



MRESCUpdate

MIDDLESEX REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Cooperative, Cost Efficient, Quality Services

CLL Murals At Noyes Museum

After completing several "amazing" art therapy workshops for special education students at the Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University, in Oceanville (Galloway Township), Lisa Burger applied what she had learned to benefit her students.

Ms. Burger, an art teacher at the Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL), said she discovered new approaches to help students use art as an outlet for self expression, in addition to increasing their ability to make decisions independently. She recently incorporated her additional training on behalf of the over 200 students with Autism & Multiple Disabilities attending CLL.



As a result, four CLL student murals were on display in the museum's Young-at-Art Gallery for the entire month of July.

"I love these paintings," said Saskia Schmidt, Noyes Museum's Director of Education, who was delighted to exhibit the art after receiving slides of the murals and being contacted by Ms. Burger.

(See **CLL Art** on page 4)

The NuView Academy Annex Opens For The 2015-16 School Year



Students Jehmari Copeland (L), and Xander Dizzard-Sterns, with recently hired NuView Academy Annex (NAA) Principal Chastity Rivera. Like NuView Academy, the NAA is a collaboration with Princeton House Behavioral Health, offering academic programs and clinical services in a nontraditional school environment.

Additional students needing academic and clinical support can now be served as a result of the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission's (MRESC) decision to open the NuView Academy Annex (NAA) in time for the 2015 -2016 school year.

The NAA is a collaborative effort between the MRESC and Princeton House Behavioral Health (PHBH), and modeled similarly to the NuView Academy, the MRESC's other PHBH collaboration.

Like NuView Academy, the NAA will operate from 8:30 a.m. – 2:15 p.m., for students ages 5-21 with a diagnosis of depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and conduct, thought or anxiety disorders, who function academically at or near grade level, but do not adapt well in a traditional school setting.

Located on MRESC's Piscataway Campus, 1690 Stelton Road, admission and referral information can be obtained

(See **NAA** on page 4)

Congratulations To Our 2014-2015 Graduates! See Page 6

Program Updates Shared With Administrators

Administrators from nonpublic and public school districts had an opportunity on two days to attend meetings at the MRESC's Media Center to hear information about a variety of program and procedural updates. Participants also learned about nursing consultation requirements, based on New Jersey Department of Education statutes and Administrative Code guidelines.

Moderated by MRESC's Director of Nonpublic School Services Nancy Armbuster, the program included presentations by Nonpublic School Services Supervisors Barbara Pezzuto and Fredrika Schwerin.

A narrated PowerPoint of the program can be accessed at MRESC's Home Page, www.mresc.k12.nj.us/pages/Middlesex_Regional, and clicking the Nonpublic School Services listing under the Education Services heading. •



Nonpublic and public school administrators recently met at MRESC's Media Center.

Music To Learn Science By



Mr. Leigh Russ periodically volunteers to visit ALC and sing songs with students that incorporate scientific concepts.

MRESC's ESY Program



The MRESC offers Extended School Year (ESY) services during the summer. The ESY program includes a blend of recreational activities and academic course work for students.

New Special Education Administrator Search Service

Although all administrators have significant responsibilities, special education administrators have several unique challenges as well. In addition to developing a comprehensive and engaging curriculum that complies with state and federal regulations, special education administrators must:

- Effectively facilitate a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Establish student placement guidelines along an LRE continuum.
- Understand the intricacies of federal

and state laws, state code and the underlying principles of IDEA

- Communicate across the spectrum of school personnel, parents, social service agencies and medical facilities.
- Secure state and federal grants when possible.

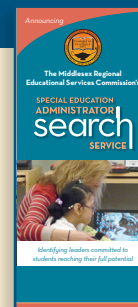
Given all that is entailed, the MRESC is now offering a Special Education Administrator Search Service to help Boards of Education identify and hire quality candidates.

"We decided to offer this shared service because of our years of experience

coordinating special education services with literally hundreds of school districts," said Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein.

In addition to the special education administrator search service, the MRESC also offer a Superintendent Search Service.

For additional information, please contact mfinkelstein@mresc.k12.nj.us, or 732-777-9848 Ext. 3200. •



MRESC Vendor Expo 2015: Thank You – Please Join Us Next Year!

