

Mid-Valley Special Education Cooperative Newsletter



December, 2013

Notes from the Executive Director

The Holiday Season is upon us! I hope you all have the opportunity to see these days in the eyes of the students!

Our Central Office staff was recently invited to the SAIL feast (Terri Edward's class). The students planned, prepared, and decorated for the event. We were all so impressed, not only with the delicious food, but the students social skills were just so great. We had lovely conversations and were made to feel so welcome. What a great experience for all of us.

We continue to enjoy our visits to the classrooms, although we aren't "out there" as much as we'd like! Nancy just hosted her first Finance Committee where only three of the eleven participants were returning from last year. It was just wonderful to be able to show pictures of all of our students in action, working hard and enjoying themselves. It is an important reminder for everyone.

Culver's Night: December 10th from 5:00-8:00

Don't forget to come and tell your friends and family to go to Culvers in St. Charles (by the WalMart on 64), buy some dinner and mention Mid-Valley. 10% of the proceeds will be given to Mid-Valley. So, no cooking on Tuesday!

Holiday Party

Thanks so much to our fine Sunshine Committee: Yolanda, Bonnie, Diane B., Jeanne, Linda, MaryAnn, Terri, Denise A., and Sandy G. We had lots of fun! Pictures will be sent in a different mailing. I just can't get them to load this evening!

National Boards

Congratulations to Deb Sall who just earned her National Board Certification! It is a huge accomplishment after many hours of dedication to her profession. We are so proud of her!

Winter Outerwear Clothing Drive

Thanks so much to the social workers, students and staff from New Directions who sponsored and staffed the winter outerwear clothing drive. Several families “shopped” during parent-teacher conferences. Thanks to all of you who donated as well! The remaining coats will be donated to help those in need during this holiday season.

Holiday Hours

Mid-Valley’s Administrative Offices will be closed from December 24-27 and again on December 31 and January 1st. The offices will be open on January 2, 2013.

Holiday Cards

Thanks to all the students who made cards for the cooperative’s mailing this year. We selected a student’s card from Melissa Mills’s class. Three reindeer on the front made of fingerprints. So cute!

Parent News

The New Directions Program had approximately 85% of their parents attend Parent-Teacher Conferences! Waubensee SAIL had a great turn-out, too!

I have had the privilege to meet with two parents who are interested in becoming our Parent Partners. I will be visiting with several more in the next few months. I think it is a great way to make our new parents feel comfortable and it is a good support for both sets of parents.

Blood Drive

Thanks to all of you who donated blood on behalf of Bonnie’s son. You still may do so if you wish just by going to any Heartland Blood Center and mentioning that you are donating with Mac in mind. He still is in critical condition at Rush. He was home (near Normal) for a while, but was taken back to Chicago by ambulance last week. Please keep him and the whole family in your thoughts and prayers.

Upcoming Professional Development at Mid-Valley (Check the calendar on the website for details)

- December 13: Psych/SW Network
- January 21: Progress Monitoring for Social-Emotional Needs
- January 29: Autism Sequence
- February 28: Autism Basics for ParaProfessionals
- February 28: Anita Archer: Strategies for Struggling Learners

Reminder: Most Paraprofessionals will participate in the February 28th Institute Day. More details about February 28th will be coming out in January.

Families in Need

Thanks to Reesa, Yolanda and Mary Ann who delivered Thanksgiving dinners! Again, the parishioners of St. John Newman Church will provide holiday support at Christmas, including gifts for each family member for 20 of our Mid-Valley families. We are looking for Santas to deliver the goods! If you are interested in helping to deliver, please contact Bonnie.carlson@d303.org. and we'll give you more details as we know them.

Giving Fund

Last year, the staff of Mid-Valley were very generous and also gave donations to support additional families. We would like to do that again this year. We are finding that many of our families don't have the funds for items during the school year and throughout the year. In addition to holiday assistance, this fund will help the families purchase the lunches when students are on community outings, purchase the school spirit wear, pay for incidental medical expenses and other necessary support throughout the school year. These funds will be managed by the social workers. If you are interested in giving, please send a check to Dominia York, the secretary at MJC or Nancy Sporer. Make your checks payable to the MV Sunshine Fund and mark in the ledger "Giving Fund". Thanks again for your generosity and kindness for those in need.

