

Mid-Valley Special Education Cooperative Newsletter



March, 2013

Notes from the Executive Director

Two important federal and state events have happened recently and could use your attention...

Despite our best efforts – and the efforts of millions of other Americans who asked Congress to prevent sequestration – the devastating cuts took effect on Friday, March 1st. This will mean that there will be a 5% cut to federal IDEA funding. In our local area, this is a reduction of approximately \$281,055. While the damaging results of the cuts may take months to surface, we know first-hand that special education was already hurting before even more funding was taken away by sequestration. I will keep you informed about upcoming advocacy efforts. You may access more information on sequestration in our state at <http://www.isbe.net/sequestration/default.htm>.

More from the state... Last week the Illinois State Board of Education voted 5-1 in favor of putting out for public comment the repeal of the rules that define special education and general education class size limits (Sections 226.730 and 226.731). The rulemaking is posted on the agency's website at <http://www.isbe.net/rules/proposed/default.htm> and the proposed amendments will be published in the Illinois Register on Friday, March 8, 2013, (<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/index/register/home.html>), which will begin the official 45-day public comment period. The public comment period will end at close of business on April 22, 2013. The rules will go to the State Board for adoption in late spring. The public comment period will focus on both the 70/30 rule (70% general education students in a typical classroom) and the special education class size limits.

There was significant debate during the Board meeting, both for and against the proposal, however, ISBE believes that the current rules go beyond federal law and class size is an issue that is best addressed locally. Their opinion is that these artificial limits are, in some cases, actually keeping students with disabilities out of general education classrooms, limiting their access to the curriculum and instruction they deserve and need to be successful.

Important Certification Information

On July 1st, all of your certificates that have been registered with the state will be transferred to a new licensure system. There is still a lot of uncertainty about the transfer, therefore we are highly recommending that you go to isbe.net and click on the ECS system. Enter any professional development or courses you have taken since the last time you entered your professional development in the system. Then PRINT THE INFORMATION FOR YOUR FILES. Also, if your certificates are up for renewal this year, please renew them by May 31, not June 1st, just to make sure the transfer will be seamless. More information about this process will be coming out in a separate, important email.

Draft of the Strategic Plan

At the March 6th Board Workshop, we were able to present the first draft and the five-year comprehensive strategic plan. We have received input from parents, the administrative liaisons, MVSEA leadership and the Board. We are sending it out to all staff for their written feedback by April 19. Or, if folks would like to comment in person, we will be hosting a focus group on April 18 from 3:30-4:30. I hope to hear from each of you.

Email Changeover

Over the summer, we will be changing over to the google system for our email and calendars. You will be receiving more specific information about this changeover and the possibilities it creates for improved communication. Please be alert to the upcoming deadlines. In the meantime, deleted and sent emails will not be transferred to the new system. So, spend some time during spring break to clean out your electronic mailboxes!

And the Winner is...

Thanks so much to all of you for responding to the survey for the PALS/VIP and the Multi-VIP Program. The winner is: ELS (Educational Life Skills) for PALS/VIP. The winner is ABLE (Ability-Based Learning and Education) for Multi-VIP. We're going to check with the staff of each of those programs before we make it official, but you should be seeing changes in our handbook, website and brochures by the next school year.

Needs Assessment

While I'm busy thanking you... Thanks to so many of you for completing the annual needs assessment. The results reveal many important ideas and suggestions for professional development and program improvement. If any of you are interested in obtaining a complete copy of the results, please contact Natalie Assell.

Spring Parent-Teacher Conferences

Please remember that many of your parents would like to have a follow-up parent-teacher conference as scheduled in the spring. Please contact each of your parents to see if they would like to have a brief conference with you.

Great Institute Day!

I think we had a wonderful Institute Day. Thanks so much to our presenters, Mindy (and Trish), Jennifer, Megan and Anne. It was just so great to see the kids and the fabulous work you all are doing with them. I was really pleased with the discussions about student growth in the programs, too. I am looking forward to our next steps together. *A make-up day is planned for April 12th for those who were unable to attend.*

Important Spring Dates

Mark your calendars for these important Spring Dates: And please note that the End of the Year Celebration has moved from May 6th to May 13th!

