



MRESCUpdate

MIDDLESEX REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Cooperative, Cost Efficient, Quality Services

Seven Students Selected For Student Recognition

Seven MRESC students were among the 65 honored at the 29th Annual Student Recognition Program held at New Brunswick High School. The program honors "outstanding" juniors and seniors in Middlesex County high schools.

"We honor Middlesex County students who demonstrate incredible perseverance and focus despite enduring challenges which life has placed in their paths," said Dr. Frank Alfano, President, Middlesex County Association of School Administrators.

Dr. Alfano, who is retiring in June, added: "The students have taught all of us a life lesson about achievement in the face of adversity."

Founded by MRESC Superintendent of Schools Mark J. Finkelstein, the Student Recognition Program is sponsored by the Middlesex County School Boards Association, and the Middlesex County Association of School Administrators,

Students recognized from MRESC schools were: James Pugh and Ryan Swain, Raritan Valley Academy; Ernie Small, Center for Lifelong Learning; Nancy Balbuena and Guillermo Serra, Piscataway Regional Day School; Hanif Mayo and Dentzell Olden Academy Learning Center). •



Middlesex County Association of School Administrators President Dr. Frank Alfano (L), Vice President Mr. Kevin Ahearn, Hanif Mayo (ALC), and Catherine Sucher Greeley, President of the Middlesex County School Boards Association.



Dentzell Olden, ALC



Ernie Small, CLL



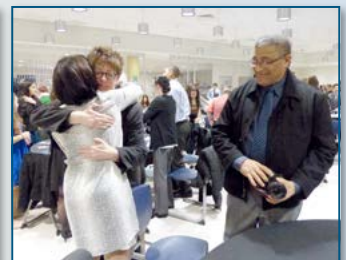
James Pugh, RVA



Nancy Balbuena, PRDS



Guillermo Serra, PRDS



Parents of PRDS' Guillermo Serra express appreciation to Vice Principal Phyllis DeLucia.

Strong Interest At Vendor Fair



Follett Account Executive Maria Akini (R), chats with Nonpublic Supervisor and Vendor Day Coordinator Barbara Pezzuto at the recent Vendor's Day event. This year's participants included: Benchmark Education; Curriculum Associates; ETA Cuisenaire; Follett; Keyboard Consultants; Lakeshore Learning; LightSwitch Learning; Sadlier; Scholastic Education and Super Duper.

Safety Issues Top Cooperative Transportation Program



The MRESC's transportation partners from across the state turned out for the Cooperative Transportation Program. Coordinated by Transportation Coordinator Chris Zarate and the Transportation staff, attendees learned about "Substance Abuse and Testing for Student Transportation," in addition to information about the Seon school bus camera system, which captures video and audio of school bus activity allowing drivers to concentrate on driving.

Fashionable Learning At BBLC



The first annual BBLC Cultural Fashion Show was a great success. Students and staff modeled garments representing over 12 countries as a way to learn more about the culture and customs of different countries. Case Manager Alison Berkovits coordinated the fashion show.

Olympic Spirit At NuView



Students at NuView, inspired by the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games, created a bulletin board encouraging everyone to strive for their "personal best."

New Pre-School Program At PRDS

A new pre-school program for children with multiple disabilities is starting in September at Piscataway Regional Day School, so students can receive all services in one school until graduation.

The Pre-School Disabled Multiple Disabilities program (PSD-MD) will offer students ages three to five with educational and related services in accordance with their IEP. The PSD-MD faculty are appropriately certified, with a focus of maximizing the student's level of independent functioning.

The PRDS works with students whose disabilities range from moderate to severe, and includes the areas of Cognitive, Neurological, Medical and Orthopedic disabilities. For additional information, please contact PRDS Principal Toba Knobel at 732-985-8752, or tknobel@mresc.k12.nj.us.



A new Pre-K class is starting at the PRDS in September.

