

# insights



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## TGIF!

The Biggest TGIF Party in the Burgh



Kennywood Park may be buttoned down against the winter cold, but plans for the 2007 edition of The Great Kennywood Caper, scheduled for Friday, Sept. 7, are heating up.

And by mid-April, they'll be sizzling! **From April 16 to June 1, you can buy one ticket for the Caper at the regular price of \$50 and get a second ticket at half price (\$25).** After June 1, all tickets will be \$50. No group sale rates will be available. Coordinators are being recruited in every school district to handle sales.

When The Great Kennywood Caper makes its return this year, all fun features of the event will be intact.

There will be "big-kid" rides, including all the coasters; favorite Kennywood foods; a grand prize and silent auction prizes; cash prizes for the games; cash bars (beer and wine) and continuous entertainment.

Joe Grushecky and the HouseRockers, who were the headliners at the 2004 Caper, have signed on for an encore performance, so come ready to rock and roll. Of course, we'll again have the park to ourselves, so we can "party on" all evening (5:30 to 11 p.m.)

Volunteer recruiting will begin in earnest in February when School Action Committees decide if they're interested in running a game booth. As in the past, the Committees that put together a team to work the event will realize a portion of the game booth profits for teacher-level Great Idea Grants in their home school districts. Letters to past volunteers will go out in February. Watch the MVEC website - www.mvec.org - for updates.

The Caper is the Consortium's signature fundraising event, with proceeds going to help secure the organization's financial future. This is the fifth Caper since 1995. Ticket prices have not changed since then and remain a bargain even at the full \$50 per person rate. The ticket blitz makes them more affordable than ever before.

Remember, the Kennywood Caper only comes around once every three years, so mark your calendar now for "the biggest TGIF party in the Burgh!"

GET YOUR  
'TICKET TO RIDE'  
FOR CAPER  
ON SEPTEMBER 7



### 'Are We Ready?' Hearing

The Consortium gathered high school students from across Pennsylvania for a second NCLB-related hearing, this one in Harrisburg in November, 2006. The 50-plus attendees were asked to reflect on how their schools are preparing them for life after graduation, and they weren't shy about sharing their views. Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, Pennsylvania's First Lady, at left, stopped in to talk with students at the hearing's conclusion, urging them to stay involved and continue to make their voice heard on civic matters of importance to them. For more on the hearing, turn to Page 3.

## For the Love of Books Feb. 9-18 at Borders

If you love books and want to pass on the joys of reading to children throughout southwestern Pennsylvania, visit a Borders store during the Feb. 9-18 observance of For the Love of Books.

And when you go, take one (or more) new or gently used children's book to donate at the specially marked white bins. You'll be sending a literacy Valentine to a child who needs it most.

All five Borders Books and Music stores in the Pittsburgh area are participating: Monroeville, South Hills, North Hills, Eastside and the Galleria at Pittsburgh Mills.

The Consortium and its major partners - Borders and WQED Multimedia - once again are joining forces to pack the 10-day celebration with special events, entertainment and appearances by storytellers, guest authors and favorite book characters.

Act 48 sessions for teachers also are planned (see Page 6).

Meanwhile, the Consortium is working to give more students the opportunity to visit Borders during the event and is raising sponsorship funds to provide transportation and the chance for every child to purchase a new book.



The 2007 edition of For the Love of Books will be launched at 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 9, at the new Borders Eastside store in the Shadyside-East Liberty area of Pittsburgh.

Returning partners for the event are Comcast, providing special on-air promotional services and classroom store visits; Allegheny Valley Transfer Co./Allied Van Lines of West Mifflin, providing transportation to move the collected books; Guardian Self Storage, which continues to donate space to house the collected children's books; Whole Foods Markets, which is catering the kick-off event, and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, which is helping with guest talent.

Over the past five years, nearly 570,000 new or gently used children's books have been collected and sorted for distribution. These books have been recycled to the community food banks and food providers for distribution to their client families as "The Fifth Food Group - Food for the Mind."

Coming  
up...  
...at MVEC

2007

Great Idea Grants  
Deadline/ Spring Round  
Friday, February 2

For the Love of Books  
February 9-18

MVEC Leadership Retreat  
April 20-21

Mon Valley Reads  
April 23-27

TFIM Student Conference  
April 24-25

The Great  
Kennywood Caper  
Friday, September 7



Mon Valley Learns  
Friday, October 26



## The View From Here

### Collaborative effort expanding around Project 720 Schools

By Linda L. Croushore, Ed.D., Executive Director, & Stephen G. Selly, Associate Executive Director



For the past two decades, the Consortium has focused on creating initiatives to support schools that are working diligently to effect greater opportunity and improvement for students. Literally hundreds of educators and schools in the region have taken advantage of these strategies, ranging from Great Idea Grants to Literacy for Life to The Future Is Mine to our Leadership Collaborative.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, with its Project 720 initiative, also is increasing opportunities and resources, and the Consortium is developing a new strategy – the 720 Days to Success Collaborative – to assist districts in realizing the maximum benefit from this program targeting secondary education.

