



MRESCUpdate

MIDDLESEX REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Cooperative, Cost Efficient, Quality Services

MRESC Service Awards

The MRESC Board of Directors and School Superintendent Mark Finkelstein acknowledged the following staff members for their years of service.

ACADEMY LEARNING CENTER

10 Years

Ronnie Dolinsky
Kimberly Miller
Karen Szold
Barbara Tumulty
Kathleen Walsh

5 Years

Kathleen Evers
Dolores Grillo
Colleen Patterson

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS LEARNING CENTER

10 Years

Shahnaz Afzal
Alina Gulak
Asmita Patel
Audrey Roderman
Julie Sakowicz
Mahalakshmi Sridhar

5 Years

Marta Figueroa
Maheshwari Gurukula
Nelly Palacios
Heena Patel
Sandra Permaul
Angela
Tripodi-Seaboldt

CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

10 Years

Sharon Ferrari
Linda Pirot

5 Years

Nicole Axelrod
Terese Manalansan
Helene Paullus
William Schussler
Bharti Valiramani

CENTRAL OFFICE

25 Years

Helene Rudnick

20 Years

Nancy Tavormina

10 Years

Michele Peaney

5 Years

Michael Gritz
Dawn Ramsen

NONPUBLIC DEPARTMENT

(Nonpublic Teachers/IDEIA-B Teachers)

10 Years

Robin Garber
Marin Spencer

5 Years

Susan Brennan

(See **Service Awards** on page 6)

County Superintendent Visits MRESC

"I witnessed staff members with the type of attitude and positive energy required to be effective with special needs students," said Todd Flora, Interim Executive County Superintendent of Schools for Middlesex and Mercer Counties, following tours of two MRESC schools.

"I admire and respect, the passion, and commitment I see here," he added, following tours of the Bright Beginnings Learning Center and the Piscataway Regional Day School.

As County Superintendent, Mr. Flora provides leadership in educational planning and program improvement, and is responsible for the coordination and approval of fiscal, educational, facility and transportation services.

"We are always looking for ways to provide quality services while being mindful of taxpayer dollars, and I'm very impressed with the approach used by the MRESC," said Mr. Flora.

Prior to his tour, Mr. Flora learned more about the MRESC's educational and business services through presentations by Superintendent of Schools Mark Finkelstein, Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar, Business Administrator Patrick M. Moran, Human Resources Director Lorraine Small,



Interim Executive County Superintendent Todd Flora during one of his classroom visits while touring the MRESC.

Purchasing Agent Teresa Gerstacker, and Financial Advisor/Marketing Coordinator Dennis Balodis.

"We have evolved from a \$15 million entity dealing primarily with special education issues, into the largest educational services commission in the state, with an \$80 million budget serving the needs of the educational and business communities," said Mr. Finkelstein.

The presentations also included a comprehensive overview of the MRESC's shared services approach in dealing with both its educational and business services and student job sampling programs.

(See **County Sup't** on page 3)

Letter From The President



BBLC students learned some civics lesson recently, which they shared in a bulletin board which included a signed photograph and letter from President Obama.

Students Build Legacy Wall



The PRDS Legacy Wall culminates a two-month project spearheaded by Audrey Roderman. All PRDS students participated in designing and creating their own legacy tile, paid for by donations, and greatly admired by parents attending Back-To-School Night. Student Anna Lee Perez, along with staff member JoAnn Ackerman proudly points out her tile.

Polish Heritage Month



As part of their exploration of different cultures, BBLC students learned a great deal from the materials assembled by Teacher Olga Lepkowska in honor of Polish Heritage Month in October.

Fall Fun Day



The change of seasons was incorporated into a Fall Fun Day activity at NuView.

Safety Award For The MRESC

The MRESC was named a recipient of the 2013 Safety Award from the New Jersey School Boards Association Insurance Group (NJSBAIG).

The award is based on MRESC's implementation of an effective safety program minimizing workers'

compensations costs, which in turn lowers insurance premiums.

The MRESC was one of 43 districts from over 400 districts in the NJSBAIG workers' compensation insurance pool to receive the award. •

Major Donation To ALC From Stonebridge Men's Club

The Academy Learning Center received a \$10,000 donation from the Stonebridge Men's Club to purchase a Smartboard for use in its Preschool for Students with Autism, and 10 iPads (including a selection of preloaded language development and behavioral apps, protective cases and extended warranties), for general student use.

