

Community Innovation Zone Update

June 2016

The Community Innovation Zone grantees are making progress in outreach and engagement with school districts, early learning programs, families and children throughout Pennsylvania. This initiative is funded with the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. For more information, please visit the [Pennsylvania Department of Education website](#).

Hazleton School District

The Hazleton School District Community Innovation Zone team has been busy implementing, improving and expanding the *Read With Me* program for families in the community. The program is a six-week session that teaches parents/caregivers how to read to their children. The popularity of the program has prompted the CIZ team to expand the sessions and develop new topics that still focus on literacy on below, on, and above readers.

Implementation of the Hybrid Learning Model in the classrooms of Hazel Township Early Learning Center and Arthur Street Elementary School started at the beginning of the school year. The model combines direct instruction, collaboration and independent learning to students. All teachers from Pre-K through grade 2 are using the same model to allow for continuity throughout the school district.

Teachers are receiving weekly coaching and data that has been collected shows an increase in students who are working at grade level.

The School district hosted the first ever Diversity Night in March 2016, with over 250 participants. The night included ethnic food, music and clothing representative of the community, which was covered by [The Times Leader](#).



Luzerne Intermediate Unit

The Luzerne IU Community Innovation Zone team has been busy implementing three trainings for Hanover Area School District (HASD) and Child Development Council (CDC), the PA Early Learning Standards, Transition to Formal Schooling and STEM. The team leader has also surveyed the local early learning program to identify their professional Development training needs. After completing this survey, the IU has started the application process for PQAS.

The application for Parents as Teachers has been submitted and are awaiting approval. In the meantime to clear some barriers that prevent families from engaging in events and activities the team is in the process of developing a branding logo that would be used in all communication to the community. The

IU social worker will be presenting the Early Learning GPS to the community. A *Leap into Literacy* event is scheduled for May 7, 2016 to be held at the high school. This two-hour event will include community partners including the library, pediatricians, Early Intervention and, Head Start. Implementation of MTSS (K), PBIS (Pre-School) has been complete and follow-up coaching is continuing with staff.

Greater Nanticoke Area School District

The Family Center at Greater Nanticoke Area School District (GNASD) has a goal to have all children that are registered for the 2016-2017 school year be enrolled in the family engagement program, *My School, My Community*. All families that are enrolled in the program with their children (in their pre-kindergarten year) will receive a personalized passport and be linked to the GNASD text notification program. As of March, 56 families are enrolled and two family engagements events were held at KM Smith elementary.

The team is also working on a Parents as Teachers program with families from birth through school age. The program currently has 44 families, with 61 children enrolled and they also receive a personalized passport to use throughout the year. With these passports admission to football and basketball games throughout the year was waived (one child/Caregiver per game). Along with the admissions, 10 community events are planned for the passport holders including a Rail Riders Baseball game, admission to the community pool, and group outing to State Park Education Center are just some examples. This passport also includes development checklists for health, exploring the community, school participation and parent /child recreational activities.

As the collaboration moved into the second year and with the team attendance to the Governors Institute the team recognized the need for math training after attending a math workshop with Dr. Douglas Clements. The team reached out to national instruction from Denver, Douglas Van Dine, to present the training, Common Core Mathematics. The training was filled with hands-on practice in applying the research to teaching methods and approaches in math and problem solving. Below are some quotes from participants.

“Excellent in-service! Unlike many times where you can barely keep your eyes open, Doug’s professional development was outstanding! He was very knowledgeable and caused me to reexamine my preconceptions about early math instruction. It was a very engaging and worthwhile presentation. I’d love for our teachers to have the opportunity to explore the other areas of mathematics with this research group. Thanks!” - Angela Sager, Reading Specialist

“The February 12th in-service was very insightful. It was nice to have an in-service that was meaningful, and I understood why we needed the guidance. I enjoyed learning about how to think out of the box. I know myself, I teach math skills the way I was taught. So, it was nice to be reminded that children can think and excel in other ways. The hard part will be to teach myself to work out of the box so I can help my students. Thank you for your insight and help.” -Heidi Mullen, Kindergarten Teacher

“The workshop was informative, engaging, and useful in my daily work with pre-school aged children and their parents. The materials available helped me understand both the ideas being

presented and the importance of hands-on math for young learners.” -Beth Kratz, Parents as Teachers (PAT) Parent Educator

Keystone College

The Keystone College Community Innovation Zone team is currently working on home visits with 50 identified families in the Lackawanna Trail Elementary school. Four home visitors and a family engagement specialist have been hired and trained to visit families to assistance them with educational goals, job opportunities, and social services that are available in the community.

Monthly newsletters and surveys have been created for families in the community to evaluate needs for training, employment, human services, education, and other needs that are an immediate need for the community. Data from the surveys are in the process of being collected and evaluated.

Pittston Area School District

The Community Innovation Zone team at Pittston School District has been working on the Carrie Flower book series with author Cynthia Post. The author created the book series based on social and emotional development but also has all the developmental milestone weaved into the books. The books are used in conjunction with the PATHS program to reinforce social and emotional readiness in children from birth through third grade. The program has been a huge success with the early learning program and the elementary school using both tools making transitions from the early childhood program into the elementary school. They team has also collaborated with Kings College theater group to create a play that will be performed to the early learning program and students in the elementary school in May.

The Community Innovation Zone team is also implementing the iReady Diagnostic tests to children in K-3 to gather data on below, on and above level in reading and math. The data was collected in the second quarter and is being analyzed to create data driven instruction to enhance curriculum.

The family engagement event with musician Jack Hartman was a huge success. He performed in the evening for families, and then again, during the day for the students and the local early learning program. Jack’s music incorporates social emotional learning through singing and dancing.

