for all full-time, part-time, and substitute personnel. As a member of MIU IV's executive team, Marino plays an integral role in additional MIU IV programs. She leads an ongoing collaborative effort between MIU IV's human resources, information technology, and business services departments dedicated to using technology to maximize resources to save costs, manage employee time, and improve employee productivity. She serves as a leader in various MIU IV committees including the safety committee, the labor and management committee, the professional development committee, the neighborhood appreciation committee, and the social committee. Marino is an active participant in negotiations and serves as MIU IV's Right to Know Officer.

Brenda and her husband, Richard Harper, reside in Mercer, PA with their two dogs.

MIU IV Let Me Win 5K Registration is Open - Sign Up Today!



Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield are proud to present the 2nd Annual *Let Me Win 5K Run/Walk*. Runners and walkers of all ages are invited to participate in the event on Saturday, April 26, 2014 at Neshannock High School's John Thompson Memorial Trail, 3834 Mitchell Road, New Castle, PA 16105. Registration begins at 9:00am and the race will start at 10:00am. All proceeds from the race benefit the Special Olympics of Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties.

Runners and walkers will enjoy entertainment by Faraone Brothers DJ Service along with post-race refreshments. Water will be provided at each mile of the 3.1 mile course. All pre-registered participants will receive a free t-shirt (race day registrants are not guaranteed a t-shirt). Prizes for age-group winners will be awarded at a post-race ceremony. In addition to Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, the event is sponsored in part by Edgenuity, County Market, LPL Financial, Leader Services, Mazurek Auto Sales, Papa & Papa Attorneys at Law, PHN Charitable Foundation, TMS Physical Therapy, and Wal Mart. PNC Bank, Allstate Insurance, and the Special Olympics have provided in-kind support.

Registration forms are available at www.miu4.org or by calling 724-458-6700 extension 1218. The cost for pre-registered adults is \$20. Pre-registered students in kindergarten through college can participate for a fee of \$15. Children under age 5 chaperoned by an adult are free. The deadline for pre-registration is April 16, 2014. Race day registration for all ages is \$25.



The Let Me Win 5K is sponsored by:



Juniors in Mercer County are Invited to Participate in Unique Senior Challenge in 2014-2015

Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV (MIU IV) in partnership with the eCenter@LindenPointe, the city of Hermitage, the Franklin Center of Beaver County, Community Connections and five local school districts has developed an innovative pilot project: The Entrepreneurship Academy@LindenPointe.

Funded in part by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Discovered in PA, Developed in PA program, the experience incorporates 21st century skills into an active learning experience for students at local schools. The instructional programs will provide hands-on learning experiences that teach students to incorporate critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, adaptability, entrepreneurship, communication, curiosity, and imagination into their work.

"The innovative program we are supporting today will help by providing student entrepreneurs with the resources they need to grow and thrive in the commonwealth," said Department of Community and Economic Development Secretary C. Alan Walker.

Discovered and Developed in PA (D2PA) was established by the Corbett administration in 2011 to better support Pennsylvania businesses and to spur creativity and innovation in economic development services. D2PA funds are used to promote entrepreneurship, encourage technology transfer, build capacity for regional economic development, and proactively reach out to and help businesses.

Beginning in September, 2014, twenty-five students from five pilot school districts will receive instruction 4 days per week in half-day sessions at the eCenter. High school students who successfully complete the program will receive credit toward high school graduation. Pilot school districts include Farrell, Hermitage, Sharpsville, Sharon, and West Middlesex.

In addition to the learning experience at the eCenter, students will engage in an entrepreneurship course through the Franklin Center and the Entrepreneurship Youth curriculum. Guided by this curriculum, students will have the opportunity to develop their own Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) business plan. These business plans will be presented to an eSTEAM panel of experts to be judged for potential startup. Each member of the winning team will receive a \$500 cash award.

On January 9, 2014, each of the five participating high schools held a recruitment assembly for students who will be seniors in the 2014-2015 school year. Penn State senior and former Lindenpointe intern, Sean Zippie, led an energetic and interactive presentation that focused on the meaning of entrepreneurship, the unique nature of the Entrepreneurship Academy, and the exciting opportunities that the program presents.

"We want them [the students] to work in teams and compete with different business ideas," said Zippie. "Should the two-year pilot program prove successful," Zippie continued, "it could expand across Pennsylvania."

MIU IV Curriculum Director and Entrepreneurship Academy committee leader, Dr. Cathleen Cubelic, noted that the Academy is close to meeting its enrollment goal of 25 students.

"We are excited by the enthusiastic response that we received from students following the assembly," Cubelic said. "There has been an outcry from the Federal government and private business and industry to produce graduates who possess 21st Century skills and STEAM-related expertise. We are confident that the Academy will provide students with the critical skills necessary to succeed in the 21st Century workforce."

Cubelic indicated that the committee is seeking to partner with local businesses to enhance the learning experience. On March 13, 2014, business leaders gathered at the Park Inn by Radisson to learn more about the Academy and opportunities for involvement.



Sean Zippie presents the Entrepreneurship Academy to juniors at Farrell Area High School.



"This event was a giant step in our active recruitment of business leaders who are interested in investing in the region's future," Cubelic said. "We hope to partner with corporations who are interested in hosting site visits, making presentations, or leading activities with the students."

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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Early Childhood Institute Features Preparation for Success

On March 7 and 8, 2014, over 150 early childhood educators, aides, higher education professionals, parents, pre-service teachers, and Early Intervention specialists convened at Grove City College for the 2014 Midwestern Early Childhood Institute. Hosted by the Midwestern Early Childhood Council, the theme of the professional development event was Preparation for Success.