Project 720, named for the number of days a student spends in high school, provides a new and unparalleled level of resources and encouragement to schools working to meet the needs of students. We commend the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Secretary Gerald Zahorchak for introducing Project 720 and for the thoughtfulness and high expectations that have gone into building a network of 720 high schools throughout the Commonwealth.

According to PDE, only 44% of high school freshmen graduate on time with a college-ready transcript. This figure may be even lower in the districts that work with the Consortium, where many students still emerge as the first in their families to seek higher education. It always has been the Consortium's belief that all Pennsylvania students must graduate from high school prepared to enter college and the high-skills workforce.

Dr. Zahorchak clearly states that high schools must make sure that every student performs well so that they are not limited in their future choices (college or technical school, work, apprenticeships or other trainings).

Other tenets of 720 include:

- Helping students earn college credit before graduating from high school through Dual Enrollment.
- Upgrading "vo-tech" for the 21st century.
- Creating seamless transitions from high school to higher education, aligning high school and post-secondary education.
- Requiring all students to take a challenging curriculum in reading, writing, science and math.
- Improving the learning environment and creating small (personalized) learning communities.
- Improving student advising services and introducing the new role of the career guidance counselor.
- Strengthening the pathway from high school to post-secondary success through dual enrollment and partnerships with employers.

## 2 area teachers earn national certification; Consortium is supporting plan to qualify more from western Pennsylvania

Marsha Ferrara of Belle Vernon Area School District and Barbara Pepper of Charleroi Area School District are among the 7,800 top U.S. teachers who achieved National Board Certification in 2006.

The Mon Valley Education Consortium is hoping more teachers from western Pennsylvania pursue certification now that Duquesne University is establishing a Support Center for candidates who want to earn it.

National Board Certification is the highest credential in the teaching profession. A teacher-driven, voluntary process established by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), certification is achieved through a rigorous, performance-based assessment that typically takes one to three years to complete and measures what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do.

As part of the process, teachers build a portfolio that includes student work samples, assignments, videotapes and a thorough analysis of their classroom teaching. Additionally, teachers are assessed on their knowledge of the subjects they teach.

Ferrara, in commenting on her selection, said she was gratified to achieve certification and urged her colleagues to seek it for themselves: "I won't kid you, it's hard work, but it's worth it."

Pepper characterized the certification process as "the most intense professional development" she's ever experienced. She feels it has made her more able to deliver the best quality of teaching and learning to her students.

Pepper said she's always told her children to be the best at what they do, and, in undertaking the quest for national certification, "I had to live up to my own words."

In 2005, of the 11 Consortium districts that sought Project 720 grants, East Allegheny and Bentworth were successful. Today, McKeesport Area, Frazier, Southeastern Greene, Elizabeth Forward, and Brownsville Area have been awarded grants, and Laurel Highlands and Freedom Area have joined us in forming a network to promote 720 practices throughout the region.

It is not only the school districts, but a broad network of business and organizational partners that can make the promise of the future a valuable one for every student. Helping students recognize the realities and possibilities of the region's current and potential economy, and understanding how to be a successful participant in it, require imagination and hard decisions.

As a public education intermediary, the Consortium recognizes the value of collaboration between school districts and other agencies in the region.

In developing its 720 Days to Success Collaborative, the Consortium is talking with such possible partners as Carnegie Mellon University, Catalyst Connection, the Writing Project at the University of Pittsburgh, the Robotics Academy, the Art Institute of Pittsburgh, and the Entertainment Technology Center.

As we rethink the teaching and learning of math, reading and writing, it is our sincere hope that every child will go to school each day knowing the classrooms and hallways offer exciting opportunities to learn, participate and thrive.

Perhaps we should consider the challenge before us as "Project 2340" because that is the number of days in a student's Kindergarten-Grade 12 school life. In the broad scheme of things, it is a short time to move children from sharing, coloring and printing their letters to using the math, science and writing skills they need to research, solve problems, and become productive workers and active members of the community.



Dr. Julia Stewart of McKeesport Area High School, center, and Kevin Fortuna of Bentworth High School talk at the Consortium's recent 720 Collaborative meeting. Listening at left is MVEC Executive Director Linda L. Croushore.

## MVEC SHORT TAKES

### New coordinator named for The Future Is Mine

Holly M. McGraw has joined the Consortium staff as coordinator of The Future Is Mine initiative. She replaces Aimee D. LeFevers, who resigned.



