

Mid-Valley Special Education Cooperative Newsletter



November, 2014

Notes from the Executive Director

I know Halloween is over, but I just had to start this newsletter with the scariest pumpkin ever! I appreciate all of your patience as we deal with the cyber attacks that are happening in St. Charles. The tech teams and Comcast are working as hard as they can to solve the problem. As you know, Bonnie is trying to recreate all of the information she has placed on the website since the last uncorrupted back-up in June. So, again, your patience is appreciated.

Speaking of technology... We also appreciate all of your patience as we try to work out all of the kinks with the instructional and assistive technology issues this year. We are so sorry if it has interrupted instruction for your classroom. Again, we are trying to work on solutions with the District 303 technology staff.

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT: Open Enrollment for Insurance Due November 30

DO THIS BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR THANKSGIVING BREAK

The portal is open for everyone to make changes to their current benefit plans, sign up for benefits, and/or enroll in the Flexible Spending Account. Please remember, everyone **MUST** go into the portal *even if no changes are being made*. Every full-time employee

receives a board-paid life insurance policy, and if you do not go into the portal and confirm the life insurance, your life insurance will be terminated on Jan 1, 2015 so please be sure to participate, even if no changes are being made to your health/dental benefits.

The portal will be open for the month of November. Please plan to complete the process ***NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 30, 2014***. However, it is always best to do it sooner.

If you are new to the benefit program and have just recently completed the benefit elections, you will need to enter the portal to confirm your elections. If you don't, there is a chance that your elections will be dropped (an unfortunate glitch in the system).

Packets have been either mailed to your homes or are here at the Mid Valley Admin Offices. If you have any questions, or if you need help with the process, please contact Karin Alber or Nancy Sporer.

Student Growth

On our last school improvement day, we were so pleased to see that everyone had collected baseline and were sincerely talking about student growth! Folks are making changes and planning to collect data again. ***At a minimum, you should collect another round of data by our next Institute Day which will be February 27th***. At the same time, teams should be researching and reviewing a second assessment method to be piloted next school year. Great work so far!!

Balanced Assessment Webinars

We all learning about the state's requirements for Student Growth that will be a part of educators' evaluations. As a part of our learning experience, we are viewing the Balanced Assessment webinars together. You are welcome to join us. Our next meeting is on November 13 and the other dates are on the website. You may also view these webinars on your own. They are found on [isbe.net/assessment/balanced assessment](http://isbe.net/assessment/balanced%20assessment).

FABIP

Thanks so much to Jennifer Phillips for providing almost all of the staff with the New! and Improved! Functional Analysis and Behavior Planning process! I think you will find the process to be much more meaningful and effective with your students.

Parent News

The social workers are hosting opportunities to meet with representatives from Day One Network for families to start the process to access the PUNS system. This is only the real avenue for families to obtain services from the state in their futures. If you know of any families who would benefit, please talk with your program's social worker.

Another New Van Driver!

Congratulations to Leslie Surta, in the SAIL program who has become our second van driver! She has picked up the second van and it's parked over at Shelby!

Save the dates for the Sunshine Committee Activities

Mark your calendars for the following:

- Holiday Party--December 10
- Bowling Party--March
- End of Year Celebration--May

Upcoming Professional Development Dates (Check the website for more information.)

- November 13: DLM Training for educators who will be administering the DLM
- November 13: Balanced Assessment Webinars and Discussion (3:30)
- December 12: Psych/SW Network
- January 13-14: CHAMPS Training: Classroom Positive Behavior Strategies

Culver's

I'm excited to report that MJC made \$140 at their recent Culver's Scoopy night! Thanks to everyone who helped out and who came out to support the students.

Families in Need

Annually, we are grateful to the parishioners of St. John Newman Church who provide holiday support at Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter to 20 of our Mid-Valley families. We will need volunteers to deliver the Thanksgiving meal and the Christmas meal/gifts. The Thanksgiving meals will be delivered to MJC on Friday, November 21. Deliveries can be made anytime on that day (frozen turkeys) or throughout the next week. If you are interested in helping to deliver, please contact Bonnie.carlson@d303.org.

Giving Fund

Every year, the staff of Mid-Valley are very generous and also give 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. 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 leger "Giving Fund". Thanks again for your generosity and kindness for those in need.

Official Transcripts Due November 15

Any transcripts that reflect additional, pre-approved academic credits are due to Nancy Sporer or Karin Alber by November 15.

Emergency Days

One never knows when the snow will fly...Remember that you are to follow the emergency closing procedures for your assigned building. Itinerant staff are to follow the procedures of the district where they are assigned most often. Overall, staff need to work the number of days indicated in your professional agreement and contracts.

Department Budget Meetings Starting Soon

It's hard to believe, but the budget season is starting already! Nancy will be convening her first of many finance committees this month. Your coordinators will be starting the budget discussions with each of the departments and programs as well. We are asking for your input about (a) what purchases you need to continue on an annual basis, (b) what new purchases would seem appropriate for your program, (c) ideas for necessary professional development, and (d) other ideas for program improvement. After these discussions, we will review each budget with the finance committee and make decisions about what is feasible to accomplish in these lean economic times. Don't forget that we are also looking for ways to improve efficiency and save money for our districts as well!