The MRESC Co-op Pricing System thanks the many vendors and attendees of the recent Vendor Expo, and looks forward to a bigger and better event next year. "We had a great Expo, appreciate everyone's involvement, and as usual, based on input from participants, will make adjustments and add new elements," said School Business Administrator Patrick M. Moran.

The Vendor Expo offers municipal, housing authority, and county government officials, along with school business administrators and purchasing agents a mini-Atlantic City convention experience. Participants test products and equipment, compare prices, attend accredited workshops, and network over the course of a few hours.

"Officials entrusted with spending taxpayer funds appreciate the Vendor Expo because it's a convenient way to accomplish their due diligence regarding major purchases in a short time, and the event is free," said Mr. Moran.

Held at MRESC's Piscataway Campus, 1690 Stelton Road, vendor products range from security cameras and card access systems, to furniture, custodial and office supplies. There is plenty of room outdoors for school buses, tractors, forklifts, bulldozers and snow removal equipment. Accredited workshops for Government, Ethics, Business Law and Procurement Procedures are also available.

New in 2015 was the Vendor Expo Raffle Drawing. Co-op Pricing System members received a free 50/50 ticket and a chance to win prizes contributed by vendors, including: a 60 inch Vizio Smart TV from Open Systems Integrator; \$500 of Safety Fill Installation from Energy Solutions; and a two night,

three day Jersey Shore getaway courtesy of Adelphia Steel.

The Vendor Expo is coordinated by MRESC's Co-op Pricing System, representing over 900 school districts and government agencies. The Co-op Pricing System is New Jersey's largest state approved cooperative, and membership is free. •

**To learn more about
the 2016 Vendor Expo,
contact the Co-op Team at:
coop@mrescl.k12.nj.us, or
732-777-9848 Ext. 3120**



CLL Art (Cont'd from page 1)

Ms. Burger was thrilled with the opportunity to showcase her student's art work. Assisted by her husband, she went to The Noyes Museum and spent an afternoon mounting the four murals, each four feet wide and six feet high.

"The abilities of our students vary greatly, however everyone at CLL participated in this project," Ms. Burger said.

"For some it was a lot to make little marks, while others put in a significant amount of time. But the fact that all of our students participated was great," she added.

Students had full decision-making power regarding color choices, and had several items to choose from to paint with, including sponge brushes, paintbrushes of varying sizes, paint rollers and cotton swabs.

"The students enjoyed the experience and were proud of their work," said CLL Principal Mary Beth Conley.

"It was a joy to see how pleased they were with what they had accomplished," she added. •



Lucas Mazza enjoyed the opportunity to use art as a form of self-expression.



Gabriel Diaz liked making his own color choices while working on the murals.

NAA (Cont'd from page 1)

by contacting the NAA at 732-777-9860, Ext. 6100, or emailing Principal Chastity Rivera at crivera@mresc.k12.nj.us.

Mrs. Rivera was recently named the NAA principal after serving five years as principal of the Deron School of New Jersey, a special needs school offering academic programs, independent living, and transition services.

"I am honored with the opportunity to be principal of the NuView Academy Annex, and to be part of the MRESC family," Mrs. Rivera said.

Mrs. Rivera will also serve as principal for the Middlesex County Academy, and the Interim Alternative Educational Program, serving at-risk and classified students in grades 7-12.

"We have had great success with the academic and clinical support services model at NuView Academy for 15 years," said MRESC Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein.

"However, NuView Academy can only accommodate approximately 70

students. When our constituent school districts informed us they needed to place additional students who required the academic and clinical components we offer, our Board of Directors responded by expanding the program," he added.

Like NuView Academy, the NAA will provide the educational program and coordinate referral procedures. The PHBH will administer the psychiatric and therapeutic components, and further support student instruction.

Princeton House Behavioral Health President Richard Wohl said he welcomed the opportunity to expand his organization's collaboration with the MRESC.

"A 15-year working collaboration says a lot about our two organizations. The encouragement and support we have had for each other has resulted in an extremely satisfying relationship," said Mr. Wohl.

