

Mid-Valley Special Education Cooperative Newsletter



April, 2015

Notes from the Executive Director

I'm writing this newsletter on the last day of Spring Break for most of you. I hope that your time away was fun and refreshing. When you return, there will be only about 8 more weeks before the year's end. I look forward to a fabulous finish to a great year!

I'm working over spring break so that I can be away next week (besides the fact that I'm a workaholic). I will be going to the annual Council for Exceptional Children Conference once again. This conference is wonderful for practitioners, researchers and administrators. Over the past few years, we have brought back several items and ideas that we're using in our programs:

- the STARS system that we're using in New Pathways;
- two assessment systems that we're using in the New Directions and SAIL programs for vocational/college/career readiness;
- the reading and math programs that we're using in the ELS program;
- information about technology support systems for New Pathways;
- information about student growth and measurement; and, of course,
- trend information and new ideas for our programs and services.

This year, I hope to learn and bring back even more ideas!

Illinois State News

The Illinois Supreme Court heard arguments on March 11th regarding the pension reform law that was signed into law by **Governor Pat Quinn** in 2013. Participants of the various State retirement systems filed suit after the enactment of SB 1, claiming that it was unconstitutional based on the provision regarding the diminishment of pension benefits. The State's defense is not arguing the fact that there would be diminishments in pensions, but that the state has flexibility within the Constitution in emergencies - such as the poor fiscal health of the State (and thus the pension systems).

The state's argument was that even a constitutional provision is not absolute, that the state retains "police powers," and that the case should be remanded to the circuit court to determine if a fiscal emergency great enough exists for the state to reduce pension benefits. The plaintiffs pointed to the state constitution, which says that state pensions are contractually enforceable and that the benefits for those pensions cannot be diminished or impaired.

The Supreme Court Justices, however, had many questions of the State, often asking why the state should be granted police powers when it could be argued that the state created the fiscal emergency.

Chief Justice Rita B. Garman said that the Supreme Court now would review the case. The court took the case on an expedited basis and a decision could be made relatively quickly.

The outcome of this case will have a major impact on the financial outlook of the State of Illinois. School districts may once again face a pension-cost shift proposal if the pension reform measures are deemed unconstitutional. *The districts may have to pay some or all of the state's contributions to the pension system.*

Important Spring Dates

Mark your calendars for these upcoming events:

- April 10 Psychology/Social Work Network
- April 15 My Service Tracker Training
- April 22 Transition Network
- April 23 Business Partner Breakfast
- April 26 Regional Special Olympics Track and Field Meet
- April 28 Next Steps Training: Speaker—Financial Planning
- May 13 Young Athletes Day,
- May 14 End-of-Year Celebration
- May 22 Transition Graduation Breakfast
- June 2 MJC Graduation

Important Certification Information

Educators can start to renew your licenses now, after April 1st, only if your licensure will expire on June 30, 2015.

Illinois Hearing Conference Presentation

Sharon Jenkins and Carolyn Viereckl had a great turn-out for their presentation about student growth at the Illinois Teachers of the Hearing Impaired Conference. They had over 75 participants and ran out of handouts! They were very proud of the efforts of all of the staff at Mid-Valley who have been working on this important topic for almost two years now! And, their topic was extremely well-received. Congratulations!

Student Growth on April 17

Everyone should be collecting their final installments of their student growth data. And, you should be thinking about your second measure to use next year. On April 17, some of the licensed staff will come to MJC to review the information you have gathered so far this year and will attempt to insert it into a table/format created by the Student Growth Committee. More specific information will be coming to groups of staff via your coordinators.

Kane County Cougars Family Night—June 5!!

Mark your calendars for Friday, June 5. We will be having a Cougar Night! Students, families, friends, staff and their families are invited to this special event. We will be selling tickets. 60% of the proceeds will go to mid-Valley, PLUS we will all be able to enjoy a great day at the old ball park! More information will be coming soon.