A native of Port Vue, Pa, and a graduate of South Allegheny High School, McGraw earned her Bachelor's Degree in Business, Computers and Information

Technology Education at Robert Morris University in 2003.

Prior to joining the Consortium, she spent four years working as Director for the Community Outreach Partnership Center, a project of Robert Morris University and America's Promise in Duquesne City School District. She also has taught computer classes at Westmoreland County Community College and a second grade class for Penn State's 21st Century Community Learning Center.

### Foundation support, EITC contributions noted

The Consortium has received a number of major grants to continue or expand its programming.

They include:

- \$155,000 from The Grable Foundation for work with Apangea Learning around its SmartHelp tutoring program.
- \$25,000 from The Grable Foundation for the Consortium's strategic repositioning work.
- \$100,000 from The Heinz Endowments for The Future Is Mine (\$75,000) and strategic repositioning (\$25,000).
- \$200,000 from the Richard King Mellon Foundation for The Future Is Mine.
- \$124,000 from The Pittsburgh Foundation for capacity-building activities.
- \$25,000 from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation for expansion of The Future Is Mine to high schools in Fayette, Greene and Washington Counties.

The following elected to support the Consortium through Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program in 2006:

Duquesne Light, \$21,000; Sandmeyer Steel Co., \$5,000; Waste Management, \$10,000; Mellon Financial Corp., \$5,000; Equitable Energy, LLC, \$5,250; Art Institutes International, Inc., \$25,000; Sota Construction Services, Inc., \$10,000; and Nutrition, Inc., \$16,500.

### Carmen A. Sarnicola Awards

The 2006 Carmen A. Sarnicola Awards were made at the 2006 conference of the Public Education Network in Washington, D.C.

The awards program was created to recognize excellence in communications by local education funds. It is named for the late Dr. Sarnicola, who was co-executive director of the Consortium at the time of his death in February, 1999.

The awards program honors the memory of "a tireless champion of public education whose life as a superintendent, principal, and teacher reflected his deep commitment to ensuring that every child had the opportunity to learn."

[www.education.duq.edu/nbpts](http://www.education.duq.edu/nbpts)

The Duquesne Center will be accepting 200 teachers and counselors to begin pre-candidacy support in either March or July.

**Additional information and support will be provided at a reception for potential candidates and current National Board Certified Teachers at Duquesne University on Tuesday, Feb. 27 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Those interested should RSVP by Feb. 20 to Bernadette Lebakken at 412-396-6102.**

Mary Kay Babyak at the Consortium also can answer questions regarding the Duquesne University Support Center.

# Are We Ready?

*Pa. high school students speak out on their preparation for 'real life'*



Are Pennsylvania students ready for life after high school?

Yes, no and maybe.

The answers were as varied as the young people who gathered in Harrisburg on Nov. 21 for the second NCLB-related hearing sponsored by the Consortium.

In many ways they echoed the responses at the first hearing in Pittsburgh in 2006, where a similar cross-section of Pennsylvania high school students reflected on the impact of the No Child Left Behind federal legislation on their education. Where they attend school and whether there are resources for their schools apparently make all the difference.

The "Are You Ready?" hearing was more narrowly focused on the 720 days students normally spend in high school (Grades 9-12). For many in this group, that meant four years of schooling under NCLB and, as in Pittsburgh, there were complaints about standardized testing and "teaching to the tests" taking away from subject matter students feel they need to move on successfully after high school.

One young man, a senior from the Pittsburgh area, said he was "somewhat confident" as a result of the preparation he received in high school but added that, in researching the major he wants to pursue in college, found that "my school didn't have the courses recommended... Teachers are teaching to the test... NCLB - that's what it's really done to teaching."

The 50-plus student participants answered a series of questions from moderator Tonia Caruso of WQED and Comcast, touching on employers' expectations, skills needed for 21<sup>st</sup> Century jobs, understanding of what those jobs entail, and preparation for college, career/technical schools or the workforce.

While some viewed the future with confidence, others were less sure. Among the latter group were students from struggling school districts with limited resources. A student from Lancaster said there weren't enough textbooks to go around and that access to computers was reduced because the library where they're located is closed after school. "We can't accomplish research papers," she said.

Another, from Duquesne, claimed his school hadn't had new textbooks in eight years. Others cited limited course selections. A girl from Philadelphia, interested in a career in broadcast journalism, said her school had been promised equipment for two years but so far has only a hand-held camera for the exploratory course.

A Philadelphia student said flatly that "we're not prepared for the college level...our courses are not preparing us...at college, we'll all be starting out on the same level and we're not there."

Pennsylvania schools "aren't on the same page" as far as funding is

concerned, the students said, "yet we are expected to compete in the larger world."

Hearing officer Joan Benso, who is executive director of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, noted that the state has made "great strides" to increase its share of funding for public schools "but there still is great disparity from community to community."