Admission criteria to the NAA includes students who:

- Demonstrate cognitive and developmental maturity to function within the treatment milieu.

- Are physically able, and not in need of acute detoxification from drugs or alcohol.
- Exhibit sufficient impulse control so constant, close supervision is not required.

In addition, the student's resident school district must supply daily transportation to and from NAA over the course of the 185-day traditional school year.

The NAA offers individualized, small group and family counseling, and ongoing consultation with child study teams. Students receive a Google Chromebook, and other digital resources for use during the school day to facilitate the hybrid learning methodology, a blend of digital learning and face-to-face instruction.

The program includes a K-4th grade, and 5-12th grade curriculum, with courses in English/Language Arts, technology, mathematics, science, social studies, health and physical education. The NAA replaces the Raritan Valley Academy, which served at-risk students but did not include the PHBH clinical component. •

Transportation Officials Prepare For 2015-2016

Over 30 of the MRESC's district transportation partners attended the Cooperative Transportation Program in preparation for the 2015-2016 school year. Transportation representatives from several counties, including Warren, Trenton and Middlesex, reviewed new bid specification requirements, learned about updated inclement weather procedures and were allotted time to address concerns, ask questions and share recommendations.

Led by Transportation Coordinator Christine Zarate, issues regarding training aids, in addition to the policy on the increasingly popular use of electronic cigarettes, were also addressed.

"We hold this meeting annually to strengthen collaboration with our transportation partners, address a variety of issues, and point out any changes to laws and procedures," said Ms. Zarate.

The MRESC coordinates services with over 80 transportation contractors, busing over 12,000 students from 261 schools, across 1,026 routes statewide.

Middlesex County Department of Education Business Administrator Mr. John Nemeth, a panel member for the event, thanked the MRESC for its attention to safety, cost efficiencies and quality service. Mr. Nemeth also stressed the importance of communication among transportation officials.

"Direct communication is a key," he said.

"While it's appropriate to email or call someone with information, it is important to remember the value that a face-to-face meeting has when you have something particularly important to convey," Mr. Nemeth added.

The MRESC's Business Administrator Patrick M. Moran emphasized the need for collaboration among people involved with transportation.



Transportation officials from several counties attended the MRESC's Cooperative Transportation Program.

"With over 1,000 routes, we need everyone, drivers, staff, parents, to be vigilant in sharing information with us," he said.

"If anyone notices something needing to be addressed that we might not be aware of, it is critical for them to bring it to our attention," he added.

Reinforcing the importance of student safety, Ms. Zarate said: "We get together and want people sharing information about



Middlesex County Department of Education Business Administrator Mr. John Nemeth (standing), makes a point during the Cooperative Transportation Program. Panel members included (L-R) Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein, Business Administrator Patrick M. Moran, and Transportation Coordinator Christine Zarate.

best practices for boarding and dropping off special needs students, and complying with the many rules and regulations concerning student transportation," she said.

The use of audio and video surveillance systems is also an important area to review, she added.

Assisting Mrs. Zarate with the meeting were Transportation Specialists Lisa Cook, Michele Peaney, Ana Rodriguez and Karen SeEVERS.

The MRESC is also offering a free workshop, "Transportation and the Special Needs Student," from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., on October 20th, at the Professional Development Academy, 1690 Stelton Road. The program is designed for school bus drivers, aides, and coordinators, with a special emphasis on how the anti-bullying Bill of Rights applies to student transportation. Registration for the workshop is required, and participants will receive two professional development hours for attending. For additional information, call 732-777-9848, Ext. 3240. •



Participants in the Cooperative Transportation Program discussing "the community we serve."