End of the Year Celebration—May 14th

The Sunshine Committee has been working furiously on the End of the Year Celebration scheduled for May 14th. We will be honoring our retirees, Lynn Chassee, Phyllis Markovic, Ami Burgess, Donna Popelka, Hope Moore, and staff who have achieved milestone years of service. We will also celebrate our 14 new employees and all of their mentors! Please come to enjoy this special event!

Mandatory My Service Tracker Training—May 15

Steve Karuna from Hathorne will be joining us on May 15 from 3:30-4:30 in the Board room to trouble-shoot our issues regarding MyServiceTracker data. You have been notified by me if you should attend and this training is required. Other staff who wish to learn more are welcome to attend as well.

Autism Awareness Month and Blue Hair Day!

In honor of Autism Awareness month, we are SO looking forward to Nail Wraps and Blue Hair extensions day on April 9th from 2:00-6:00 to support local efforts for Autism research! Please contact Bonnie for more information.

April is OT Appreciation Month!

I think PT appreciation is in the fall, and I think I missed it, so appreciate both groups this month!

PowerIEP Training

The dates for PowerIEP Training have been set. The following are the dates/times/locations for specific staff members to sign-up through the calendar on mvse.org.

- June 1 a.m. or p.m. Early Childhood Teachers (Optional if you are still in session)
- June 11 p.m. SAIL Teachers and SAIL Related Service, Vocational Staff
- August 18 a.m. ABLE, ELS, NP, ND, SS, ECHI, APE, Art **Teachers only**
- August 19 a.m. or p.m. All itinerant teachers (VI, HI); all related service staff (SLPs, SW, Psych, CSN, OT, PT, Vocational Facilitators (if not on 6/11), Instructional Facilitator

If you have problems with any of these dates, we do have overflow options, so please contact your coordinator with your concerns. We are really looking forward to this positive change!!

Programming Changes for 2015-16

Each year, the cooperative works with our member districts to determine what kinds of needs our referred students have for programming and services. This is the nature of a cooperative because district's needs change every year. We hope that we continue to provide quality services that are helpful to the students in our member districts. So far, we anticipate the following changes for the upcoming school year. Some additional changes may be forthcoming after our Board Workshop on April 16.

- One new section of New Pathways at Geneva Middle School South.
- One new section of ELS Intermediate at John Stewart Elementary School.
- One new section of the 12+ program. Estimates for this program are from 25-35 students. Cudos to the 12+ staff who have worked hard on this new programming option.
- One new full-time Vision Teacher. (That makes three!)
- There will be small increases to psychology, OT, PT, nursing and SW services.
- Two sections of New Pathways will be moving to Fabyan Elementary in Geneva (from Western Avenue and Harrison Street Schools).

Fit for Kids Grant

I am happy to announce that we have just received a Kane County Fit for Kids Grant. It will allow us to purchase a funnel ball, tether ball, sitting rocker and standing rocker to add to the playground equipment at MJC!

What's going on with the Vans (Volume 3)

Thanks to everyone who has signed up to be a driver and gone through all the steps. We hope that this opportunity has provided the programs with more flexibility. And, because we have enough drivers, we are trying to go ahead with the purchase of a lift van and another 10 passenger van. However, the state no longer has these options through the purchasing plan. So, we are going to have to go out for bid and purchase vans outright. It is another long process that we hope to have finished by the start of the next school year. Fingers crossed!

Driver Training and Renewals

Speaking of drivers...If you are currently a driver, over the summer, you will need to register at the ROE (www.kane.k12.il.us) for a 3-hour refresher training and submit an annual physical examination. The cooperative will reimburse you for any expenses you may incur.

If you would like to become a driver, please contact Bonnie Carlson and she will review the requirements and deadlines with you.

MJC Supports the Troops for Memorial Day

Meg Bingham and the students/staff at MJC are once again organizing to support our men and women serving in the United States military across the globe. Our students will be writing letters to express their thanks and support. They are also working with Fox Valley Troop Support, Inc. to pack care packages to send to the troops.