"We don't have a common set of expectations for our students," Benso continued, "and we don't make an equal commitment to every child."

Asked to look ahead and weigh their emotions about their next steps, students expressed excitement tinged, in some cases, with worry about the unknown.

A young woman from Cumberland Valley said, "I'm excited about going to college and the diversity I'll find there. Here (at the hearing) I've met so many people from urban schools...with different views."

Another from a school district in the Pittsburgh area was equally confident, thanks to a dual high school/college enrollment program: "I'll have a full semester of college when I graduate...I know what to expect."

Special programs in other school districts won endorsements as well. A Lancaster student cited his school's Small Learning Communities as helpful "in focusing our studies and making us feel more confident about the next step."

A girl from McKeesport Area praised that district's integration of technology into the curriculum, and a Freedom Area student credited her school's move to project-based learning as helping in a variety of ways, including the acquisition of "soft skills" crucial to the workplace (working as a team, interacting with others, communicating, etc.)

"Putting myself out there...and not being reminded to do this and that...relying on myself" was a prospect a Big Beaver student found exciting and somewhat daunting. That independence, "knowing I'm going to be on my own," filled a Lancaster girl with a sense of "overwhelming-ness."

Other students worried about how to pay for the cost of college, about high school courses that "aren't in tune with college requirements," and about having the



Above, MVEC Executive Director Linda L. Croushore, Ed.D., and Associate Executive Director Stephen G. Sely lead the group from the hotel to The Forum, the stately Harrisburg landmark where the hearing took place (below). At right, students file into the Forum for the videotaping.



necessary computer skills ("everything in life is computers; we have to have that knowledge").

One of the high school graduates invited to be part of the group had some words of advice and warning for the seniors in the audience. Citing his own first-year college experience, he said, "One thing I was not prepared for... the way you learn in high school is completely different from college. In high school, you get a syllabus and the teacher reminds you when papers are due...helps you every step of the way. In college, you're on your own...It can be a complete shock."

A second alumnus said, had he known what awaited him in college, he would have prepared more and done more work in high school.

As the comments above indicate, many in the audience appeared intent on attending college.

When asked if community colleges or career and technical schools received equal attention in their schools, the general feeling either was that they did not or if they did, they were not regarded by students as first choices.

"If you're not going to college, you're in the shadow," said a girl from Philadelphia. But others from subject-centered Philadelphia high schools offered different opinions.

One noted that her school "is completely designed so that if you don't want to go to college, you can go out and earn a living."

And a girl who attends a business academy in Philadelphia feels she's been well-prepared to go to a business school. Another contended that high school "should not be a preparation for college but a preparation for life...college is not for everyone."

An East Allegheny student said, "We get the message from our school...if you want to be someone, further your education, go to a two-year or a four-year school."

"We're living in a time when a high school diploma isn't enough," added a girl from Philadelphia.

A guidance counselor in the audience spoke up to say that "we present other opportunities but it's often the parents who want their child to have a better education...who are pushing kids into college."

Hearing officer Benso, noting that the fastest sector of job growth is for those with an associate degree or a degree in some area of technology, said she worries that "we're not exposing



Arnold Fege, Director of Public Engagement and Advocacy for the Public Education Network, is shown at left above with hearing officers (front, l-r) Linda L. Croushore, Joan Benso, Thomas Gentzel and Ronald Cowell, and at rear, Dr. Joe Forrester and Janis Risch.



Producer Gina Catanzarite assigns everyone to their proper positions on the stage of *The Forum*. At right, the group waits for the cameras to roll.



## Are We Ready?

*Continued from Page 3*

our kids to this...I'm hearing a disconnect between schools, students and parents."

Fellow hearing officer and Consortium executive director, Dr. Linda L. Croushore, said that disconnect is the "biggest challenge schools have to overcome in preparing kids for life...We have to overcome attitudes...and be thinking about how the world is functioning today...and where the jobs are."

Hearing officer Joe Forrester, president of the Community College of Beaver County, reminded the student group that two-year community colleges in Pennsylvania provide a quality education at a relatively low cost. "You and your parents should know what the options are," he added.

Dr. Forrester cited an instance of a "fairly significant disconnect" he sees, between the alignment of high school and college curricula, as evidenced by testing incoming freshmen. "Students do well on PSSAs (Pennsylvania System of School Assessment) but many don't do well on our placement tests...The skills and abilities being tested on PSSAs are not necessarily the ones we are looking for in students coming into the college environment."

Math, he added, "continues to be a concern." It's a concern, among others, shared by Hearing Officer Lou Ramos, community relations manager for PPL Susquehanna, which operates the Susquehanna nuclear power plant in Luzerne County and employs 1,130 full-time workers on-site plus another 180 in Allentown, Pa.