Our 2014-2015 Graduates

ACADEMY LEARNING CENTER

Sean Forrest
Richard Fortes
Daniel Grabinsky
David Grant
Tara Keegan
Queirla (Kayla) Peralta
Mark Zeluff
John Ziola III

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS LEARNING CENTER

MOVING UP

Paola Class
Nathan Dalzon
Abel Gomes
Jyniah Graham
April Orellana

Xavior Pirka
Sadhika Premkumar
Amelia Zarro

CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Ashley Boyd
Jasmin Diez
Robert "Bobby" Henrion
Kristie Issac
Amanda Marchetti
Guadalupe Saucedo

MIDDLESEX COUNTY ACADEMY

Jordan Elia
Jessenia Juarez
Christopher Pozo
Mariyah Rich

NUVIEW ACADEMY

Edwin Adonga
Milton Bosques
Colin Breese
Jaylan Clapps
Nicholas Fameux
Christopher Lopez
Gary Nebus
Andrew Ruiz

PISCATAWAY REGIONAL DAY SCHOOL

Jestin Armetta
Brandon Brown
Anthony Gordon
Michael Johnson
Raj Joshi
Neil Khwana
Sebastian Kishun



Jesus Nunez
Oscar Oliva
Joania Randan
Jonathan Ribeira
Jesus Sanchez
Natasha Santiago
Nicole Siwadla
Melissa Sorta
Andrew Sullivan

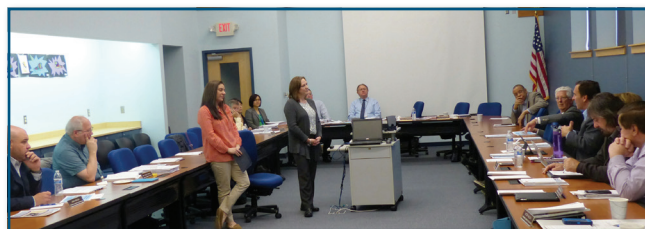
RARITAN VALLEY ACADEMY

Nathaniel Frazier
Anthony Gernay
Jessica Gettinger
Jamil Kanu
Shantell Simmons
Ryan Swain

Staff Describes Curriculum Initiatives At Board Meetings



BBLC Teachers Tonya Shearin (L) and Kate Johnson described their technique for introducing the concept and process of Computer Coding to students.



CLL Occupational Therapist Nancy Begarney (L) and Vocational Teacher SLE Coordinator Regan Beeler explained the collaborative approach used to implement the Community-Based Instruction program.

Vendors' Day For Educators



Vendors' Day, Coordinated by Nonpublic Supervisor Barbara Pezzuto, allows educators to review a range of school resource materials over the course of a few hours. Vendor participation this year included representatives from: Benchmark Education; Newmark Learning; Okapi Publishers; Abram's Learning Trends; Boardworks Education; EMC Publishing; ETA/hand2mind; Keyboard Consultants; Lakeshore Learning; Learning A-Z; McGraw-Hill Education; Scholastic Classroom; Singapore Math, and Universal Publishing. •

Getting Ready For Tomorrow



Next-Gen Networking, a workshop designed to help people make informed decisions about future technology related purchases, was co-sponsored recently by CDW-G and the MRESC. •

“Better Together” Podcast Focused On Shared Services

The MRESC recently launched “Better Together,” a podcast focused on how participation in shared services benefits students academically and taxpayers financially.

The premier edition of Better Together featured Board President Dale Caldwell, Vice President Bill Petscavage, and Superintendent of Schools Mark J. Finkelstein.

The podcast can be heard by visiting www.mresc.k12.nj.us, and clicking “Better Together” – MRESC’s Podcast Series about Shared Services, listed under the NEWS heading.

Shared services, a relationship where two or more districts collaborate to meet a common need, is an approach the MRESC, education leaders, and elected officials continue to identify “as an effective way to provide quality education and save taxpayer dollars,” said MRESC Board President Dale Caldwell.

“However, despite our growth, shared services remain an underutilized resource because of the ‘you get what you pay for’ mindset most people understandably have when told it’s possible to receive more services and spend fewer tax dollars,” said Mr. Caldwell, responding to a question from MRESC Coordinator of Communications and Host David Sandler.

Mr. Finkelstein said shared services are particularly effective in reducing special education costs, because the approach eliminates the need for districts to independently meet costly federal and state mandated services.

“Collaboration eliminates the need for school districts to duplicate services,” said Mr. Finkelstein.

“For example, Jamesburg now offers a comprehensive special education program through MRESC at a fraction of what it would cost to provide independently,” he added.

Special education is expensive because of low student-teacher ratios, speech, occupational and physical therapists, adaptive equipment, land appropriate classroom furniture,” and, Mr. Finkelstein said.