- Business Partner Breakfast April 18, 2013 9:00 a.m.
- Transition Graduation May 24, 8:30
- MJC Graduation May 31, 12:00
- End-of-Year Celebration May 13 3:30-5:30

Purchasing Deadlines

We're going to be closing the books on this fiscal year's purchases over Spring Break. So, if you have purchases to make for this school year, please submit them to your coordinator by March 23. Thanks.

Mentoring

Carolyn Vierekl and Sue Caddy had the opportunity to attend the state-wide mentoring conference last month. They came back with many good ideas to recharge our mentoring program. Soon, they will be asking for mentors for the upcoming school year. I hope many of you will sign-up!

Educator of the Year

We're coming down to the final stretch! If you have pictures, letters or mementos of Linda Hensel or Melissa Jackson, we will need them before spring break. Thanks so much!

Bowling!

The bowling party was so much fun! There were about 50 people there and we had a blast! My favorite part was meeting all the families who joined us! Thanks so much to Linda Koch, Diane Berg, Sandy Gearhart, Yolanda Smith, and MaryAnn Domaracki who planned and hosted such a great event!

ICEC Fall Conference

Wow! We have had three conference sessions accepted for the Illinois Council for Exceptional Children Conference on November 7, 8 and 9, 2013! The theme is "Celebrating Special Educators." Mindy and the New Pathways team will be presenting their video modeling presentation. Natalie and her team will be presenting Linking Professional Development to Student Outcomes. And, staff from the New Directions program will be presenting their Character Counts Program. Congratulations to you all!!!

March Parent Forum

The March Mid-Valley Parent Forum will be a conversation with Mr. Ambrose Panico who will present “A Parent’s Behavior Change Tool Kit”. Thursday, March 21, 6:30 p.m. only. Please pass this information along to your parents.

Theatre Camps

Fox Valley Rep's Performing Arts Academy announces new program for youth with Autism and Developmental Disabilities. Theater Camps begin July 1, 2013. The flyer is attached to this newsletter. Sounds like fun!

Think Summer! ESY!

We will be starting to notify staff about positions in late-March. If you are interested in applying, the application is under the ESY tab on the website.

Referrals for ESY are due to your coordinator by March 15. Parent registration packets are due to your coordinator by April 15.

Electronic Recycling for AID

The Association for Individual Development (AID) is your local source for electronic recycling. Electronic recycling is part of the vocational training for people with physical, mental, and developmental disabilities. AID promotes environmental responsibility in the community. They take all kinds of electronics and have drop-off locations in Elgin and Aurora. This is a great work site for adults with disabilities and it is a great service. More information is included in the attached flyer.

Book Study

There is a group for the next book for the Book Study, Learners on the Autism Spectrum, Preparing Highly Qualified Educators. The group is planning to meet next Monday or Tuesday (18/19th) at Mid-Valley to distribute books, go over format, and plan meeting dates/places. So far, the members are: Mindy Kaplan, Kimberly Payne, Chris Boers, Meg Bingham, Myra Stinson, Holly Heinrich, and Sandy Gearhart. It’s not too late to contact Sandy Gearhart if you would like to join this group!

Thinking Ahead to Next Year

Mark your calendars for the following dates:

- August 19th First Institute Day
- August 12-15 New Staff Orientation
- August 14th Netchemia Training for New Staff/Refresher for All Staff

All of the CPI training will be in the summer so that it does not interfere with the programming. You will be compensated for these dates and more information will be coming out soon.

Move Requests

For this month, our next move date will be Thursday, March 21. So, that means you should turn in any move requests to **Bonnie Carlson** by **Monday, March 18** 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 in March

Welcome to Benjamin Dahm, Teaching Assistant at the Geneva VIP Program and Brian Lindstrom, Teaching Assistant, New Pathways, Munhall. We're happy you joined us!

Birthdays!

Happy March birthday wishes to: Shona Fowler, Steve Haugen, Ginger Rohde, Stephanie Dietiker, Kim Rakowski, Sharon Reskey, Penny Donehoo, Chris Boers, Susan Litster, Lisa Whitmer, Gail Feltault, and Trish Klein. Happy Birthday!