"For quality jobs," he said, "it's all about advanced math skills, science skills and strong reading skills." The competition for entry-level jobs, he continued, is intense even as the pool of those jobs is shrinking.

Hearing Officer Donna Cooper, who is the state's Secretary of Planning and Policy, said the discussion showed her that "we need to make you aware of your choices much earlier." She urged them to get involved in the democratic process and contact their legislators about funding issues and other areas of concern.

Hearing officer Ronald R. Cowell, who heads The Education Policy and Leadership Center, urged students to explore Pennsylvania's "rich system of higher education." Tuition at the state's public univer-

sities is among the highest, he added, but Pennsylvania has "one of the best grants program in PHEAA (Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency)" to turn to for financial help.

Participating students came from Big Beaver, Clairton City, Duquesne City, East Allegheny, Freedom Area, McKeesport Area, and Quaker Valley School Districts in the western part of the state, and Bethlehem, Cumberland Valley, Lancaster and Philadelphia in the eastern half.

In addition to those mentioned above, hearing officers included the following: Thomas Gentzel, President, Pennsylvania School Boards' Association; William Moulfair, Director, Bureau of Employer and Career Services, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry; and Janis Risch, Executive Director, Good Schools Pennsylvania.

Cheryl A. Kubitz of Sky Bank, a member of the Consortium's Board of Directors, also was part of the hearing audience. She helped out at the Monday evening prep session, when students got a brief course on videotaping etiquette and, working in groups, refined the points they wanted to make the next day. After the hearing, some of the student groups and their teacher chaperones toured the Capitol and met with their local legislators.

The hearing was filmed for airing on the Pennsylvania Public Television Network (PPTN) and will be available on-demand from Comcast.

Copies will go to every legislator in Harrisburg and to the state's representatives in Washington. The federal government will consider reauthorization of No Child Left Behind this year and Pennsylvania will be reviewing its implementation plan. The Consortium's national organization, the Public Education Network (PEN), also will be disseminating the results of this work at the federal level, incorporating suggested changes and improvements to the law. PEN provided funding for the hearing.

The first Consortium-sponsored hearing took place Dec. 8, 2005. A summary of that event is available at [www.mvec.org](http://www.mvec.org), the MVEC website. A third hearing will take place this year.



Students from Lancaster, above, and Duquesne, right, participated in the hearing.



Check-in was a busy place on Monday night. Students stayed at the Harrisburg Hilton, located just a few blocks from *The Forum*. This group is from East Allegheny High School.



Janis Risch, executive director of Good Schools Pennsylvania, spoke to the group Monday night during the prep session for the next day's hearing.



### FIRST LADY CHALLENGES STUDENTS TO BE ACTIVE CITIZENS

MVEC Executive Director Linda L. Croushore, left, and Joan Benso of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, right, pose for a photo with Judge Rendell.

One of the highlights of the Nov. 21 hearing was a visit from Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, Pennsylvania's First Lady.

She spent about 20 minutes with the students following the taping, commending them for their participation in the hearing, encouraging them to continue to be active and vocal citizens and then engaging in an informal question-and-answer session.

Judge Rendell supports the Pennsylvania Coalition for Representative Democracy (PennCORD), a partnership that is jointly led by the National Constitution Center, the Pennsylvania Bar Association and the Governor's Office of the First Lady. PennCORD is committed to improving civic education for students in Grades K-12, including upgraded civics and government standards.

In addition to her role as First Lady, Marjorie Rendell currently serves as a Federal Judge on the United States Third Circuit Court of Appeals. In developing civic education as the cornerstone of her mission as First Lady, Judge Rendell took into consideration the importance of leveraging her interest in the historical heritage of Pennsylvania and its impact on the formation of our democracy as well as her perspective and experience as a federal judge.

## 53 PROJECTS FUNDED IN FALL ROUND OF GREAT IDEA GRANTS

Students are studying the environment through schoolyard habitats (William Penn Ele., Elizabeth Forward S.D.), delving into the Civil War (Yough Intermediate Middle School), and becoming "Sensational Scientists" who experiment with viscosity wands and blobbers (Homeville Ele., West Mifflin Area S.D.).

These were three of the 53 creative and innovative learning projects funded in the Fall Round of the Consortium's long-running Great Idea Grants program.

Of the 53, 38 were teacher-level grants and 13 were school grants. Additionally, two district grants were approved – \$5,000 to Frazier School District to explore the history of Perryopolis using the visual arts, and \$3,035 to Ringgold School District for "The Village of Ringgold," which expands on a previously funded school-readiness Great Idea Grant.

The Fall Round grants add up to \$36,484.57, bringing the total amount of funds distributed to date to \$1,193,170.62, according to Patricia E. Hoke, grants coordinator for the Consortium.

