

MCIU Update

Fall 2009

The Newsletter of Montgomery County Intermediate Unit 23

Spotlight on MCIU's Transition Program Benefits for Students, Districts & Employers

When Brian Bowden first started working in the cafeteria at Frederick Mennonite Community, he felt overwhelmed and frustrated by all the responsibilities, making it impossible to do his job. "I couldn't remember everything I needed to do or how to do it. I got frustrated and couldn't control my temper," said Brian. His disability also made it



harder to talk to people and ask for help. Four years later, thanks to support from the MCIU Transition Program, Western Center for Arts & Technology and the Pottsgrove School District, Brian is now employed part-time in the food services department at Western Center and ready to spend the rest of his career in food services.

"I learned to stay calm, ask questions and use a list for all my responsibilities," said Brian (pictured with Western Center Food Services Director, Lori Deni). Brian said that he learned these skills through the MCIU transition teachers and job coaches, the Pottsgrove School District staff and the Western Center staff. "It's amazing to see how far Brian has come," said Dave Woodman, School to Work Coordinator at Western Center. Brian was originally referred to Western Center who requested support from the MCIU Transition team.

"Brian's success is the perfect example of what the transition program should accomplish," said Transition Teacher, Jackie Lyster. The program provides a sequence of vocational opportunities for high school students with disabilities within Montgomery County. A student's Individual Education Program (IEP) team begins planning his/her transition program at the age of 14. Many students start their training within the school district, and then are referred to the MCIU.

The MCIU is receiving an increased number of referrals for transition services from school districts and, as a result, is expanding and opening new job sites throughout the county. The program, supervised by Cheryl A. Wise, operates with three transition teachers and thirteen job coaches who work with more than 100 students at 25 different job sites, including retail stores, pharmaceutical companies, grocery stores,

...continued page 4

MCIU Spearheads 1st Annual Montgomery County Schools Fitness Challenge: Fit in 60 Days

Register Now for a Healthier Lifestyle

Looking for the motivation to adopt a healthier lifestyle? Register today for the first annual "Montgomery County Schools Fitness Challenge: Fit in 60 Days" - a new initiative that provides motivation and support for all Montgomery County school employees and their families to adopt a healthier lifestyle in 60 days.

Nearly 2,000 people are currently enrolled in the Fitness Challenge, which kicked off September 21, including staff from the county's 21 public school districts, the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit and vocational-technical schools. These participants have accepted the challenge of exercising and tracking their progress between September 21 and November 25 via the Fitness Challenge website, <http://fitnesschallenge.mciu.org>. You can join in the fun and start improving your health by enrolling at any time during the Challenge.



The MCIU spearheaded the organization of the Challenge following discussions with school district business and human resources managers. As members of the Delaware Valley Health Care Consortium (DVHCC), the schools and MCIU were interested in developing various activities that improve employee wellness and, thereby, help the district meet the criteria for premium discounts with Independence Blue Cross. Each district has an assigned Fitness Coordinator who serves on the Montco Schools Wellness Committee. In addition to coordinating the Challenge, this group may develop other wellness activities for the future.

"We were pleased to spearhead this county-wide initiative to promote healthy lifestyles to our school staff and their families. The Challenge is a fun, friendly competition and a rewarding, motivational experience for those who participate," said Kristen Rawlings, Fitness Coordinator for the MCIU.

At the end of the Challenge, prizes will be awarded to the district with the highest number of hours based on the per person participant average; the top three staff county-wide with the most hours of activity; and the top staff member from each school district with the most hours of activity.

If you're interested in joining the Challenge, simply log on to <http://fitnesschallenge.mciu.org> and click "Enroll Now."

New After-School Video Academy



Attention aspiring movie makers! The Montgomery County Intermediate Unit (MCIU) Technology and Information Services Division is offering after-school video academies for high school students throughout the 2009-2010 school year. Participants will meet after school one day a week at the MCIU in Norristown for five consecutive weeks. Course content will include Pre-Production (scripting and storyboarding), Production (videotaping), and Post-Production (editing) techniques.

Students will work in teams (2-4 per team) and produce one or two short videos (5 minute maximum length) during the five week course. The courses will conclude with a culminating event. Students may choose from either the PC or Mac platform course offerings.

All courses are \$199.00 each. Courses will be offered starting in October, January, February and April. For the course schedule or additional information, contact John McBride at 610-755-9355 or email jmcbride@mciu.org.

The MCIU is now on



If you're interested in receiving information about MCIU events, trainings and services, follow us on Twitter. You can subscribe by visiting www.twitter.com/mciu or www.mciu.org and clicking on the twitter icon.