MRESC Hosts Conference For Teachers Of Deaf Students



A conference for teachers who work with deaf and hard of hearing students was hosted recently on the MRESC's Piscataway Campus. The MRESC's Itinerant Services for Children With Hearing Loss provides support services through the utilization of certified Teachers of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing who are experienced in the unique communication needs of students with hearing loss. •

Lt. Gov. Guadagno Visits PRDS Students At Work

During a visit to the corporate headquarters of the Piscataway-based International American Supermarkets, New Jersey Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno took time to visit with PRDS students working there as part of the school's Community-Based Instruction Program.

Student job responsibilities include placing labels written in Arabic on Fruit Roll-Up boxes prior to shipping them to Saudi Arabia. International American Supermarkets is a primary supplier of American branded food products to global markets throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

The CBI program at PRDS has established numerous relationships with area employers so students can identify their interests and develop employment skills prior to graduation. •



New Jersey Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno (R) congratulates Raissa Pruss for her role in developing a strong CBI program at PRDS.



New Jersey Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno (R) enjoys watching PRDS students Stephanie Wong (left) and Sunana Chaundry (center), place labels written in Arabic on Fruit Roll-Up boxes being shipped from the corporate headquarters of International American Supermarkets in Piscataway, to Saudi Arabia.

Quality Education For Less Cost



The MRESC continues to offer quality education at significantly lower cost than private special education schools, resulting in enrollments reaching unprecedented levels for the 2013-2014 school year. MRESC services are used by 70 districts (47 out-of-county, 23 in Middlesex County), for a tuition savings of approximately \$21.2 million.

Based on information provided by the New Jersey Department of Education's Division of Administration, the 2013-2014 private special education school tuition averaged \$78,000-\$90,000, while MRESC tuition rates were in the \$40,000-\$50,000 range.

Cost savings will continue in the upcoming school year, as the MRESC Board of Directors recently approved the 2014-2015 budget which limits the average tuition increase for Regular and Extended School Years to two percent. •

Board Members Thanked For Service To MRESC



Mrs. Kathleen Spiegler, East Brunswick's representative on the MRESC board for several years, accepts a certificate acknowledging her years of service from (L to R) Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein, Board Secretary Patrick M. Moran, Board President Dale Caldwell and Board Vice President Bill Petscavage.



Recognized for their many years of service to the MRESC board are: Dr. Gail Verona (2nd from L), Dr. Frank Alfano (3rd from L) and Dr. Gary McCartney (2nd from R). Also shown are Board Secretary Patrick M. Moran (L), Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein (back row) Vice President Bill Petscavage and President Dale Caldwell.

New Board Members Welcomed

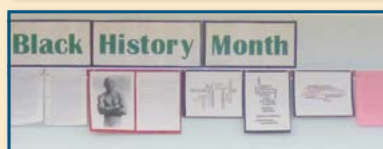


Two new board members, Dr. Vivian Rodriguez of Perth Amboy (2nd from R), and Mr. Doug Poye of Monroe (2nd from L), have joined the MRESC Board of Directors. The above photo also includes Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein (Far L), Board President Dale Caldwell (C), and Board Vice President Bill Petscavage (Far R).

MCA And RVA Research Black History Month



Students from MCA and RVA learned about notable achievements and shared them in a bulletin board they created and displayed in the Board Conference Room during Black History Month. •



Faculty Shares Curriculum Information With The Board Of Directors

Monthly Board meetings now open with MRESC faculty sharing information about different elements of the curriculum. Recent presentations included: (top photo) Center for Lifelong Learning's Terese Manalansan MA, CCC-SCP, discussing the Augmentative and Alternative Communication Program; and Case Manager/Social Skills Teacher Debbie Bussiere, reviewing the Social Skills Training for Students with Multiple Disabilities curriculum, a component of the PRDS Community-Based Instruction program. •



Two-Day Science Fair At BBLC

Students and faculty once again provided a comprehensive overview of the BBLC science curriculum for parents and MRESC faculty and staff at their recent two day Science Fair. According to Science Fair Committee Member Kate Johnson, participation in the Science Fairs helps "students learn the scientific process through functional application of their IEP goals."

This year's topics included: The Life Cycle of a Frog; How to Grow a Salad; Will these Items Sink or Float; How to Make Cheese and Ice Cream, and tips for Growing a Fungus Garden.