Fourteen of the 17 eligible school districts in Allegheny, Fayette, Washington and Westmoreland Counties participated, along with regional Career and Technology Centers (CTCs) and Area Vocational-Technical Schools (AVTS). There have been 39 grant rounds (two per school year) since 1987, when this popular program began.

Other highlights include:

- Five teacher-level grants, in Belle Vernon Area, Charleroi Area, McKeesport Area, West Mifflin Area and Yough School Districts, were awarded with funds from Dominion, which has an ongoing partnership with the Consortium. Dominion funds are earmarked for grants that promote math, science or the environment.

Teacher-level grants average \$300 and usually are implemented in a particular classroom while school-level projects average \$1,500 and benefit a larger portion of the school population. District grants carry a \$5,000 maximum and must have a school/community focus.

At the teacher-grant level, applications are evaluated and awarded on a competitive basis by local School Action Committees, which are the Consortium's grassroots arms in school districts in which it works. These committees raise funds for teacher grants in their home districts, while the Consortium funds grants at the school/district level with monies provided by The Grable Foundation.

A special committee comprised of all School Action Committee chairpersons meets each round to review and award grants at the school and district levels.

### Belle Vernon Area School District

Carol Aten Frow, Karen Guseman – *Let's Scrapbook*

Jody L. Grove, Linda Finley – *I'm A Published Author!* (UW River Fund)

Greg Boggs – *Math—When Do We Use This?* (Dominion Award)

Scott Kennel – *A Fish Story*

Lindale DeBone, Sandra Bilski, Anne Sweany, Judy Thompson, Rose Lehner,

Joan Romansky, Marsha Ferrara, Linda Hamer, Marci Colditz, Jill Mascara – *Duck Day*

Ross A. Farmer, Carol Frow, Nancy Berna – *The Eye of the Beholder*

### Bentworth School District

Joy Gazi, Nicole Thomas, Virginia Vasko, Robin Bell, Brian Nath, Denise Lawrence – *Welcoming Butterflies*

### Brownsville Area School District

Bethany Hughes, Ralph Bill, Debra Mascia – *Show it to Me!*

Janet Jones – *I Got A New Attitude*

Jolene Hough – *Character Education*

Terri Trempus, Susan Solomon – *Smart Board-Smarter Students*

Terri Trempus, Susan Solomon – *Sweet Success in Math*

Janet Jones, Jennie Karwatske – *Can You Hear Me Now?*

Amy Grable, Ruth DiCianno, Sandy Murray, Roberta Bergstedt – *A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words*

### California Area School District

Elaine Shannon – *Third Grade Time Line/Memory Book*

Susan Dillon – *U.S.A.: Good Things in Small Packages* (UW River Fund)

Lori Martin, John P. Harris, Cindy Diethorn, Robert Ruddle – *WCAL Gets a New Look*

Bernard Spada, Jr., Roxanne Vavases,

Rachel Sawyers, Ray Huffman, Don Hormell, Renee Hajdu, Susan Hurley, Michelle Harivnak, John Vavases – *The Solar System-A Mural*

### Central Westmoreland CTC

Mark Ohi, Terry Boris – *PowerPoint Portfolios*

### Charleroi Area School District

Tadem Perok, Becky Spiker – *It's Time to Face the Facts!*

Brett Tozer – *Technology Lab*

Brianne Dalfonso – *Learning Fun with Magnets and Drawing*

Cathy Hayden, Steven Shields – *Every Day Counts!* (Dominion Award)

Howard Johnson, Mary Tickner – *The Big Puddle* (UW River Fund)

Catherine Hayden, Steve Shields, Linda Filby, Amy Winn, Jamie Pomponio, Jennifer Ewedosh – *Scientific Inquiry Learning*

Amy Nelson, Jamie Pomponio, Amy Winn, Steve Shields, Cathy Hayden, Linda Filby, Mary Kay Sidary, Barb Pepper, Paul Simpson – *Elementary Level Spanish*

### Elizabeth Forward School District

Sarah Nill, Anita Kovka, Bernice Kirby – *Family Fluency Folder*

Elaine Cray, Lisa George, Michael Day – *Take the Challenge: Discover and Explore the Fascinating World of Bridges in SW PA*

Brad Simala, Carol Hoover, Christina Fine – *William Penn Schoolyard Habitat and Outdoor Classroom*

### Forbes Road CTC

Cherie ONeal, Kelly McCord – *If I Ran The Zoo*

John Lyman – *Kids Helping Cops-Community Relations*

Roxanne Oberst – *A Spoonfull of Sugar*

### Frazier School District

Vincent Rafail, Valarie Bubnash, Ken Meadows, Kathy Janci, Donald Martin, Joanne Cushman, Valarie Madorma, Tanya Brown, Sue Elliot, Adrien Dzurko, Elaine Harmon, Noreen Halvonick – *Exploring the History of Perryopolis Through the Visual Arts*

