



MRESCUpdate

MIDDLESEX REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Cooperative, Cost Efficient, Quality Services

New Program For Young Adults With Special Needs Opens

A partnership between the Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission and The Arc Middlesex County has resulted in the creation of the Piscataway Career Center (PCC), a program for adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who at 21, have aged out of their public schools.

The program runs daily from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. and is located at 1670 Stelton Road, within the Piscataway Regional Day School. Participants receive ongoing life skills training, community-based job experiences, and academic instruction.

According to Superintendent of Schools Mark J. Finkelstein, the effort is something the MRESC has been interested in starting for several years.

"It is wrong for students and families that have relied on public special education to be left to fend for themselves when the student turns 21, and the PCC is a significant first step in our attempt to address this issue," said Mr. Finkelstein.



Coordinator Eric Ware working at the new young adult Piscataway Career Center Program with Noor Amjad (Center) and Edem Berson.

(See **New Program** on page 2)

MRESC Launches New Superintendent Search Service

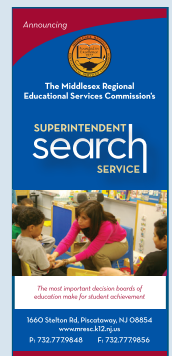
The Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission has launched a Superintendent Search Service to help boards of education identify and hire outstanding superintendents.

"As an Educational Services Commission, our mission includes continually developing new initiatives based on the needs of our constituents, and some of them have expressed interest in having us create a Superintendent Search Service," said MRESC Board President Dale Caldwell.

"Hiring a superintendent of schools is a critical decision that can positively or negatively impact a school district for years. We have assembled the administrative expertise necessary to help boards of education identify dedicated educators capable

of effectively serving their school district and community," Mr. Caldwell added.

Heading the MRESC's Superintendent Search Service is Dr. Gary McCartney, who has 28 years of experience as a superintendent, including 10 years as superintendent of the South Brunswick School District, from which he retired in 2014. Selected "Superintendent of the Year" in 2003 while working in Pennsylvania, Dr. McCartney is currently the President of the Middle States Association Board of Trustees. (See **Search** on page 2)



MRESC's Free Vendors Expo On May 8th

Municipal, school district, and county government officials responsible for major purchases can test equipment, speak with vendors and learn about many services at the free Vendors Expo from 9:00 a.m. 3:00 p.m., on Friday, May 8th, at MRESC's Piscataway Campus, 1690 Stelton Road.

The Vendors Expo features products and services available to MRESC's Co-op Pricing System members, including: grounds and maintenance equipment, furniture, technology products, security cameras, card access systems, carpet and flooring, electricity, and natural gas.

With over 900 members, the Co-op Pricing System is the largest state approved cooperative, saving millions of taxpayer dollars annually.

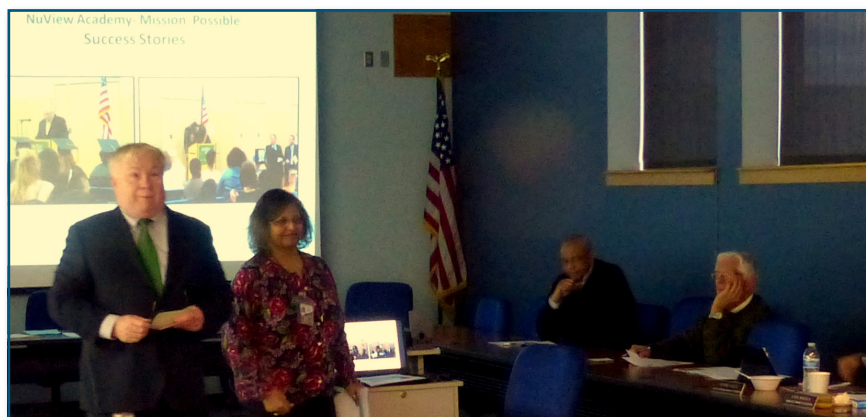
"With free membership and no obligation to purchase anything, there is no downside in joining the Co-op Pricing System to potentially save money for taxpayers," said MRESC Business Administrator/Board Secretary Patrick M. Moran.