Another benefit of the Science Fair is the opportunity it presents for teachers, speech and occupational therapists, and classroom aides to work collaboratively, Mrs. Johnson added.

The Science Fair Committee includes: Cristina Tropeano, Marcia Flood, Kyloe Parker and Kate Johnson. •



As part of a two-day Science Fair, BBLC Supervisor Cindy Borell (L) hands newly hatched chick to Secondary Student Emily Fernandez, while Jonathan Gomez looks on. The project was part of the "Life Cycle of a Chicken: Hatching Eggs" presentation.



Sadhika Premkumar is amazed as BBLC Classroom Aide Louis DeMeglio Jr., explains tornadoes as part of the "Types of Tornadoes and How They Form" project during the Science Fair. Also participating are (L) Classroom Teacher Kim Ehresman and Classroom Aide Darlene Alston.

Announcing The MRECS's Upgraded Website

The Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission encourages you to visit our upgraded website at www.mresc.k12.nj.us.

Upgraded website features include:

- Easy to navigate pages
- Timely curriculum information
- Photos of classroom activities
- Language translation options
- Accessible on all mobile devices
- **Click here to review our 2014-2015 Shared Services Resource Guide •**



New Hours For IAEP

The Interim Alternative Educational Program (IAEP) is changing its hours to 8:45 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. starting in September 2014. The change is based on 77 percent of respondents indicating a preference for the new time slot, in a recent survey.

"Our constituents expressed a desire for new hours more reflective of the typical school day, so we are doing everything we can to accommodate them," said Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar.

The IAEP offers learning disabled and/or at risk students the opportunity to continue their educational program in a supportive, individualized environment consistent with their Individual Education Program.

For additional information, please contact Principal Arthur Francis at 732-317-0300 Ext 6200, or afrancis@mresc.k12.nj.us. •



Based on input from constituents, the Interim Alternative Educational Program is changing its hours to 8:45 a.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Survey Results In For 2013-2014

The MRESC surveys all districts using its services in an effort to guide the creation of new programs, build on strengths, and address any concerns. The survey is emailed to school superintendents, directors of special services, business administrators, and child study team members.

Survey highlights for 2013-2014 included:

- 78% expressed interest in working with the MRESC to establish in-district programs by returning students from out-of-district placements.
- 94% considered participation in the Co-op Pricing System a "worthwhile experience."
- 83% supported the MRESC providing secretaries, therapists, child study team members, board certified behavior analysts, behavior specialists, teachers, custodians and cafeteria workers to work on an hourly, as needed basis in their school districts.
- 81% percent of respondents were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with programs offered by the Professional Development Academy.
- 91% percent were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the support, responses and feedback from the Superintendent and his staff.
- 77% would consider participating in expanded Community-Based Instruction, Vocational Education and additional hands-on professional occupational training opportunities.
- Professional development topics of most interest to respondents were: iPad Apps and the Special Education Student (42.9%), Crisis Prevention (40%) and Differentiated Instruction (34.3%)

Please contact the Superintendent of Schools at 732-777-9848, Ext. 3200 for additional survey information. •



Interest in participating in expanded Community-Based Instruction, Vocational Education and additional hands-on professional occupational training opportunities was indicated by 77 percent of survey respondents.

CLL's Michael Lucas Honored

March was Brain Injury Awareness Month, and the Center for Lifelong Learning's Michael Lucas was named the "Honoree" at the Sayreville Association for Brain Injured Children's (BIC), 19th Annual Charity Ball held at the Grand Marquis.

Center for Lifelong Learning Principal Debra Nappi, and Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein attended the event in support of Michael and his family.

Additionally, the St. Bartholomew School in East Brunswick, where Michael's two brothers are enrolled, raised \$768 through a "Dress Down Day," and donated the funds to the BIC in Michael's name.

The BIC is a nonprofit organization providing year-round recreation programs to children and adults with special needs.