"When we heard about the work ALC does with special needs students, we contacted them to see how we could help," said Tony Guerriero, Stonebridge Men's Club Fundraising Chair.

After touring the school with Principal Dr. Erik Solberg, Mr. Guerriero recommended the club make a significant donation.

"We saw firsthand how hard the staff works with these kids and the difference they make in their lives, so we were delighted to provide funding for the



ALC students are already benefiting from the Stonebridge Men's Club \$10,000 donation.

equipment Dr. Solberg recommended," Mr. Guerriero said.

Mr. Guerriero and Stonebridge Men's Club Vice President John Colella attended a recent MRESC Board of Directors meeting to receive a

resolution honoring the organization for its donation.

"It was an extraordinarily generous contribution that we much appreciate," said MRESC Board President Dale Caldwell. •

Nonpublic's "Amazing Nurse"

Nonpublic Services Nurse Genevieve Yhap-Zebro was selected as one of 10 finalists in the Johnson & Johnson nationwide search for the "Amazing Nurse" of 2013. Although Mrs. Yhap-Zebro was not the final selection, she was excited to make it as far as she did in the competition.

"It was truly an honor to be a top 10 finalist," said Mrs. Yhap-Zebro.

The winning nurse, determined by online voting totals from across the country, was Gloria Kindzeka, RN, Hiawatha Home Care in Coon Rapids, MN.

Employed at the pre-K-8th grade Sacred Heart School in South Amboy, Mrs. Yhap-Zebro was selected by a panel of judges who reviewed more than 1,200 nominees from across the United States. According to Johnson & Johnson, the judges narrowed the competition down to the 10 finalists who "demonstrate and provide extraordinary care and make a difference every day in the lives of others," based on scoring

the nominees in the categories of "Inspiring Experience," "Exceptional Care" and "Lasting Impact."

Mrs. Yhap-Zebro was nominated by Jennifer Jenkins, the mother of a Sacred Heart student.

Ms. Jenkins was required to submit an essay of up to 300 words explaining why Ms. Yhap-Zebro deserved the title.

Nonpublic Services Supervisor Fredrika Schwerin agreed.

"In the two years Mrs. Yhap-Zebro has been with us, she has demonstrated that she is a detail-oriented, conscientious nurse, who always does what is in the best interest of students and their families," said Ms. Schwerin. •



Nonpublic Services "Amazing Nurse" Genevieve Yhap-Zebro.

County Superintendent

(Cont'd from page 1)

The MRESC's Co-op Pricing System, the largest cooperative purchasing program in New Jersey, was also reviewed, along with the process for managing over 600 school transportation routes across the state. The Lease Purchase Financial Advisory Bidding Service, which provides schools and municipalities cost effective ways to bid equipment and major project lease purchase transactions, was also explored. •



Interim Executive County Superintendent Todd Flora liked what he observed during a recent visit to the MRESC.

An Overview of Favorite and Affordable Apps (Courtesy of Nonpublic's IDEA-B)

APP	Why We Like It	For Grades	Price
Phonics Genius	Words with specific letter/sound combinations. Can personalize flashcards to include target words and sounds	K-2	Free
Fractions	Narrated lessons, virtual manipulatives, practice questions, visual models, interactive challenges	5-8	\$0.99
Tiny Chicken Learns Rounding	Practice/review game for rounding numbers	3-5	Free
Motion Math Hungry Fish	Teaches multiple ways to improve math skills	3-5	Free
Hands-On Equations 1 Lite	Offers fundamentals of Algebra	6+	Free
MathTappers: ClockMaster	Helps students time telling skills	1-3	Free
MathTappers: Find Sums	Basics of addition and subtraction	1-3	Free
Rocket Math (Mathmateer)	Math review tools	1-5	Free
Alpha Writer	Enhances spelling abilities	K-2	\$2.99
Dragon Dictation	Voice recognition helps student speak and see text	All Grades	Free
iLearn: US States	Overview of US Geography	4	\$0.9
Study/organization skills	Flashcards, writing tools, can be customized	All Grades	Free
Show Me Interactive	iPad as a personal interactive tool	All Grades	Free

Welcome Aboard



New MRESC Board of Directors are (L) Mr. Timothy Capone, Superintendent of Highland Park, and Dr. Linda Madison, Superintendent of Middlesex Borough, joined by Board Vice President Bill Petscavage (2nd from L), and President Dale Caldwell.