The Vendors Expo also includes information about MRESC's Technology Consulting Services, Tax-Exempt Lease Purchase Financing, and workshops eligible for state approved continual education credits. For more information, please call 732-777-9848 Ext. 3120, or email the Co-op Team at coop@mresc.k12.nj.us.



Attending the May 8th Vendors Expo is a great way to meet people, test equipment, and learn about different services to save taxpayer dollars.

An Overview Of The Nuview Academy



NuView Academy Principal Bill Walsh and Secondary Community Class Teacher Rashna Madon provided the MRESC Board of Directors with an overview of the school's educational program, and the psychiatric and therapeutic components provided to NuView students through its collaboration with the Princeton House. •

New Program (Cont'd from page 1)

Mr. Finkelstein added there is little coordination among the services currently available for young adults, and funding is scarce.

"The MRESC has reached a point where we intend to take a leadership role in this area so families are not left adrift once they walk out the door in June," he added.

Participants in the PCC have access to a Media Center with interactive technology, a Gymnasium/Cafeteria, and a spacious outdoor recreation/exercise area. The program includes offsite visits to locations like the Menlo Park Mall for lessons on sales and using coupons, Barnes & Noble to read books, and Target to purchase supplies and use coupons. Daily exercise, along with health and safety discussions are also part of the program.

Several subject areas are taught including:

- Money Management
- Computer Skills
- Reading & Writing
- Art & Gardening
- Cooking & Nutrition

For enrollment information, please contact MRESC Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar at (732) 777-9848, Ext. 5010, or gmolenaar@mresc.k12.nj.us. •

Search (Cont'd from page 1)

A seasoned superintendent with decades of administrative experience, and impeccable credentials, Dr. McCartney also has a thorough understanding of the challenges New Jersey boards of education face in the hiring process, Mr. Caldwell added.

The new service offers a comprehensive "Personalized Superintendent Search Plan," and "Post Selection Services" including research based workshops designed to jump-start the relationship between the new superintendent with board of education members, school staff and the community.

For additional information on the new Superintendent Search Service, please contact School Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein at 777-9848, Ext 3200, or mfinkelstein@mresc.k12.nj.us. •

CLL Holds 1st Annual Spelling Bee

When she attended elementary school, Courtney Dworkin, a Center for Lifelong Learning Speech Therapist, remembered it was always the Speech-Language Pathologist who led the school-wide spelling bee.

The memory prompted her to suggest that CLL hold a spelling bee of its own, and within a few months, the school held its first spelling bee which was so successful it will be an annual event.

"I love that the MRESC places an emphasis on having activities like a prom, school yearbook, and a mascot, like general education students have," said Ms. Dworkin.

The spelling bee was not limited to CLL's verbal population. Several non-verbal students participated using modalities such as an iPad or white board.

Ms. Dworkin coordinated the event, which included making sure the 36 participants (ranging from five to 20 year-olds), were prepared.

"The teachers and I scheduled time for students to practice so they could independently spell three words," she said.

The words varied in difficulty based on student progress, with beginners learning words like car, boy, and hat, while more advanced spellers tackled such words as exchange, lengthen and protection.

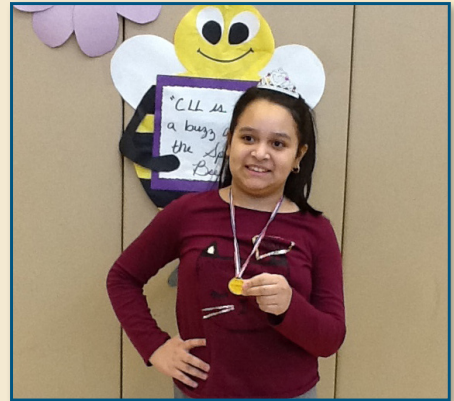
A dress rehearsal was held a few days prior to the spelling bee to familiarize students with the procedures, including seating arrangements, standing up and walking to the front to spell their word, and returning to their seat in an orderly manner.