Thoughts and Prayers...Get Well Wishes

Bonnie's daughter's mother-in-law has been in and out of the hospital since her husband passed away in December. Barb Beasley's husband is having a kidney transplant with a kidney donated by his son-in-law, Jeff. We are sending best wishes for speedy recoveries.

Our Sympathies to...

On Saturday, February 16 at 12:44 PM, Nellie Baker (94) , Jeanette Grondin's mom, passed peacefully into heaven with her family surrounding her. She is finally at peace after an extended battle with dementia and other health issues.

People News

Hear the Cheers! Scores \$18,200. Hear the Cheers! Campaign Scores \$18,200 to Help Young Female Athletes. Money Will Purchase Hearing Aids through Chicago Hearing Society



Sixth-grader Eliza Peters' dream was to raise \$10,000 to help young female athletes with hearing loss. Teaming up with Sarah Spain of espnW and ESP Radio and the Chicago Hearing Society, a

division of Anixter Center, Peters shattered that personal goal and will be able to help more fellow athletes than she ever thought possible. In less than a month, Peters' Hear the Cheers! Campaign to provide hearing aids for young female athletes raised more than \$18,200 from approximately 290 donors located throughout the country. She is one of Sharon Jenkins' students!

Peters knows firsthand how important hearing is to an athlete. Thanks to her hearing aids, she can hear every cheer when playing basketball or running cross-country. But she also knows not everyone could afford hearing aids and that most insurance plans do not pay for the expenses related to hearing aids. So she started Hear the Cheers! As word of the campaign spread, especially through social media, the donations rolled in and the total grew. All donations will be used by Chicago Hearing Society to provide hearing aids, and related audiology services, to young female athletes around the Chicago area, including Kane County, where Peters lives.

Sharon and Eliza have attended the Lion's Club luncheon who also donated funds to this great cause. Eliza's fundraiser is over but she can win a contest for the best project through Julie Foudy's organization. Go to the websites below for more information. Share and she are also scheduled for March 13 for the interview with Karen Meyer of Channel 7. What an inspiration!

<http://www.chicagohearingsociety.org/news/item/217-hear-the-cheers>

<http://contest.juliefoudyleadership.com/projects/motherdaughter>

New Bike!

Jill Wilder and her class had a parent luncheon at Honey Jam Cafe and surprised Mrs. Phillips with an adapted bike for her two boys. Thanks to Betsy Blowers works with the Bike Rack in St Charles. They had a bike to donate to a family and she asked the teachers she works with for recommendations (she works with Josie who suggested the Phillips twins). The young girl in the photo (with help from her mother) raises money for donations.



Great News about our Josie Wallace!
New Christian-based basketball program in Elgin



Along with Justin Anthony, Josie Wallace is the co-founder of EPIC Youth. EPIC Youth — Empowering People in Christ — is open to anyone interested in basketball, not just underprivileged youth. It will offer an Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball program for boys in fourth through 10th grades. The first season kicks off in March. Both believe that basketball is a way to inspire kids to work hard and aim high, not just in sports but also — and more importantly — academically.

Another winner!

Sharon Jenkins is proud and happy to announce that Laura Gonzalez, GHS student in the Hearing Itinerant Program, won the Jacki Marcus Student Scholarship through Illinois Teachers of Hard of Hearing/Deaf Individuals (ITHI) organization. Laura, her mom, Sharon, and Mary Stith, a Geneva Board member, attended the luncheon at the 49th Annual ITHI Conference held at the Wyndham Lisle-Chicago Hotel in Lisle on Friday, March 1. Laura was amazed and asked lots of questions. She said she had never been in a place where so many people were signing. She was gracious and interpreted for her mom who does not speak English. She was explaining everything to her mom from start to finish.

When Laura's bio and picture were up on the screen everyone was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop as the president of ITHI read her bio. There were gasps in the crowd when they heard the president talk about the high level classes she has taken and how successful she has been with learning multiple languages. One of her elementary teachers came to congratulate her after the awards. So many people congratulated her and talked with her that she asked me if I knew everyone in the room (350+ people). I laughed and told her I know a lot of them. Her mom was so happy and proud of her. We were all very proud of her!