New Teacher Evaluation System

The NJPSA's Dr. Nancy Richmond recently visited MRESC to share information with administrators regarding the Stronge Teacher Effectiveness Performance Evaluation System, one of four state approved evaluation models mandated for use this school year.

The Stronge Evaluation System, one of the state's approved evaluation models was selected by MRESC because it is a "comprehensive assessment tool, taking into account multiple teaching traits including professionalism, communication skills, innovation, passion and instructional planning," said Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar.

Overseeing implementation of the Stronge evaluation system is Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar and Director of Human Resources Lorraine Small. •



Administrators learned more about the Stronge Teacher Effectiveness Performance Evaluation System during a recent training.

Congratulations To Board Members

The MRESC Board of Directors knows the New Jersey Association of School Administrators is in good hands with two of its members holding leadership positions. Dr. Gary McCartney, Superintendent of the South Brunswick

- Schools, currently serves the NJASA as its President.
- Meanwhile, Dr. Brian Zychowski, North Brunswick Superintendent was recently selected as the organization's
- President-Elect. •

Teachers From Japan Visit MRESC

The Fukia, Japan Board of Education is about 7,000 miles from MRESC's Piscataway Campus, so one would expect some differences in each organization's approach to education. While there are some differences, a dozen teachers visiting from Japan also identified many similarities and best practices during a collegial exchange with MRESC staff during an afternoon debriefing session.

"The positive attitude of your teachers, and the use of student work to decorate classrooms and hallways create a good environment for learning, which is something we do as well," said Ya Suko, a teacher at Yomeri Junior High School.

Another visiting teacher mentioned how he observed a "step by step" teaching approach similar to the style he used in his classroom.

Everyone agreed with the assessment of Marie Phelan, a 27 year veteran teacher at the Piscataway Regional Day School, who said making sure students "have fun while learning, and feel respected," were important factors in the education process.

The visitors from Japanese Junior and Senior High Schools were part of a tour of MRESC's Bright Beginnings Learning Center, and PRDS, coordinated through Rutgers University's Program for American Language studies.

"Touring the schools was a perfect way for the Japanese educators to observe productive classroom approaches," said Karen Pickering, coordinator of the Rutgers program.

The visiting teachers observed direct instruction techniques used to teach students with autism, and adaptive/physical education and English/Language Arts programs that engaged multiply disabled students. The visitors observed and took notes, and didn't hesitate to interact with students in small group activities, in addition to enjoying a midday lunch break at Frank's Café, the staff/student run restaurant at PRDS.

"They designed a procedure, worked together as a team, helped students achieve their goal, and always showed an encouraging attitude," said Mr. Satoru Yamauchi.

The visitors observed some new approaches to learning that they plan to incorporate into their classrooms, including crouching down at times to be at eye level with an individual student.

Mr. Yamauchi, the leader for the visiting teachers, was interested in the use of student portfolio's to measure student progress.



The visitors observed some new approaches, including crouching down at times to be at eye level with students.

"That is not practiced in many schools in Japan, but I think it is one of the most useful ways to evaluate and support students," Mr. Yamauchi said.

One key difference that came to light was a law in Japan requiring corporations with over 100 employees to have a workforce that included a minimum of 1.5 percent of people with disabilities.

Mr. Molenaar pointed out that while

it is illegal to discriminate against someone with special needs, there are no laws requiring companies to hire people with disabilities.

Mr. Molenaar concluded the day noting that the educators from both countries clearly recognized the need to "teach from the heart, with unconditional positive regard towards student achievement in order to make a positive impact in the classroom."

Practical Skills At ALC



ALC's Chris Freeman, assisted by Occupational Therapist Sheryl Wurmbrand, working in the ADL room as part of the "salad making program" for MRESC, learns what is involved in peeling a carrot. The students prepare about 40 customized salads for sale each week, and learn vegetable preparation skills in the process.

Early Start for New Employees

Over 40 new MRESC employees attended a "New Staff Orientation" program a week before school opened.

In remarks to the new staff, Superintendent Mark Finkelstein stressed the service component inherent in joining about 1,350 other MRESC employees.

"We offer educational and business services to over 600 school districts and municipalities, coordinate transportation for approximately 12,000 students, and operate the largest Co-op Pricing System in New Jersey," Mr. Finkelstein said.