The spelling bee was three rounds, and all students were recognized for their efforts, which included a medal and photo with their parents.

By all accounts, CLL's first spelling bee was a resounding success.

"The students were introduced to various spelling concepts, and everyone involved enjoyed the day," said Ms. Dworkin.

"In fact, teachers have already contacted me about students who were not quite ready for this year, but will be able to participate next time," she added. •



Arianna Rosario was pleased to receive a medal for participating in the CLL spelling bee.



Non-verbal students like Christopher Neins participated in the spelling bee by writing words on a white board or using an iPad.

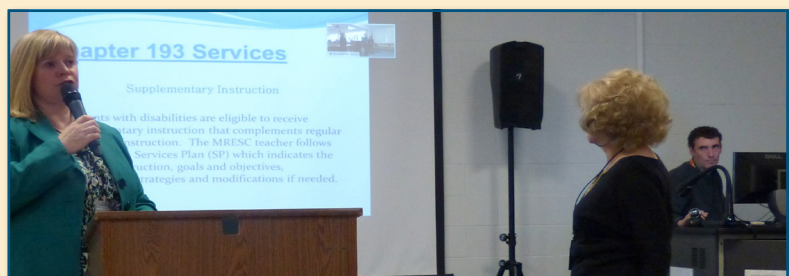


1st Annual Spelling Bee Coordinator Ms. Courtney Dworkin, with student Edward King.

Webinar Preparation At The Media Center

As service providers to school districts, municipalities and county governments throughout New Jersey, MRESC will make some programs more convenient by hosting webinars to enable online participation.

Reviewing the logistics involved for a June Nonpublic Administrators webinar are Nonpublic Supervisor Fredrika Schwerin (not pictured), and (L-R) Director of Nonpublic Services Nancy Armbruster, Supervisor Barbara Pezzuto and Information Technology Coordinator Robert Reinke.



BBLC Rocks



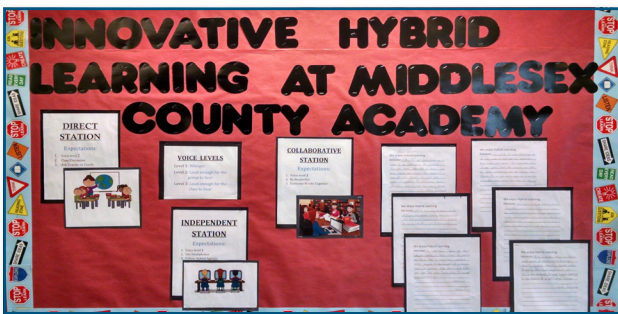
Professional musician Darren Verpeut (R), who sings and plays guitar, bass and drums, entertained students with help from Music Teacher Eric Marozine. In addition to monthly visits to BBLC, Mr. Verpeut (who works at the Tenafly School of Rock), has appeared on the Carson Daly Show and MTV.

PRDS In The Community



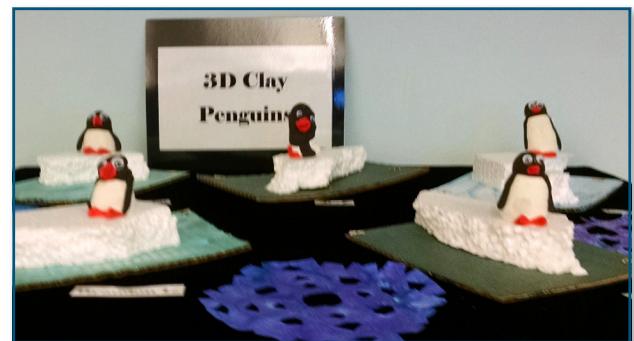
To introduce students to workplace experiences, the thriving PRDS Community-Based Instruction program has cultivated relationships with many employers including Shop Rite, Rutgers University, Target, Sam's Club, Elijah's Promise, TJ Maxx and Burger King.