The New Jersey Department of Education is trying to "improve the public's understanding of prevention, treatment, educational strategies, and services needed to support individuals with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and their families," said Susan Martz, Assistant Commissioner, Division of Student and Field Services. The NJDOE offers TBI resource information at www.state.nj.us/education/aaps/cccs/chpe/concussions/.

An upcoming BIC fundraising effort, the 12th annual "Hit the Bricks" 5K run or walk, takes place in October. Please contact the Sayreville Recreation Department at 732-390-7092 for additional information. •



Michael Lewis, the "Honoree" at the Sayreville Association for Brain Injured Children's 19th Annual Charity Ball with Classroom Aide Michelle Valenti during class at the Center for Lifelong Learning.

Learning Origami From The Source

Students at BBLC learned some of the finer points of origami, the traditional Japanese art of paper folding, during a recent visit of teachers from Japan. The teachers visited several MRESC schools as part of a cultural exchange through the Program for American Language Studies at Rutgers University. •



Autism Swim-A-Thon Pays Dividends

Swimmers completed laps, vendors donated funds, and people bought tee shirts as part of MRESC's Second Annual Autism Awareness Swim-a-Thon. All of the effort proved worthwhile, with about \$4,000 raised on behalf of Autism New Jersey, the state's leading Autism resource, which provide essential information, advocacy and support to children and their families.

The Swim-a-Thon, coinciding with April being Autism Awareness month, was held at the MRESC Aquatics & Fitness Center at the Center for Lifelong Learning.

"Last year's was good, but this year's participation and enthusiasm was even stronger," said Katelyn Dauphinee, Aquatics & Program Coordinator, and Summer Camp Director, who coordinated the event.

"We raised more than last year and had more participants, so we are confident that the Swim-a-Thon will get bigger and better each year."

Staff from the MRESC logged the most laps, led by Kristen Policastro (154 laps), Rickie O'Rourke (128 laps), and Ellen Santuro, who completed 100 laps.

Contributions from AmSan, Ferguson Plumbing and VanCon School Bus Builders also contributed to the total funds raised. •



The Swim-a-Thon, which attracted more participation than in the previous year, raised about \$4,000 on behalf of Autism New Jersey, the state's leading resource for Autism.

Serge Gilbert, a student at the Piscataway Regional Day School (PRDS) gets a well-deserved high five from Academy Learning Center Principal Dr. Erik Solberg, during MRESC's Second Annual Autism Awareness Swim-a-Thon on behalf of Autism New Jersey. Serge completed 62 laps with the help of PRDS Teacher Julie Sakowicz.



Skill Building For The Future



Academy Learning Center students created a bulletin board showcasing the numerous job sites and community partners involved in the school's Community-Based Instruction program.

Donations To MRESC Programs

The MRESC appreciates the following donations provided to our schools on behalf of the education of our students.

- Academy Learning Center: \$155 DonorsChoose grant – Teaching Special Students About Special People – for use by the speech department.
- Bright Beginnings Learning Center: \$1,458 from Merck Partnership for Giving and \$500 from B&R Business Solutions.
- NuView Academy: \$336 for 12 copies of the new DSM-5 Diagnostic Manual from Otsuka America Pharmaceutical.
- Raritan Valley Academy: \$408 DonorsChoose grant for a ViewSonic projector. •

Reading Across The MRESC

Local officials, faculty, staff and students celebrated the 17th annual Read Across America Day at all MRESC schools. Initially created by the National Education Association in partnership with Dr. Seuss Enterprises, L.P., as a one-day program to encourage student literacy, Read Across America has evolved into an annual event nationwide. The MRESC thanks the many people who volunteered their time to serve as guest readers for our students.



Tanvee Patel, a student at ALC, took a turn reading to classmates.



Monroe Township Council President Gerald W. Tamburro reading to ALC students.



Director of Human Resources Lorraine R. Small both played the melodica and read to students at several schools including ALC, CLL, RVA, NuView and MCA.



The NJEA's Cat In The Hat visits BBLC.



Piscataway Township Police Chief Rick Ivone engages students at PRDS.



Middlesex County Sheriff Mildred Scott delights students at PRDS.



Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission

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