Adaptive Bikes Fund Raiser

Many of our students are the beneficiaries of the work of Adaptive Mobility who provide bikes for students with physical disabilities. If you wish to help, more information



follows.

From GoFundMe

The Holiday Campaign for Mobility is fundraising to surprise 12 children with disabilities with adaptive bicycles this holiday season. Adaptive bicycles provide children with disabilities with the freedom of mobility, social inclusion, and exercise.

Each bicycle costs \$3,000-\$4,000 and 100% of donations will go to surprising children with disabilities this holiday season. Please support these wonderful children by supporting Project Mobility's Holiday Campaign for Mobility!

Olive Garden Surprise

Olive Garden surprised the New Directions Level 5 kids with a pasta lunch and will continue to do so every month!

Recruiting Substitutes

Thanks so much to Josh Axelson and Paige McNulty who recently went to the job fair at Aurora University to recruit substitutes for our programs. We are still actively looking to increase our pool of subs. So, we're scheduling an orientation session on January 17th in the morning for anyone interested. If you know of anyone who may help us out, please have them contact Nancy Sporer. Thanks!

Think Summer!

We can't believe it, but we are planning for ESY already! The dates are **July 7 to July 31, M-Th, from 8:00-12:00**. The locations will be **MJC, Shelby and Alice Gustafson in Batavia**. Information about summer employment will be announced and

posted on our website in March. These dates/times/locations are firm, so you can begin to inform your parents, if you wish. The official brochure will probably be ready in February.

Students attending ESY must all meet the criteria for eligibility. These forms and procedures are on the Netchemia document library (MVSEC) and on the mvse.org website, under the ESY tab.

Policy Revisions

The policy committee (Tim and Mike) is back at work again, reviewing revisions to our policies and reviewing any pertinent policies related to vehicles. When finished, these same policies will be sent to all staff for any comment before presenting them to the Board at an upcoming meeting.

IMPORTANT Deadlines

Several important deadlines are fast approaching. If any of the following apply to you, please notify Nancy Sporer IN WRITING in the Human Resources Department, by the appropriate deadline.

- Feb. 1: Employees on leave of absence must inform MVSEC of their intention to return to work (MVSEA & TASC)
- Feb. 1: Certified staff members seeking a leave of absence must inform MVSEC of their intention for the upcoming school year (MVSEA)
- Feb. 1: Full-time, tenured staff members may request a reduction to a part-time position (MVSEA)
- Feb. 1: Part-time staff members intending to continue part-time must provide written notice (MVSEA)
- Feb. 1: Individuals who wish to job share must jointly apply (MVSEA)
- Feb. 1: Employees may notify their desire for a change in their caseload assignment for the upcoming school year (TASC)
- Feb. 1: Employees may request a change in FTE status for the upcoming school year (TASC)

- Mar. 1: Educators must notify MVSEC of interest in receiving payment in full the balance of their salary (no summer pay) (MVSEA)
- Mar. 1: Any certified employee who is interested in a transfer for the upcoming school year should notify MVSEC of their intent (MVSEA)

Reminder: Two Business Rules

Mileage should be completed to the last day of the month and then submitted. Your reimbursement will probably be about 6 weeks later. All other reimbursements should be submitted by the 26th of each month. Remember that you will only be reimbursed for pre-approved items.

Book Study Group



- Book Study - Explicit Instruction book by Anita Archer is completed. The book is a great reference for instructional strategies. All members of the group are looking forward to hearing Anita Archer and getting their books signed in February.
- The next book study will be starting after holiday break. It will be "**Self-Determination: Instructional and Assessment Strategies**" by **Michael L. Wehmeyer & Sharon Field**. This teacher-friendly guide presents research-proven instructional techniques that empower students with disabilities to become their own advocates and use effective choice-making, problem-solving, and goal-setting skills. Contact Sandra.Gearhart if you are interested in joining this study.