Innovation At MCA



Innovation students at Middlesex County Academy communicated the benefits of Hybrid Learning in this creative Central Office bulletin board.

A New Dimension For ALC Students



3D penguins, created by ALC students, were part of a recent display in the Board Conference Room.

Special Read Across America Guest



Shari Halpern, a volunteer with The Bright & Beautiful Therapy Dogs of Morris Plains, delighted students by bringing Aspen, a pet therapy dog, to help celebrate Read Across America at BBLC. The MRESC appreciates the support of all the volunteers who participated at our schools. •

BBLC Students Learn About Safety Awareness

The SAMBULANCE Educational Safety Program recently visited BBLC to share information with students about safety awareness, dealing with emergency situations and first aid techniques.

The SAMBULANCE is an ambulance wrapped in bright colors and used to introduce students to its uses, equipment inside, such as oxygen units and back boards, and the role of first responders.

Sahara Sam's "Lifeguard Sam," was also part of the program in an effort to make learning about good safety practices less intense.

The SAMBULANCE Educational Safety Program is a complimentary service for schools and community groups primarily funded by the West Berlin based Sahara Sam's Oasis Indoor Water Park. As an indoor water park, Sahara Sam's trains and fully-certifies its lifeguards in first aid and CPR through an extensive classroom course and practical real water scenarios.



Lifeguard Sam added some lighter moments during an "Educational Safety" program at BBLC.

The program addresses several New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards by offering programs like "Safety Awareness" (Stay Calm, Stranger Danger, Bullying); "Emergencies" (Knowing Who to Call, The 411 on Calling 9-1-1 When You're Alone); First Aid (Minor Scrapes, Cuts and Bleeding, Burns, Sprains, and Allergic Reactions, along with "Water Safety" recommendations (Know Your Limits, Lifeguards, Pool, Lake, and Beach Safety). •

Transition Planning For Adult Life



Planning for Adult Life Director Jerisa Maskeo discussed "Transition Planning" at a free workshop sponsored MRESC's Advisory Council.

When families have children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, procrastination is not advised with regard to preparing for the transition from school to adult life, according to Planning for Adult Life (PFAL) Director Jerisa Maskeo.

Speaking to over 40 special education practitioners and parents attending the MRESC Advisory Council's free "Best Practices In Transition Planning For Students With Disabilities," Ms. Maskeo advised developing a transition plan early, given the multiple agencies and complex regulations involved in order to offer students "hope and a vision for the future."

"Not every graduate is going to be in the National Basketball Association," said Ms. Maskeo.

"Identifying the students strengths, challenges, preferences and support needs are important issues to resolve as early as you can," she added.

Ms. Maskeo recommended giving serious thought to the question: "What do you plan to do after leaving high school?" when the student turns 14, and including it in their Individualized Education Plan.

Assessing vocational training and employment options, housing, care giver relationships, and seeking out financial and legal advice about guardianship and long-term care issues are additional considerations to address.

The many challenges entailed is what prompted Ms. Maskeo, in partnership with The Arc of New Jersey, and funding from the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities, to establish the PFAL.

The program includes PFAL

"Transition Navigators" meeting with students twice a month, coordinating onsite visits to community employers, and reinforcing life skills training. A "Webinar Wednesdays" series, offered each month at www.PlanningForAdultLife.org is another avenue of support.

In addition to Ms. Maskeo, Transition Planning presenters included Ms. Beverly Roberts, Director, Mainstreaming Medical Care, The Arc of New Jersey, along with Ms. Anne Freeman and Ms. Lin DiRenz, both Education Program Development Specialists from the New Jersey Department of Education.

Workshop participants came from Ocean and Ewing Townships, the Bergen County Special Services School District, and Middlesex County.

"We were delighted with the turnout and the comprehensive program," said Ms. Stacy Rieger (BCBA), President of MRESC's Advisory Council and Vice Principal at the Academy Learning Center. •



Transition Workshop participants came from Ocean and Ewing Townships, the Bergen County Special Services School District, and Middlesex County.