### McKeesport Area School District

Marla Hayes – *How Safe Is Our Food?* (Dominion Award)

Robin Canova, Ben Althof, Matthew Miller, Sherry Yocco, Wendy Zober – *Historical Idol*

### Ringgold School District

Kathleen D. Moranelli – *Calendar Kids*

Stephen Large, Twila Ramsden, Darla Smerilli, David Petrosky, Rose Ellen Crompton – *The Keystone State* (UW River Fund)

Lugene Calderone, Tammy Gaffey, Karen Polkabila, Thomas Williams, Michael Tominiello – *The Village of Ringgold*

### South Allegheny School District

Joan C. Packrone, Carrie Betters, Amy Hvozdiak, Aimee Jackson, Sue Smith,

Heather Sopp – *I Earned It Boutique*

Judi Lydon, LeeAnn Latorre, Dawna O'Keefe, Jennifer Volland – *Girl Talk*

### West Jefferson Hills School District

Scott Houck, Bill Wetzel – *TJ Television Studio Set*

### West Mifflin Area School District

Veronica Mattson – *Keep on Reading*

Heather Vidic, Sharna Baker, Mundi Gouker, Lisa Newmyer, Jennifer Johnston – *Homeville's Historical Heroes*

Gina Hilligsberg, Heather Vidic – *Sensational Scientists* (Dominion Award)

**Mon Valley Education Consortium: We would like to thank you... Awarding this wonderful grant has already had an impact on the students' educational experience. Thanks again.**

Amy Grable, Sandy Murray and Ruth DiCianno, Central Elem., Brownsville Area S.D. (In reference to their Great Idea Grant, *A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words*)



**United Way of Mon Valley supports Great Idea Grants**

The Consortium is pleased to announce that a donation from the River Fund of the United Way of Mon Valley helped underwrite teacher-level Great Idea Grants in Belle Vernon Area, Ringgold, Charleroi Area and California Area School Districts.

The grants, each in the amount of \$300, were awarded for the first time in the Fall Round 2006. Grants Coordinator Patricia E. Hoke said the United Way support increases opportunities to school districts in the mid-Mon Valley and expressed gratitude for the contribution.

The River Fund grants are noted in the listings on this page.

## Activities, partnerships, parental involvement grow at EA's Full-Service School

The Consortium and East Allegheny School District continue to collaborate to implement the Full-Service Community School (FSCS) concept at EA's middle school, and with Site Coordinator Jane Schuneman in charge, the agenda has been a busy one.

Before being hired by the Consortium, Schuneman was involved in the program as a parent volunteer, assisting in coordinating events and publishing the parent newsletter. She has a long history of community and school involvement and is putting that to good use to generate interest in and partners for FSCS.

Here's what has happened lately:

FSCS offered "Baby-sitting Basics" as an after-school learning opportunity through UPMC Magee-Women's Hospital. Twenty-five students who completed training in first aid, diaper changing, and childcare basics received a certificate and a business kit. The class is scheduled to be offered again in the second semester.

With cooperation from the school wellness coordinator (formerly school nurse), FSCS sponsored a walking club. Students met Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from October through December after school for a one-hour walk on the campus grounds.

"This was a fun activity that promoted healthy exercise and healthy friendships," Schuneman said, adding: "We're looking forward to resuming in April. A Health Fair for students and the community is set for early spring, with Nutrition, Inc., as a partner.

The YMCA helps with after-school programming, where board games, including chess, soon will be added. Presently, lunchtime board games are a popular activity.

FSCS and the East Allegheny PTSO are joining forces to increase parent involvement.

With guest speakers and the use of the FSCS Family Resource Center, attendance at monthly PTSO meetings has more than doubled. Schun-

eman said she is working with the North Versailles Public Library to improve the resource center's parent library. And five Family Movie Nights, when families can come to the high school and see a movie free of charge, are being planned.

Finally, FCSC and the district's Leadership Design Team are working with the four municipalities that comprise East Allegheny to develop a joint newsletter, with the first edition due out in late April.

The East Allegheny Middle School project is made possible by a grant from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation.



*More than 200 students had fun at an FSCS after-school dance, complete with sundae bar, at East Allegheny Middle School in November. Another dance is set for March 23.*

# MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR...

## For the Love of Books, Feb. 9-18

Three Act 48 sessions are planned in conjunction with For the Love of Books at the Pittsburgh-area Borders stores, as follows:

**Monroeville Store – Saturday Feb. 10, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** The Orton-Gillingham Approach. Maria Paluselli will help teachers identify characteristics exhibited by students with language learning disabilities. She will discuss the intensive, systemic, sequential phonics method of teaching language.