MCIU news tweets can be received on the web, cell phone/instant messenger or other device.

You may also subscribe to MCIU Really Simple Syndication (RSS) newsfeeds from the website, www.mciu.org. These feeds can also be sent to your email inbox or to the feed reader that you have set up. MCIU newsfeeds and tweets will allow you to easily stay informed without seeking information on your own time.

New CIPD Assistant Director



Over the summer, the MCIU welcomed Arthur Mitchell, M.Ed., as the new Assistant Director of the Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development Division. Arthur joined the MCIU from Norristown Area School District where he served as Director of Science and Technology Education for five years. Prior to that, he worked for the New Jersey Department of Education as the Manager of Innovative Programs and Schools. Arthur has also spent time in the classroom as a biology teacher for Upper Merion Area High School and Camden High School. He received his

M.Ed in Secondary Science Education from Temple University.

Arthur said he looks forward to "broadening his influence on curriculum beyond science and opening up additional opportunities for more children in all areas. I hope to make CIPD even more relevant and responsive to meet the needs of teachers, administrators and students."

Joint Energy Summit

The Montgomery and Bucks County Intermediate Units held The 2009 Joint Energy Summit for their member districts this summer. The program included presentations and discussions covering many upcoming changes in the energy market affecting school districts such as the pending deregulation of electricity, lifting of price caps, new energy procurement strategies, and renewable energy solutions.

Over 50 school district representatives attended the event.

2009-2010 MCIU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: John S. Grispon, Spring-Ford Area School District
Secretary: Jeanette Maitin, Abington School District

Vice President: Marc Lieberson, School District of Cheltenham
Treasurer: Marie A. Knox, Upper Merion Area School District

Dr. R. Paul Baumgartner, Souderton
Randy Bennett, Perkiomen Valley
Dr. Russel S. Bleiler, Hatboro-Horsham
Joseph Chmielewski, Upper Dublin
Dr. Susan Guthrie, Lower Merion
Malcolm Gran, Springfield Township

Dr. David Hakes, Upper Moreland
Robert H. Hartman, Jr., Pottstown
Yuri Khalif, Lower Moreland
Ted Miller, Jenkintown
Janice Pearce, Norristown Area
Thayer Pendleton, Bryn Athyn

Burunda Prince-Jones, Wissahickon
Frederick P. Remelius, Pottsgrove
Daniel Sattler, Methacton
Vincent Sherpinsky, North Penn
Mary Rives Young, Upper Perkiomen
Mitch Zimmer, Colonial

Administrator's Leadership Academy

History Teachers Invited to participate in American History Grant

The MCIU is pleased to offer The Administrator's Leadership Academy beginning in February 2010.

This opportunity, co-sponsored by the Flippen Group, the AVID Center, Learning Keys, and the MCIU, is open to any building level or district level leader.

Come learn what other successful administrators have experienced. Many call it "life-changing – both personally and professionally." Participants discover commonalities, and collaborate on the issues affecting today's school environment. More importantly administrators share best practices on how to deal with and solve these issues – while building professional relationships that will last a lifetime.

Experienced facilitators take theory to the application level by providing the participant with "on-the-job" feedback; what you "should" be doing and how well you are doing it.

Register online at www.mciu.org/register and use the search term "leadership". Participants will earn 130 PIL (ACT 45) credits to be applied after July 1, 2010.



Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry and Abigail Adams were among the MCIU's visitors this summer. The time travelers each had many stories to tell about the American Revolution, the founding documents of our country and their personal, political and professional lives in the late 1700s.

Their audience included about 20 history teachers from Montgomery County school districts and the MCIU – the beneficiaries of a \$988,500 grant from the Teaching American History Grants Program of the US Department of Education. The grant, awarded to the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit and MCIU Education Foundation in the spring of 2008, was used to create The George Washington Valley Forge Freedom Institute, a 36 month professional development project designed to improve instruction by Montgomery County teachers and student achievement related to traditional American History.

Now in the 2nd year of the grant, the MCIU is inviting more teachers to participate in the grant opportunities. This year, there are 10 professional development sessions planned beginning October 29th. The workshops will focus on the Post Revolutionary War through the Reconstruction. Activities will include two field trips, including Gettysburg and the Constitution Center. There will be new historical interpreters and strategy sessions to effectively take the historical content to classroom implementation. There will also be a showcase, poster sharing session where teachers will highlight how they have incorporated the new information and teaching materials.

The MCIU is also broadening its work with the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, including a participation in their annual Leavey Awards conference for entrepreneurial educators. This event will show participants how to transform their best practices into fundable grant proposals.