NuView Teacher Recognized For Hybrid Learning Efforts

Please know how proud we are of you and your many accomplishments on behalf of our students. You are truly a gifted educator," Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein wrote to NuView Academy Teacher Nicole Elmini when the news arrived that she was named a "Hybrid Learning Rock Star" in the "Best New Artist" category, from the Hybrid Learning Institute (HLI).

The Best New Artist award goes to educators who "made the most positive impact on students during their first year of hybrid instruction," said Kevin Dellicker, President and CEO of Dellicker Strategies, whose firm has worked with the HLI since 2012 in an effort to improve student academic performance.

"We hear so much about what needs to be changed in public education," said Mr. Dellicker. "These awards are about what is being done right, and



NuView 's Hybrid Learning award winner Nicole Elmini with Brian Rodriguez.

recognizing teachers and administrators for exceptional contributions to their students and their profession."

The HLI and Dellicker Strategies have worked with over 50 schools to adopt

the instructional Hybrid Learning method, with 94 percent of participating schools reporting improved student academic performance, according to Mr. Dellicker.

Hybrid Learning combines digital and face-to-face instruction, resulting in more personalized learning opportunities in an effort to improve student academic performance. The initiative includes providing a Google Chromebook to each student during school hours.

"Technology continues to evolve rapidly, and the classroom experience for students must keep pace," said Mr. Gary Molenaar, Assistant Superintendent for Learning/Educational Services.

The MRESC was also designated as the official Hybrid Learning model school district in New Jersey by the HLI. In addition to NuView, Hybrid Learning was also introduced at the Middlesex County Academy and the Raritan Valley Academy. •

Positive Results In Annual MRESC Survey

Responses to MRESC's annual survey indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the programs and services offered.

"We use the survey data to inform the development of new and expanded MRESC programs and to help in constructing our annual budget," Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar said during a presentation to the MRESC's board of Directors.

Superintendents, Business Administrators, Directors of Special Education and Child Study Team Case Managers participated in the survey.

Key survey results included:

- An overall satisfaction rate of 95 percent with MRESC's programs and services.
- Satisfaction rates of specific programs ranging from 56-94 percent.
- 100 percent support for the effort to establish the Piscataway Career Center, a partnership between MRESC and Arc Middlesex County designed for adults 21 and over with intellectual and/or development disabilities.

- An 80 percent satisfaction rate for programs offered through the Professional Development Academy.
- Interest by 79 percent of participants in Community-Based Instruction services for students 17-21.

The survey also included questions for MRESC Administrators, Faculty, Instructional Aides, Parents and Students. Those results included:

- A 93 percent satisfaction rate for teachers and an 86 percent satisfaction rate for related services staff from administrators.
- 83 percent of faculty feel they receive clear direction and support from administrators, and 81 percent indicated a positive climate and culture in their school.
- 91 percent of instructional aides were satisfied with the collaborative relationships with faculty.
- 88 percent of parents were satisfied with their child's program, and 95 percent were satisfied with their involvement in planning for their child.



The Piscataway Career Center, for adults 21 and over with intellectual and/or development disabilities, received 100 percent support from participants in the annual MRESC Survey.

- 68 percent of students were satisfied with teachers' concern for their learning, and 75 percent were satisfied with the use of Google Chromebooks as part of the Hybrid Learning program. •

Special Night For Recognition Award Winners

Eight MRESC students were honored as part of the 30th Annual Student Recognition Awards dinner held at New Brunswick High School.

In her speech to family members, educators and the 63 Middlesex County students being honored, Dr. Linda A. Madison, President of the Middlesex County Association of School Administrators, and MRESC Board of Directors' member said:

"Your hard work and achievement, despite the challenges that have confronted you, are an example to your fellow students, your teachers, your principals, and all of us here this evening."

