Colonial IU 20 Holds Regional STEM Design Challenge for Elementary and Middle School Students

On March 3, 2017, CIU 20 held the annual Regional STEM Design Challenge at the Monroe campus of Northampton County Community College.

Thirty five teams competed in the Grade 4-5 category, and thirty teams competed in the Grade 6 -8 category. Overall, 260 students were involved in this year's event from 15 LEAs.

Students in grades 4-8 were presented with a challenge and then built an object using K'Nex pieces with a unique blueprint. At the challenge they presented a narrative report, submitted blueprints and cost sheets, and built their object within a certain time limit.

This year's challenge was the following:

"Your team has been hired to create a new amusement park. However, this new amusement park is making "green" a priority. The owners are working to make the world healthier, cleaner and safer and are creating a fun family park that will inspire others to be environmentally friendly.

You will need to create a ride for this new park. Your ride must represent the environmentally friendly approach that the owners are requiring."

We are pleased to announce the top finishers for the CIU 20 Regional Competition:

Grade 4-5 Winners:

Pink Emojis

First Place: Nazareth Intermediate School, *Pink Emojis*
Second Place: Northampton Area SD, Moore Elementary School, *Eco Captains*
Honorable Mention: East Stroudsburg Elementary, *ESE's "Argh" Team*

Grade 6-8 Winners:

The Holy Rollers

First Place: St. Jane Frances de Chantal, *The Holy Rollers*
Second Place: Nazareth Intermediate School, *Blue K'Nex*
Honorable Mention: Nazareth Intermediate School, *EcoFriendly Explorers*

The top team in each division from the CIU 20 regional competition is invited to compete in the state competition on May 19, 2017, at Harrisburg University.

Colonial Virtual Program Expands Offerings for District Students

CVP is Expanding Online Options for Elementary Students. We have expanded our elementary options with the addition of Odysseyware Academy through the Colonial Virtual Program. Full elementary programming for grades 3-5 and K-2 SPARK programming focused on skill building in Math and ELA.

CVP Cyber Academy Programming for 2017-2018

Full Cyber Academy options are available for your district through a partnership with CVP. If you are considering options available to your district, CVP offers numerous course options, flexibility in programming, course customizations and support.

CVP Summer School 2017

Schools and districts are now planning for Summer School. Credit Recovery and Accelerated Learning options are available.

- Credit Recovery - Enables students to gain credits they were not successful in gaining during the traditional school year.

- Accelerated Learning - Enables students to earn full original credits over the summer. Use these to complete prerequisites for courses offered in the district, get ahead or get on-track for graduation.

    ~ Both programs run in an 8 week format

    ~ CVP will enroll, monitor and report grade information at the end of the session

    ~ Available with parent payment through the portal or district payment

If you are thinking about expanding online options for your students or would like to learn more about CVP's flexibility and programming options, please contact Renee Harris, rharris@ciu20.org, 610-515-6566.

Keystone Kids Digital Book Report Challenge Combines Literacy & STEM

Students in grades 5 & 6 within the CIU 20 region had the opportunity to participate in the annual Keystone Kids Digital Book Report Challenge. Because 2016 was an election year, this year's theme was "With Liberty and Reading for All." Students were encouraged to choose a book that tied in some form of United States government. They had to integrate reading, writing, and 21st century literacy skills into an interactive and engaging multimedia project.

A total of 24 digital book reports representing 6 different schools were submitted. A panel of judges used a scoring rubric to determine the winners in each division. Prizes were awarded to the participating students and schools who earned 1st and 2nd place within each division.

A number of local businesses helped sponsor the event, including Dan's Camera City of Allentown, Just Born Candy of Bethlehem, and Crayola of Easton. This year's winners are below. Thank you to all who participated in this year's challenge.

5th Grade Division Winners:
First Place: Bushkill Elementary (East Stroudsburg)-*Project: Ben and Me by Illyana, Makayla and Jazzy*
Second Place: Our Lady of Perpetual Help-*Project: Rosa by Sammy and Manvi*
Honorable Mention: Bushkill Elementary (East Stroudsburg)-*Project: A Haunting in Williamsburg by John, Alea and Lily*

6th Grade Division Winners:
First Place: Lehman Intermediate-*Project: Dark Life by Greg*
Second Place: Lehman Intermediate-*Project: Death Mountain by Sean*
Honorable Mention: Lehman Intermediate-*Project: Hold Still by Brooke*

5th Annual Literacy Symposium Planned for June 13, 2017

On Tuesday, June 13, 2017, Colonial Intermediate Unit 20 is hosting its 5th Annual Literacy Symposium for all K-8 educators. The theme for this year's conference is "Oh, for the Love of Reading!" The event will once again be held at DeSales University in Allentown, PA. The keynote speaker is Kate Roberts, author of DIY Literacy: Teaching Tools for Differentiation, Rigor, and Independence. We are currently planning an engaging line-up of breakout sessions that fit into the theme. If you are interested in being a breakout session presenter and would like to submit a proposal, please go here: www.ciu20.org/litsymposiumpresenter. Registration will open in late April.