Parent Teacher Conferences

November is also the month for Parent-Teacher Conferences. We hope you have constructive and productive meetings with your parents and that they feel welcome and a part of your school. **Just a reminder that all staff (including itinerant staff) are to work the same hours as your host school, even if you have no conferences scheduled at that time.**

Winter Outerwear Clothing Drive

The social workers, students and staff from New Directions are hosting another winter outerwear clothing drive this year during Thanksgiving week. Please distribute the flyer to parents who may wish to "shop" during that week. **And, they are taking coats all the way up to Thanksgiving week. Now is a great time to clean out those closets!**

Mandatory Trainings

The deadline has passed for the completion of the mandatory staff trainings through the on-line Global Compliance Network. Even I have finished them! They just take a little time in your busy days, but they are required from the state. Please see your coordinator if you are experiencing difficulties with computer access. **This must be completed ASAP.**

SAIL Microbusiness

Plan on purchasing your holiday greeting cards from S.A.I.L. productions, this year. Students are hard at work creating new designs. Look for a flyer and order form coming later this month.

STARS Visits

This year, we are continuing to implement the STARS Program in the New Pathways program. As a part of the training, coaches come from Oregon to do site visits. They came to Ryan Potter, Sarah McCafferty and Christine Phillips' classrooms and were very impressed with the programming. Great work!

Journal Articles

As usual, I'm attaching the tables of contents from professional journals we receive. Please let Bonnie know if you would like a copy of the entire article.

iPad Grants

In a separate email, I'm forwarding information from Amy Rogers Gately about iPads that may be available for families in need whose child is on the autism spectrum. Please forward this information to appropriate families and help them with the applications, if necessary. It is a great opportunity.

Blood Drive

It's almost been a year since Bonnie's son, Mac, tragically passed away of a blood disorder. The day after Thanksgiving, we are hoping that many of you will give the gift of life with a blood donation in his name, Mac Carlson.

New Staff in October

Only one new staff member joined us in October. Welcome to Theresa Rosin, a part-time RN in the Early Childhood Hearing Impaired Program!

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, November 20. So, that means you should turn in any move requests to your coordinator (for this month) by **Monday, November 17** 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.

November Birthdays!

Rebecca Dilks (2), Linda Palmisano (2), Peggy Frank (5), Anna Dembowski (8), Carolyn Viereckl (8), Scott Carchedi (17), Kathleen Stevens (18), Connie Miller (20), Janet Tichy (22), and Dominia York (24).. Happy Birthdays to you all!

Our Sympathies to...

- Hope Moore, (TA SAIL) whose mother passed away this month.
- Karen Belich, (Voc. Facilitator) whose father passed away this month.
- Kristin Dean (SLP SAIL) whose grandmother passed away this month.

Thoughts and Prayers

- Ginger Rohde's mom was in the hospital, but is doing better.
- Judy Donner's mom fell coming home at the airport, but is doing better.
- Sue Steele had her heart surgery and it went well. She will be out for at least 6 weeks, probably returning after Winter break.
- Teresa Baier underwent tests to determine her health issues and the news is pretty good.
- Linda Koch's mom is doing much better after finding appropriate in-home care for her.
- Bonnie's brother is recovering from a recent stroke.
- Bonnie's sister-in-law has been diagnosed with cancer.

Staff News

- Bonnie's daughter placed 5th nationally in Dragon Boats!
- Kristin Dean is pregnant!
- The social workers engaged in a social thinking book study and each person identified one new "thing" to implement (ask them about it)!
- The SWs have developed a 30 minute powerpoint presentation to address the topics of mental health, suicide, teen pregnancy, violence, etc. They will be in contact with each of the departments to schedule the time to present.
- Sandy Gearhart and Tracy Linning attended a great conference to assist them with successful educational coaching.
- Melissa, Linda, Maura and Carla went to an informative legal workshop. I'm sure you'll be hearing all about the updates!
- Substitute Training was pretty successful. We're hoping that the 8 attendees will sign up to work in our classrooms! Keep spreading the word to find more substitutes. It is a critical need in our organization and in all of the districts across the county.
- Fingers crossed! Sharon Jenkins and Carolyn Viereckl applied to present at their state conference about the student growth component, the assessments they are

using and have created, and progress of the trial. We're very proud of them for assisting others in the field!



Jeanne Schultz and John Beem were twins for Halloween!

Student and Program News



The SAIL students won Third Place in the St. Charles Scarecrow Festival!!



The SAIL students, busy making the SAIL Scarecrow display.



SAIL students Alex Vargyas and Steven Wilcox were elected as co-treasurers of the ADAPT Club at ECC.



On Thursday, October 9, 2014, Hannah Spejcher was honored at the *Breakfast With The Stars* at St. Charles North High School which honors individual “STARS” in the school community. Hannah was nominated by her US History teacher, Matt Johnson, and her Hearing Itinerant, Carolyn Viereckl.



Paulette Ollie's Class with their spooky monster shirts!

Professional Development Opportunities

For Mid-Valley Sessions, heck out the calendar on the website for more details about upcoming events.

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

- Video Modeling and iTechnologies, Jennifer Skalitzky, December 1, DeKalb
- Have it Your Way with Google Chrome, Jennifer Skalitzky, December 1, DeKalb
- Learning Disabilities Association Conference, February 18-21, Chicago
- Using iTechnology as Evidence-Based Practice! Addressing the Learning and Behavior Needs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Susan Stokes, February 27, Benton, IL

Final Thought

The greatest work that kindness does to others
is that it makes them kind themselves.

Amelia Earhart

As the holiday season nears, I hope that you approach it with kindness, patience and charity. I know that in my own life, the holidays will be different, but rich with family and happy memories. I wish the same for all of you. Happy Thanksgiving!