The MRESC Student Recognition recipients for 2015 were Ashley Boyd (CLL); Christian Gran (MCA); Robert Henrion (CLL); Mateo Perilla (PRDS); Agerald Reid (BBLC Secondary); Anthony Suriel (PRDS); Genare Valiant (ALC) and John Ziola III (ALC).

The annual event is sponsored by the Middlesex County School Boards Association, and the Middlesex County Association of School Administrators, and was founded in 1985 by a committee headed by MRESC Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein in his capacity as a New Brunswick Board of Education member. •



Longtime MRESC supporter Dr. Richard Kaplan, who retires in June as Superintendent of the New Brunswick School District, was honored for his leadership and commitment to the Student Recognition Dinner. Presenting the award was Dr. Linda A. Madison (R), President of the Middlesex County Association of School Administrators, who also serves on MRESC's Board of Directors, and Ms. Debbie Boyle, President of the Middlesex County School Boards Association.



Student Recognition Award recipients graduating in June were (L-R): Anthony Suriel (PRDS), Christian Gran (MCA), Genare Valiant (ALC), John Ziola III (ALC) and Mateo Perilla (PRDS). Not pictured is Ashley Boyd (CLL).



Autism NJ President Genare A. Valiant (back row), with (L-R), Mrs. Dara Valiant, Genare Valiant (ALC recipient), and Middlesex Interim Executive County Superintendent Dr. Laura Morana.



A new elementary class for students with multiple disabilities, ages 9-12, is currently open for enrollment at PRDS.

New MD Class At PRDS

A new elementary class for students with multiple disabilities, ages 9-12, is currently open for enrollment at the Piscataway Regional Day School. The class is focused on the development of independent functional skills in language, academic, social and vocational areas.

Program components include: Related Services (OT, PT, Speech, Nursing), student centered technology, Adaptive equipment assessment, Community-Based Instruction and Behavioral Intervention through the use of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) practices.

Please contact Vice Principal Phyllis DeLucia at (732) 985-8752, or pdelucia@mresc.k12.nj.us for additional information. •

The Importance Of Students Learning Functional Skills

Academy Learning Center Principal Erik Solberg gave a thoughtful presentation at a recent MRESC Board of Directors meeting by focusing on a key question: what does the future hold for adults with disabilities?

Although he did not attempt any forecasting, Dr. Solberg said the future would likely be dramatically improved for those students who received functional skills training.

Functional skills include the ability to get dressed, drink from a cup, order food from a menu, good toileting, grooming, hygiene, and bathing skills.

"Our goal is for students to do as much as they can on their own, based upon the degree of independence they are capable of," Dr. Solberg said.

Given the motor, cognitive and sensory issues that students with disabilities face, it is imperative to establish an organized functional skills plan, said Dr. Solberg.

A Functional Skills Curriculum was developed by a team of MRESC educators last summer, and is now in place at most schools.

Dr. Solberg has established a seven-week evening course for parents to share techniques with parents on teaching their children functional skills.

"We're not asking parents to be teachers, but we are recommending they concentrate on one or two activities at a time at home, like straightening their room, or setting the kitchen table.

According to Dr. Solberg, the functional skills usually required for placement in an Adult Day Program include the ability to:

- Stay on task
- Follow a written or picture schedule
- Independent meal and self-care skills
- Ability to initiate dialogue and respond to others

Parents were introduced to functional skills training at Back To School Night, and provide progress reports at parent-teacher conferences.

Dr. Solberg has worked with several districts, including Jamesburg, South Plainfield, East Brunswick and Carteret on the functional skills curriculum.

"Helping children learn a range of functional skills is one of the most important responsibilities that parents and educators have," said Dr. Solberg.

"Functional skills directly impacts the students career, where they will live and how they will spend their free time," Dr. Solberg added.

For more information on the Functional Skills Curriculum, please contact Dr. Solberg at esolberg@mresc.k12.nj.us, or (732) 605-9100 x 4020. •



The Functional Skills program includes self-care, a requirement for most Adult Day Programs.



Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission

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