Joint MTSS and RAC Meetings Continue to Make Impact

The second of our three 2016-2017 Joint MTTS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) and RAC (Reading Advisory Council) networking meetings was held in February and addressed the rationale for implementing MTSS including: effective teaching strategies for intensified core and tiered instruction within evidence-based instruction and utilizing the MTSS framework for addressing school-wide and individualized behavior needs. Participants identified low, medium, and high impacts of program influences to identify opportunities for improvement and overcoming potential threats to implementation of instruction. The overwhelming response from these networking meetings has been very positive, and CIU 20 continues to strive for ways to make the interactions valuable. To learn more about future dates for these meetings and other networking offered by the CIU 20 Professional Learning Department, please visit: www.ciu20.org/networkingmeetings.

Workshop Provides Educators with Free Tools from Google

CIU 20 recently held a workshop devoted to "Exploring Google Chrome Extensions, Apps & Add-Ons." Participants discovered useful apps, extensions and add-ons to support engaging lessons, differentiated instruction, and management of student data to provide simultaneous feedback to students. Other upcoming educational technology workshops include: "Create, Engage, Assess! Creating Lessons with Nearpod" on May 2, 2017; "PLNs for Teachers" on May 3, 2017; "Stay Informed with Formative Assessment" on May 9, 2017 (As presented at PETE & C and at the upcoming ISTE Conference); and "Getting Started with iMovie & Keynote" on May 10, 2017. For more information, view flyer here: **www.ciu20.org/edtechofferings.**

Local High Schools Compete in Regional Governor's STEM Competition

CIU 20 hosted the 2017 Governor's STEM Competition on Wednesday, February 1, 2017. The Governor's PA STEM Competition is a unique competition for students in grades 9-12 that provided an opportunity to explore careers using Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). This year's theme was "Making Our Lives Better through STEM."

Teams of students from across the commonwealth were challenged to research, design and present a device/project that is capable of improving the quality of life for residents of Pennsylvania. Teams were provided a $500 stipend to design and build a prototype of their device/project that can meet a series of practical tasks that can be translated into real world needs.

Students also engaged with their local community to learn about STEM-related careers and the skills needed for success. To culminate the experience, students presented their findings and explained the practical applications of their device to a panel of judges. The challenge tested teams' communication, problem solving, and critical thinking skills while providing a unique opportunity to share their creativity with other students from across the state.

Participating Schools were: Delaware Valley High School, Monroe Career & Technical Institute, and Pocono Mountain West High School.

All of the schools' projects were compelling; however, the judges chose Delaware Valley High School's project, which was a portable heater utilizing solar energy-derived power. This portable heater would be helpful for people who enjoy Pennsylvania's cold-weather outdoor activities like camping, hunting, fishing, and skiing.

Medals for first, second and third place were provided by CIU 20 and the first place team received an additional $750 stipend from the state to improve their project before they compete on May 19th, 2017, at Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster, PA.

Tony Pidgeon, Director of HR

Performance Improvement Plans: Are They Necessary?

What is a Performance Improvement Plan? A performance improvement plan, commonly referred to as a PIP, is a plan designed by an IU or district, with input from the employee that outlines specific areas of concern. A PIP is a tool to monitor and measure deficient work products, processes, and /or behaviors of a particular staff member in an effort to improve performance or modify behaviors.

Why would you use a PIP? The first and foremost reason to use a PIP is to get the employee to improve. An employee who is performing at sub-standard expectations will impact the education of students and bring down the morale of the staff. PIP's are generally considered by the courts not to be disciplinary; however, they can lead to discipline and be thought of as a warning in some instances. The PIP will also serve several important purposes: notice, plan, support, timeline, consequences, and documentation.

The PIP puts the employee on notice of their performance deficiencies. It outlines and memorializes a plan for improvement on specific areas that are identified as deficient. The PIP provides support by identifying resources, providing for specific trainings, and giving specific support for the employee in order to improve performance. PIP's establish a timeframe in which the employee will have an opportunity to correct performance deficiencies. Consequences are established at the outset for not correcting poor performance. The PIP creates a clear record for the IU or District and the employee.

When would you use a PIP? The law requires that a PIP be used when an overall performance rating of "needs improvement or "failing" is issued for the evaluation of a certificated professional employee. This evaluation would be reflected on the teacher or professional staff member's evaluation form, commonly referred to as the 82-1, 82-2, or 82-3. PIP's can also be used whenever a deficiency is identified, for both professional employees and non-professional employees. The goal of the PIP is to increase an employee's job performance, so that the employee understands what is expected and has the resources and tools to meet those expectations.

PIP's are necessary and very useful tools. They outline clear expectations and give the employee the opportunity to correct identified deficiencies. Because the PIP is generally not considered discipline, it usually is not grievable. PIP's should be used when an employee has had clearly defined issues doing their job and not for employee misconduct. For

misconduct, your organization should use its progressive discipline policy or process.

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