"The program presented by the MCIU and the Freedoms Foundation is fantastic! The array of activities, presenters (professors), and supplemental materials were invaluable and created a sense of excitement and appreciation amongst myself and many of the participants," said Amy Costigan, 8th Grade American History Teacher at Perkiomen Valley Middle School who participated last year. The program is open to elementary, middle school and high school history teachers.

For more information about the American History Grant program, contact Arthur Mitchell, Assistant Director of the MCIU Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development Division (CIPD) at 610-755-9336 or amitchell@mcIU.org.

MCIU Update

Montgomery County
Intermediate Unit
1605 W. Main Street
Norristown, PA 19403
610-539-8550 www.mciu.org

Dr. Jerry W. Shiveley
Executive Director/CEO

Jane W. Mansuy
Asst. Executive Director/
Director of Human Resources

Stan H. Wisler
Chief Financial Officer/
Director of Management Services
Edited by

Kristen Rawlings
Director of Communications

hospitals, retirement communities.

The MCIU can accommodate students for a full day or half day programming as well as three levels of transition support:

- Work Exploration: real life work demands in an actual employment setting with intensive job coach support
- Employment Training: short-term employment training with the assistance of a job coach and job mentor
- Work Experience: ongoing support strengthening employability skills for full employment

The transition team can also provide a vocational evaluation for students to determine job interests, cognitive abilities and physical capabilities. This improves the MCIU's ability to match the student with the right job and determine the level of supervision the student will need. The program serves students with a wide range of disabilities, including autism, mental retardation, emotional disturbances, hearing impairments, etc.

"I love that we serve students who have a variety of disabilities and are able to help all of them with that final step in their education that leads to employment," said Catharine Miller, job coach at the MCIU work site. Miller works with six groups of 4-5 students each on a weekly basis at the MCIU. The students assist with clerical and custodial work.

Employer Benefits

The students and school districts are not the only ones that benefit from the Transition Program. Employers enjoy the opportunity to mentor students and receive assistance with work tasks.

Holy Redeemer Health System is one of the transition program's major hubs in the eastern part of the county. Over the past 4 years, the program has grown from two groups of students for half a day to 12-15 students all day, five days a week. The great success of this job site is the result of a close partnership between the MCIU teachers, job coaches and Holy Redeemer's Director of Volunteers, Beth O'Connell. Sharing a common goal of accommodating students' individual needs and interests has helped the team expand and adapt the health system's job opportunities.

"We love this program and it is great for the health system because it matches our mission to care, comfort and heal. Our staff really enjoy mentoring the students, building a relationship with them and watching them grow. The students are a real asset to the health system," said O'Connell. She estimated that the students provide more than 1,000 work hours each year, assisting with jobs in the hospital's thrift store, mail room, cafeteria, day surgery center, physical therapy, information services, reception areas and assisted living program. The students' jobs include transporting patients, assisting with physical therapy sessions, cooking and preparing meal trays, sorting and delivering mail, and greeting/directing visitors.

Job coaches, Lois Blum and Katrina Landis, say they treasure the support of the Holy Redeemer staff in delivering a quality program. "We all really care about the students and work hard to match students with jobs that are appropriate. If the Holy Redeemer staff has a concern or we have a concern that a student's placement is not working well, we talk about it and adapt as needed," Blum said.

The transition team is always looking to expand relationships with employers throughout the county in order to offer students a variety of jobs in different settings. "I believe the success of the transition program is a result of three key factors. One key factor is our teachers, job coaches and vocational evaluators who serve as ambassadors of MCIU. They demonstrate excellence and professionalism in their work, high spirit and dedication each and every day. A second factor is our strong relationships with parents, employers and volunteer coordinators. These valuable relationships create a road to success for each one of our students. Last, the school district's trust and commitment to MCIU for providing a program that exceeds their expectations. As a result of these three key factors, MCIU continues to develop one of the strongest transition programs in Pennsylvania," Wise said.

For more information about the Transition Program, contact Supervisor, Cheryl Wise at 610-755-9424.



(picture above left to right) Beth O'Connell, Director of Volunteer Services at Holy Redeemer Hospital and Medical Center, joins MCIU transition teacher, Maureen Morell; supervisor, Cheryl Wise, and Pam Snashall, Holy Redeemer's Vice President of Development. (right photo, left to right) MCIU's job coach, Katrina Landis; transition teacher, Maureen Morell and job coach, Lois Blum assist about 15 high school students with disabilities by offering a sequence of vocational opportunities at Holy Redeemer.