**Monroeville Store – Saturday Feb. 17, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** Best Practices – For Teachers by Teachers. Teachers will help their peers build strategies that work in the classroom. Participants will have the opportunity to build a tool kit of lessons to make reading fun again.

**Monroeville – Tuesday, Feb. 13, 6 to 8:30 p.m.** Cable in the Classroom. Comcast will demonstrate how children's programming and educational television can be used to enhance almost any lesson.

Look for flyers with registration details in your school and on the Consortium website: [www.mvec.org](http://www.mvec.org).

## Mon Valley Reads, April 23-27

Start planning now for the Consortium's ninth annual celebration of reading. As in past years, schools are being asked to schedule a special literacy-related activity during the week.

The Consortium again will provide commemorative book-marks for every student. Last year more than 24,000 students from 62 schools in 20 school districts participated. Sign-up forms will be going out in mid-February.

In addition to public libraries in the Mon Valley, Borders Books and Music stores will support Mon Valley Reads 2007.

Libraries have been asked to plan special reading activities for their communities and Borders will be setting up special story times.



McKeesport Area School District always gets a jump on Mon Valley Reads with its "Ready to Read, Ready to Lead" campaign, which includes Bedtime Story Hours (above) at the Carnegie Library of McKeesport.



## The Future Is Mine Student Conference set for April 24-25

This year's Student Conference will feature a "new and exciting twist on a highly interactive and packed agenda," according to Holly McGraw, TFIM coordinator.

Pittsburgh-area businesses are being recruited to host career exploration visits, during which students will not just tour the facilities but also meet and talk with people who are passionate about what they do. They'll engage in a challenging business simulation activity while on site.

Stay tuned to [www.thefutureismine.org](http://www.thefutureismine.org) and [www.mvec.org](http://www.mvec.org) for more details. The 2007 conference is the seventh in as many years for high schools participating in The Future Is Mine.

## Skills for Life

An initiative of the Mon Valley Education Consortium

The Consortium's newest initiative, Skills for Life, encourages middle schools and community-based organizations to come together to educate young people in healthy decision-making.

To that end, comprehensive training in the LifeSkills curriculum is being offered to area educators and social service workers free of charge to those interested. All materials (teacher manuals, student workbooks) also are supplied.

The curriculum addresses such social skills as self-image, assertiveness, communication skills, conflict resolution as well as skills to prevent tobacco, drug and alcohol use. MVEC's three LST-certified staff members – Jennifer Sethman, Holly McGraw and David Pribish – are available to train teachers and staff to use the curriculum effectively.

Contact Sethman ([jsethman@mvec.org](mailto:jsethman@mvec.org)) to become part of Skills for Life. For further information on the program, go to [www.mvec.org](http://www.mvec.org).

## 'Step Forward to the Future' Symposium at South Allegheny on March 13

South Allegheny School District will host a collaborative symposium, "Step Forward to the Future," on Tuesday, March 13.

It will focus on how schools can better prepare students for post-secondary education and future employment.

Participation is by team and the goal of the symposium is to provide:

- A regional view of the skills students need to be successful after high school.
- Local partnerships that meet guidelines for applying for Project 720 Grants.
- An opportunity to collaborate and network with colleagues from across the region.



Mark Draskovich, assistant principal at East Allegheny High School and new to the Mon Valley Learns program, asks a question at the debriefing session on Jan. 10.



Doug Kasic of Yough School District provided a facilitator's point of view.

## Mon Valley Learns

Reflecting on '06 and planning for the 2007 event on Friday, Oct. 26

First the celebration of the 2006 edition of Mon Valley Learns, then the start of planning for 2007.

District and building coordinators, facilitators, and other school district personnel gathered Wednesday, Jan. 10, to reflect on this annual Consortium-sponsored professional education experience, which builds on the expertise in place in Mon Valley classrooms. For the first time, workshop facilitators were asked to attend the wrap-up and provide their insight.

The group's comments and suggestions will be incorporated into planning for Mon Valley Learns 2007, which will take place Friday, Oct. 26. **Next planning meeting, for district coordinators, is set for 4 p.m. March 29 at Rock Run Inn, Butler's Golf Course, Elizabeth Twp.** All information regarding workshop sessions and presenters will be due at that time.

### Symposium Details

**When:** March 13, 2007 • 4:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

**Where:** South Allegheny High School

#### Who Should Attend:

School District Teams with representatives from principals, guidance counselors, transition coordinators, curriculum directors and teacher leaders

#### Information and R.S.V.P. by Wednesday, Feb. 2, to:

- Chad Smith at [csmith@southallegheny.org](mailto:csmith@southallegheny.org) (412) 675-3070 x 1205
- Gina Larose at [glarose@southallegheny.org](mailto:glarose@southallegheny.org) (412) 675-3070 x 1206

**Catered Refreshments Provided**



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