Student Growth

The fall of 2016 is fast approaching! It is the state-required deadline to include student growth as a part of the evaluation for teachers. I know that the departments have been working hard on measuring both individual and program growth this year. By the summer, we would like to assemble 2 members of each program to determine what we should do in 2015-16. We would like to pilot a menu of possible measurements and obtain feedback from staff. In the spring of 2016, we will need to convene a joint committee of union members and administrators to determine what our teacher evaluation process will be for the fall of 2016. So, the next two years are very important. We appreciate everyone's attention to this important requirement.

Right now, we are continuing with the questions:

- a. What do we use now? Is it sufficient? Is it working?
- b. What else do we need?

Journals

As a cooperative, we are members of the Council for Exceptional Children. We receive many pertinent journals with our membership. Melissa and I decided that I should send out the table of contents of these journals along with the newsletter. If you are interested in any of the articles, just contact Bonnie who will scan a copy to you!!

New Staff in November

One new staff member joined us in November. He is Dan Bledsoe who will be a TA in the New Directions primary program. Welcome!

Move Requests

As you know, we are trying to limit the number of equipment moves to one time a month. Our next move date will be Thursday, December 19. So, that means you should turn in any move requests to your coordinator (for this month) by **Monday, December 16** so we can organize the work request. 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.

Important Meeting for Future Van Drivers in the New Directions and SAIL Programs!

As reported in the November newsletter, the Board has authorized us to lease two vans. Those arrangements have been made and the vans should be arriving fairly soon. In the meantime, we have been reviewing necessary procedures. Each driver will have some specific responsibilities as will Mid-Valley Administration. We would like to host a **meeting on January 16 OR January 22 from 3:00-4:00** to discuss these requirements with anyone who has participated in the training at the ROE (or will participate in future training). This will be a mandatory meeting if you are going to drive. You will be compensated for your time.

December Birthdays!

Kelli Hogan (3), Mike Glabinski (9), Hope Moore (14), Myra Stinson (18), Paulette Ollie (30), and Judy Donner (31). Happy Birthdays to you all!

Thoughts and Prayers

- Our continued prayers go to Jeff Baker's wife and Bonnie's son
- Phyllis is going in for minor surgery. We all hope it goes well.

Staff News

- Joyce Laben wrote and received a grant from Illinois CCBD knitting supplies for the girls group to knit hats for the needy!
- Jaqui Vivoli, our new Technical Assistant, is engaged! To be married soon!

Student and Program News

- The New Directions volleyball team has won their second game! This is a new team for the program!
- The SAIL students earned \$170 in sales at their last sale at MJC. They also received \$200 in orders for scarves. The next sale date will be Monday 16th around lunch time. The students are learning so much about production, from start to finish!

New Directions Guest Speaker: On Thursday the 12th, former MLB baseball player, Josh Axelson has arranged for Jack Perconte, to speak to the students. He will speaking about his time as a MLB baseball player, a business owner and as an author.

I placed a picture of one of his baseball cards below.



Below: Adam S. is sanding his box with Mr.O'Connor in shop class. All the students made a wooden box for their fathers last month and are making a decorative bench for their mothers this month. The projects will be wrapped and sent home for Christmas."



Below: The students in Josie Wallace's ELS class enjoy their holiday dance with their PE peers. The parents came to a reception afterwards. It was a great day!! Thanks to Josie and Mr. Mike!





Professional Development Opportunities

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

- Transition Planning, December 16, Crestwood
- Infinitec Webinars: Various Topics and Dates: Consult www.at4il.org, under Free AT Training, scroll to webinars.
- Reading, Have Dreams, January 21, Evanston

Final Thought

I long to accomplish a great and noble task.
But, it is my chief duty to accomplish
small tasks as if they were great and noble.

Helen Keller

It all adds up, especially during this time when our lives are full of many tasks! Both personally and professionally, I hope you remember that all the efforts are great and noble!

Our family will be celebrating on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd with our small family and then both extended families. Then, by the 23rd, it's all over! I am trying hard to adjust to changes in holiday routines with grown children. But, this is a small issue. I hope you will keep those in need and those in crisis in your hearts over the holidays. I wish you the best the season can bring. C.