The program provided many opportunities for attendees to learn best practices and strategies in early childhood instruction at home and in center-based or preschool settings. The Institute began with keynote speaker and author of the book *Acting Antics*, Cindy Schneider. She presented a program on using techniques from the arts to assist young children with social deficits to improve in all facets of their early childhood education. Next, concurrent workshops were held with practitioners and experts conducting breakout sessions focusing on literacy, language, behavior, play, inclusive practices, social and emotional learning, and family learning environments. Throughout the two-day Institute participants were able to peruse instructional and resource materials and discuss program enhancement opportunities with vendors in the exhibit hall.

"This is such a rich learning opportunity for anyone who works with young children," said Jane Dean, adjunct professor of education at Westminster College. "It's great to see our pre-service teachers and undergraduate students networking with current practitioners and engaging in a variety of breakout sessions."

MIU IV is one of the key stakeholders in the Midwestern Early Childhood Council. Other partners include Discount School Supply, Franklin Child Development Center, Grove City College, Laurel School District, Lawrence County Community Action Partnership, LifeSteps of Butler County, Mercer County Head Start, Mercer County Pre-K Counts, MIU IV Early Intervention, Mohawk Area School District, Sharon City School District, Slippery Rock Area School District, Slippery Rock Head Start, Slippery Rock Pre-K Counts, Slippery Rock University, Vocational & Psychological Services, Westminster College, YMCA Franklin.

Dr. Cathleen Cubelic, MIU IV's Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, is MIU IV's lead representative on the Council.

"Research shows that early learning plays an important role in a child's future success," Cubelic said. "In our third year of the Midwestern Early Childhood Institute, the Council's goal was to provide opportunities to help local programs prepare young children to succeed in school and life. It's our hope that this event will continue to grow so we can ensure that we have well-equipped educators, parents, and administrators leading the way."

April Events @ MIU IV

**4th Annual Pinewood Derby &
Academic Fair**
Clarence Brown Community School
April 4, 2014
10:30am - 2:00pm

25th Annual Very Special Arts Exhibit
Pew Fine Arts Center
Grove City College

Exhibit Open to the Public
April 7-16, 2014
8:00am - 8:00pm

Artist's Reception
April 13, 2014
2:00pm - 4:00pm

MIU IV Annual Convention
Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV
April 23, 2014
6:30pm Dinner by Invitation Only
8:00pm Public Meeting

MIU IV Let Me Win 5K
Sponsored by Highmark Blue Cross Blue
Shield
Neshannock High School
April 26, 2014
Registration begins at 9:00am



IU4 Giving Committee Makes a "Change"

Over the past five years, the *IU4 Giving Committee* has collected donations for charitable organizations throughout Butler, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties. The committee asks central office staff to make monthly charitable donations in exchange for permission to wear casual clothing on the last Friday of each month. Recently, the committee was informed that many students are in need of athletic shoes for physical education classes. In response, they created the new *Change for Change* program.

Designed to include employees based at the central office and at many of MIU IV's satellite sites (Clarence Brown, LCEC, Greenville Community School, CCIS, and Mt. Chestnut), the new *Change for Change* program will place collection jars at each site and ask employees and visitors to fill them with spare change. All funds will be used to purchase gift certificates for athletic shoes for students who are unable to obtain them on their own. Employees may contribute at the Annual Inservice August 18, 2014 at Grove City High School.

"Our committee has learned that many of our students did not have the appropriate shoes for gym class," committee member Melanie Turner said. "This program offers a solution for those students. I am confident that our employees will, once again, rise to the occasion and reach our fundraising goal of \$1000."

This year, the award winning *IU4 Giving Committee* has collected contributions for the Lawrence County Heart Association, Feed My Sheep Food Bank in Butler, Toys for Tots of Mercer County, the City Rescue Mission in Lawrence County, and the Grove City Food Pantry. Committee members are Devon Agostino, Debbie Antonelli, Cathy Cornelius, Cheryl Karns, April Kisamore, Melanie Turner, Diane Sederland, and Donna Urey.



Extreme Leadership Students Create Memoirs

Developing effective leadership skills in students is essential to the success of our schools and communities. For several years, MIU IV's Extreme Leadership for Students has enabled high school juniors and seniors to cultivate their leadership skills through a project-based leadership training program. In 2013-2014, 40 students from 20 school districts participated.

MIU IV Extreme Leadership instructors, Dr. Beth Ann Glew and Melissa Wyllie, asked students to identify their individual leadership skills and correlate them with essential 21st century skills. In order to illustrate their understanding, participants created an individual 6 Word Leadership Memoir. In addition, the young leaders interviewed superintendents, principals, school board directors, advisors, community leaders, guidance counselors, teachers, coaches, and peers to obtain lessons in leadership. Working collaboratively with students from other school districts, the students created collective Leadership Memoirs and presented their final project to the Superintendents' Advisory Council in March.

The Extreme Leadership for Students program will welcome new students in the Fall of 2014. All MIU IV school districts are invited to participate.



Extreme Leadership students from Hermitage Area School District, Donte Green and Cali Free, visit with their advisor, Ms. Roshelle Green, and Superintendent, Dr. Dan Bell, following their final presentation.

Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV

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Dr. Wayde Killmeyer, Executive Director



The mission of Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV is to provide educational and administrative leadership, programs, services, and resources which enhance the education of all individuals to meet the changing needs of a global society.