Program News

Lots of great things have been happening in the *New Directions Program*. I am attaching the most recent version of their Newsletter, the Eagle's Nest so that you can catch up. The students write and format this newsletter with the help of Paul Scanlon and Ginger Rhode.

If you look on the crowns in all of these pictures, you will see that the students and staff are "100 Days Smarter" in Jennifer Best's PALS classroom. Quite a celebration for 100 days of school!





(This is also the student whose progress was featured on the March 1st Institute Day!)

The adapted bike has been delivered to the VIP Program at Batavia High School!



Ray Ziegler, Kristin V. and Loren Gineris



Linda Koch, Jeremy M. and Loren Gineris

Viking Pals Valentine's Party

For many years, the students at Geneva High School have partnered with the VIP program students for special events and friendship. Thanks to Judy Donner and Amy Singer for their leadership for this fabulous opportunity for our students.





Professional Development Opportunities

Aurora University has been granted ISBE approval to offer the **Special Education Director Endorsement** courses. They will be holding an **information session for summer cohorts on Thursday, March 14th at the Kane County Regional Office of Education.**

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

Mid-Valley Sessions: Consult the website for more specifics about these sessions. Just click the date on the calendar in the "About Us" tab.

- March 15 (Note change from March 8) SW/Psych Network: Dr. Michael Feld
Psychopharmaceuticals
- April 8 Autism Coaching
- April 12 School Improvement Day for D303 and select programs

The following are some other professional development opportunities you may want to explore.

- Basic Elements of Structured Teaching, Autism Program of Illinois and Have Dreams, April 10-11, Chicago
- Developing 21st Century Skills via Web 2.0 Technology Infused, Inquiry-Based Learning, May 11, NIU
- Critical Supports for the Person with Autism, Alyson Beytien, April 19, Dixon, Illinois
- Autism Society Annual Parent and Professional Networking Conference, March 16, LaGrange
- STAR: Strategies for Teaching Based on Autism Research, April 29-30, Chicago Heights

Infinitec Summer Training Camps--Dates and Training Titles are:

June 10, 2013 to June 11, 2013 8:30-4:00 (Low Incidence)

Facilitated by: Dr. Therese Willkomm – Ph.D., ATP, National Assistive Technology Consultant

Beyond Duct Tape & Velcro – Making, Mounting & Modifying Assistive Technology Solutions In Minutes

Location: UCP/Infinitec Southwest 7550 West 183rd Street, Tinely Park, IL 60477

June 10, 2013 to June 13, 2013 8:30-4:00 (High Incidence)

Facilitated by Meg Ormiston – National Assistive Technology Consultant

Getting Your Students College & Career Ready By Integrating Technology Into Your Teaching Practices

Location: UCP/Infinitec Southwest 7550 West 183rd Street, Tinely Park, IL 60477

June 12, 2013 to June 13, 2013 9:00-3:00 Facilitated by: Dr Therese Willkomm - Ph.D., ATP, National Assistive Technology Consultant

Beyond Duct Tape & Velcro – Making, Mounting & Modifying Assistive Technology Solutions In Minutes by

Location: UCP/Infinitec Southwest 7550 West 183rd Street, Tinely Park, IL 60477

June 25, 2013 to June 27, 2013 Facilitated by: Linda Burkhart – International Consultant on Augmentative Communication & Assistive Technology

PODD Communication Books: Three Day Introductory Course

Location: UCP/Infinitec Southwest 7550 West 183rd Street, Tinely Park, IL 60477

Accommodations & Stipends:

Infinitec will provide hotels for teams traveling very long distances (participants will need to share rooms).

Infinitec will provide light breakfast snacks and lunch (dinner will be on your own).

Please contact Peggy Zegley at Infinitec if you have more questions.

Final Thought

**“When spring came, even the false spring,
there were no problems except where to be happiest.”**

— Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*

It is so amazing every month to write this newsletter and review everything that everyone is doing to contribute to the lives of the students and Mid-Valley. I can't thank you enough. I hope you all have a great Spring Break and take some much-deserved time for yourself, your family and your friends. See you when Spring finally arrives, I hope!