Meg will be providing us with a list of items that could be sent in the care packages that I will send out in a separate email. If you have contributions, all the donated items will be collected at school throughout May. The final day to send in donations is Wednesday, May 15th. But don't wait until the end, you can start sending in donated items now!

Mental Health Breakfast

We are happy to report that we just facilitated our first of many school/agency meetings regarding the needs of students with mental health needs. We are so encouraged by the commitment and dedication of the school and agency personnel who have shown an interest in working together.

Parent Forum

On March 26, the parent forum's topic was toilet training. There were approximately 30 family members in attendance! For families of children with disabilities potty-training is a huge milestone. We were happy to host and I believe that there will be follow-up sessions to come. A big thank-you to Kate Vincent, Jennifer Phillips and the other social workers who organized this important event.

Think Summer! ESY!

Parent registration packets are due to your coordinator by April 15.

Upcoming CPI Dates

Information for signing up for these dates will be coming soon from Jennifer Phillips. You will be able to register via our website, mvse.org. Remember that you will be compensated for these summer times. It is our hope that everyone is trained in the summer so that time is not taken away from students.

- June 5, CPI refreshers; 8:00-11:00 OR 12:00-3:00
- June 10, CPI refresher, 9:00-12:00
- August 13, CPI refresher, 9:00-12:00

Move Requests

For this month, our next move date will be Thursday, April 30th. So, that means you should turn in any move requests to **Bonnie Carlson** by **Monday, April 27th** so we can organize the work requests. If you have large furniture, equipment or large boxes to move, please fill out the form and clearly label the items to be moved. The forms are on the web-site.

New Staff for April

Welcome to Jaclyn Chopelas, a new teaching assistant in the Early Childhood New pathways Program at Fox Ridge! And, we have hired Ruth Freidel, as an SLP to start in the fall!

Birthdays!

Happy April birthday wishes to: Jen Traub (1), Bonnie Carlson (4), Carol Fisher (9), Jessica Hanlon (12), Alice Buoy (16), Suzanne Riegler (19), Susan Steele (19), Nancy Sporer (20), Megan Meyer (22), and Susan Gorecki (26).. Happy Birthday!

Our Sympathies to...

Jennifer Wallace, one of our new teaching assistants in the New Pathways program whose brother died suddenly this week. She will need to take time with her family in southern Illinois.

- a. Tina Smith became a grandma has a new baby boy, James
- b. Jessica Hanlon's g'ma passed away

People News



Reesa Kezior passed her test to drive the MV van. Way to go Reesa!!!

Bowling!

Bowling was such a great event! And, we were able to raise money for the Giving Fund. The Giving Fund helps students participate in school activities and provides small emergency assistance for students. Thanks to the fabulous Sunshine Committee and to all of you who gave so generously and had so much fun!

Program News



Jen Haney's Leprechauns!

Professional Development Opportunities

The following are some professional development opportunities you may want to explore. Just let Carla know if you'd like more information.

- April 29, Finding the Gray: Autism Seminar, Effective Interventions for Home and School Environments, Tim Wahlberg, Dixon, IL
- May 16, Putting the Zones into Practice: An Advanced Day of Training, Leah Kuypers, Schaumburg
- June 16-18, iTech Camp! Using iTechnology as Evidence-Based Practice to Meet the Learning and Behavioral Needs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Barbara Stokes, Tinley Park

Final Thought

The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.
William Arthur Ward

I believe that as a cooperative, we are constantly adjusting the sails. I know that every spring, there is a lot of anxiety about the programs, positions and the health of the cooperative. So far, the adjustments we have made together have been very good. However, we always need to continue to think ahead and plan for an unknown future. Realistically, the funding for education in our member-district area is going to be difficult in the future if the plans in Springfield materialize. We will need everyone to think creatively about how we can provide quality services within realistic budget expectations. It will take all of us. Have a lovely spring and I hope our boat sails far together.