"All of you have been hired because you appear to have the passion and commitment required for this kind of

work," he added.

Mr. Finkelstein pointed out both the new and the ongoing challenges facing the MRESC for the coming year, including: the Department of Nonpublic School Services expanding its programs to Princeton, Ewing, Marlboro and Stafford Townships; being the largest provider of Hearing Loss/Itinerant Services in the state; the continued emphasis on Community-

Based Instruction programs, so special needs students can hold positions of employment when they graduate, and the importance of "returning students to their home district" whenever possible.

Director of Human Resources Lorraine Small coordinated the orientation, with assistance from Ms. Lisa Keefner and Ms. Luz Baerga.

"Our employees must be educated, compassionate, and able to work

effectively with our diverse student population," said Mrs. Small.

"It has been a pleasure to identify and welcome you to our organization," she added.

In addition to speaking informally with MRESC's administrative staff, the program included training workshops, and a presentation by Middlesex County Academy Principal Arthur Francis about "Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect."



Middlesex County and Raritan Valley Academy Principal Arthur Francis led a seminar on "Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect," at the new staff orientation.



Participants at the new staff orientation.

Service Awards (Cont'd from page 1)

CHAPTER 226 REGISTERED NURSES

20 Years

Mary Mesica

10 Years

Karen Kelly

IDEIA-B AIDES

10 Years

Sharon Ferrari

Linda Pirot

5 Years

Theresa Luppino

NUVIEW ACADEMY

10 Years

Nicole Elmini

Barbara Rose

Lynn Williams

5 Years

Laura Cagle

Jennifer Woodard

PISCATAWAY REGIONAL DAY SCHOOL

10 Years

Bethany Broadwell

Cecelia Fisher

Gautam Goon

Manjit Kaur

Charlotte Princiotta

5 Years

Stacy Critelli

Sandra Fehl

Maureen Hodroski



Central office staff receiving awards for their years of service included (L-R) Michele Peaney, Dawn Ramsen, Helene Rudnick and Nancy Tavormina.) The recipients were joined by (L) Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar, School Business Administrator Patrick M. Moran, and (R) Superintendent Mark Finkelstein and Director of Human Resources Lorraine Small.

Glass Art Appreciation For NuView Students

NuView Academy art students spent the day at Glassroots, a workshop program in Newark "designed to provide youth with a pathway to self-sufficiency through employing glassmaking skills. GlassRoots' vision is that all individuals within our community and our state will have the opportunity to express themselves and to learn life skills through the creation of glass art."



Upon arrival, students were divided into two groups, alternating between glassblowing demonstrations, glass cutting and fusing, and learning flame-working techniques. Presentations of glassblowers creating hand blown glass structures, we shown, along with techniques for creating hand cut mosaic art and hand made glass beads through flame working, using torches and glass rods. •



NuView students Jeanelle Angeles (L photo seated), and Angel Herrera (above) both in the Upper High School class, received hands on experience during a recent trip to Glassroots in Newark.

Celebrating Frank's Café



Emotions were flowing at a recent dedication ceremony at Frank's Café, honoring the late Frank Fontello, who donated the funds necessary to create the café, which provides great job training for students, and serves tasty food as well. Attending the event were Frank's son Doug and family members (L), along with (R) friends of Frank's and MRESC staff members.

Board President Stops By BBLC Classroom



Following a recent Board of Directors meeting, MRESC Board President Dale Caldwell took time to meet with students and participate in some activities at the BBLC.

Students Visit Central Office



Terri Thompson brought some of her students over from PRDS recently to meet people at the Central Office. The visit is in part meant to help students with their socialization skills.



Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission

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Dunellen, Phillip Heiney
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Edison, Richard O'Malley
Highland Park, Timothy Capone
Jamesburg, Gail Verona
Metuchen, Rose de Vries
Middlesex, Linda Madison
Milltown, Bill Petscavage
Monroe, Louis Masters
New Brunswick, Dale Caldwell

North Brunswick, Brian Zychowski
Old Bridge, Matthew Sulikowski
Perth Amboy, To Be Announced
Piscataway, Tom Mosier
Sayreville, Frank Alfano
South Amboy, Robert Sheedy
South Brunswick, Gary McCartney
South Plainfield, Stephen Genco
South River, Michael Pfister
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Woodbridge, Robert Zega
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Gary Molenaar, Assistant Superintendent
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