“Districts providing special education services independently spend a disproportionate amount of their budget on a relatively small number of students,” said Mr. Finkelstein.

The use of shared services with the MRESC saved Middlesex County taxpayers over \$20 million in tuition in FY 14, Mr. Finkelstein added.

Mr. Petscavage said a comparison of tuition rates between public and private special education schools by the New Jersey Department of Education’s Division of Administration and Finance is further evidence of the savings that result in using shared services.

“The DOE reported private special education schools charged \$70,000-\$90,000 a year in tuition, compared to \$40,000-\$50,000 by educational service providers like the MRESC,” he said.

Shared services also saved, 12 counties, representing approximately 70 school districts, about \$2.5 million in FY14 on transportation services for over 14,000



Participants in the premier edition of MRESC’s Better Together, were (clockwise from bottom left), MRESC Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein, Board President Dale Caldwell, Vice President Bill Petscavage, and program host and MRESC’s Coordinator of Communications David Sandler.

students, said Mr. Finkelstein.

Board President Caldwell said some districts are reluctant to explore shared services due to a pervasive “that’s the way we’ve always done things” mentality.

“School officials have the best interests of students and taxpayers at heart, but some are simply resistant to change, even if it’s in their best interests,” Mr. Caldwell said.

“Fortunately, hundreds of school districts have worked with the MRESC, and quickly realize any concerns they may have had are unfounded,” he added.

Future Better Together podcasts will include how MRESC’s 900 member Co-op Pricing System saves taxpayers millions of dollars on purchases, and an overview of the Community-Based Instruction program, where students gain employment experience and independent living skills. •

Asst. Supt. Elected President Of The NJAPSA

The MRESC’s Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar was recently elected President for the New Jersey Association of Pupil Services Administrators. Mr. Molenaar was the organization’s Treasurer during the 2014-2015 school year.

Founded in 1971, the NJAPSA, a statewide organization of school administrators, is committed to sharing ideas and strategies to strengthen



Asst. Supt. Gary Molenaar with students.

student services. The organization developed a unique “Director’s Cohort” 10 years ago, a mentoring program which recruits, develops and supports administrators working in the special education field.

“I’m looking forward to my new responsibilities with the NJAPSA, and think my participation will also benefit the MRESC in identifying additional quality special education personnel,” said Mr. Molenaar. •

MRESC's 2014-15 Teachers of the Year



Teachers chosen for the Governor Educator of the Year program are selected due to their professionalism, compassion, and ability to help students reach their fullest potential. Certificates were presented to the following talented teachers at an MRESC Board of Directors meeting: (Front row, L-R), Danette Tardiff, ALC; Courtney Dworkin and Marisa Silvestri, CLL; Brenda Berrios, PRDS. (Back row, L-R), Donna Zehnbauser, Nonpublic Dept; Janice Lee, ALC, Debbie Bussiere, PRDS, Dahlia Burrell-Thompson and Christie Farmiga, BBLC. •

New PRDS Principal Named

Ms. Phyllis DeLucia (BCBA), was recently named principal of PRDS, having served as vice principal for the past 13 years.

Ms. DeLucia replaces Mrs. Toba Knobel, who retired during the 2014-2015 school year.

"I have learned a great deal over the years, and look forward to further strengthening our Program for Students with Multiple Disabilities," Ms. DeLucia said, noting the recent addition of an elementary class for students ages 7-11.

"I am continually motivated to provide students with both a comprehensive education and independent living skills, to the fullest extent possible," Ms. DeLucia added.

Ms. DeLucia can be contacted at pdelucia@mresc.k12.nj.us, or 732-777-9848 Ext. 5100. •



BBLC's Student Photographer

Student Nigel Oglesby has an interest in photography, and took this photo of a classmate examining a BBLC Science Fair display. •



Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission

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www.mresc.k12.nj.us

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Dunellen, Phillip Heiney
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Metuchen, Rose de Vries
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South Plainfield, Johanna Ruberto
South River, Michael Pfister
Spotswood, Scott Rocco
Woodbridge, Robert Zega
Vocational, Brian Loughlin

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Kai-Li Pao, *Assistant Business Administrator/Board Secretary*
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