

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



— January 2024 Education Bulletin —

Welcome to the January 2024 edition of the **Luzerne Intermediate Unit (LIU) Office of Professional Learning's (OPL)** monthly education bulletin. The intent of this communication is to provide subscribers with:

- Professional learning opportunities offered by our department,
- Provide school leaders with educational policy support, and
- Provide tips for practicing educators.

This edition will focus on the **educator shortage crisis** and the steps the LIU has taken to support schools facing staffing shortages. Other items included are:

- Use of Paraeducators as Classroom Monitors
- Additional STEELS Updates

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Bulletin!!!



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LIU SPECIAL EDUCATION CERTIFICATION

SUPPORTING A SHORTAGE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF

One of the areas of greatest need in the field of education are Special Education Teachers. Recognizing this need, the LIU has designed a program that allows anyone with a Bachelor's Degree to attain a K-12 Special Education Certificate. According to a Fall 2022 [report](#) conducted by the PA Department of Education Policy Studies, "the demand for special education teachers has far exceeded supply." Further, this report indicated that special education is an area with one of the highest issuances of emergency permits—second only to elementary education. Meaning, our students that require the greatest amount of specialized support to be successful in learning have access to relatively fewer trained educators.



**SPECIAL
EDUCATION
CERTIFICATION**

An Alternate Pathway to a Career in Education

LIU Special Education Certification Program

This program, with a near 100% success and job placement rate, is meant for adults with a Bachelor's degree in any field with an overall GPA of 3.0 or greater. Even educators wishing to become K-12 Special Education Certified can participate. All courses are conducted online and each uses a blend of live virtual night classes and asynchronous assignments and assessments. The full program includes 50 credits plus a 12-week, 12 credit student teaching experience. This program will take into account each candidate's previous work experience and prior educational coursework to determine their eligibility for exemption from participation in specific courses. If you have any questions about this program please visit www.liu18.org, or contact certificationprogram@liu18.org.

LIU PARTNERS WITH KING'S COLLEGE

In late 2023, the LIU partnered with King's College to include a Master's Degree add-on to their K-12 Special Education Certification program. Doing so provides even further professional development for past, present, and future



LIU program participants and opens up options for financial aid, eligibility for grant dollars to supplement course costs, and a greater starting salary. To learn more, download our press release [here](#).

ACT 33 OF 2023

SOLUTIONS FOR THE SUBSTITUTE TEACHER SHORTAGE

Act 33 of 2023, recently passed by PA legislation, contains a host of budget and policy changes. From school mental health grant funding to a \$14M increase in the career and technology education subsidy, this Act also includes provisions for schools to access a greater pool of educators to serve as Classroom Monitors.

When teachers are absent from their instructional responsibilities, supervision of their students is of highest concern. In order to accommodate this lapse in attendance when a substitute teacher is not available, the building administrator or their designee must find coverage from staff already obligated with responsibilities to cover the absent educa-



tor's schedule. Solutions to this ever present facet of school can cause ripple effects that can eventually cause disruption to student learning.

This is not to say that teacher absence is unwarranted. Teacher absences are necessary. These absences prevent illnesses from worsening and spreading to others, they allow teachers to attend to personal emergency matters, and even allow them time to learn something new or share their expertise about their craft. So what has Act 33 done to remedy this situation?

Act 33 of 2023 extends provisions under Act 91 of 2021 to help schools address substitute teacher shortages.

- Permanently allows retired teachers to fill teacher vacancies on an emergency basis.
- Permanently allows recent college graduates who completed an approved teacher preparation program to serve as a temporary substitute teacher for more than 20 days per school year.
- Extends provisions allowing eligible college students to serve as substitute teachers through the 2025-26 school year. The number of days an individual may serve as a substitute teacher would not be limited, except that student teachers would be limited to 10 days.
- Allows schools to issue classroom monitor permits through the 2025-26 school year.

STEELS

MULTIDIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

In the November edition of the OPL Bulletin, the concept of a multidimensional approach to teaching and learning the STEELS standards was defined. This issue focuses on the use of student performance expectations. This expectation is a “students who demonstrate understanding can” statement that includes all dimensions intended for a specific standard. For example, consider the 3rd grade Life Science standard for the Growth and Development of Organisms strand: *Students who demonstrate understanding can develop models to describe that organisms have unique and diverse life cycles but all have in common birth, growth, reproduction, and death.* This performance expectation contains all three dimensions a students must master in order to meet this standard:

- 1) The Disciplinary Core Idea: Reproduction is essential to the continued existence of every kind of organism. Plants and animals have unique and diverse life cycles.
- 2) The Crosscutting Concept: Patterns of change can be used to make predictions
- 3) The Science and Engineering Practice: Developing and using models.

Each K-12 standard is designed this way. In order to determine the explicit dimensions each standard or performance expectation includes, educators are advised to view each standard’s corresponding foundation box. This supplemental information will not only specify the dimensions of learning included in the standard, but it will also provide a great deal of additional information useful to successfully integrate the STEELS standards into a curriculum.



WHO IS WHO?

LIU OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In each issue of the OPL Education Bulletin, you will get a chance to meet a member of our team. In this issue, we would like to introduce Dr. Deanna Mennig, STEM and Personalized Learning Consultant and ELECT/ECYEH Program Supervisor, and the work she does in the LIU region and beyond.

Credentials: Bachelors of Science in Mathematics and Masters Degrees in Curriculum/Instruction and Principal Leadership. She also possess a Superintendent’s Letter of Eligibility and Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership. Dr. Mennig is also a PA Certified Secondary Teacher of Mathematics and Instructional Technology Specialist.

Years of Service: High School Math Teacher (14 years), LIU STEM and Personalized Learning consultant (6 years), Supervisor ELECT/ECYEH (2 years).

Other areas of Interest: Dr. Mennig’s main focus areas are School Improvement concentrating on ATSI/TSI, Comprehensive Planning, and Servings as the LIU Assessment Coordinator.

Additional Project Areas: Special Education Certification Program, Principals Academy, Computer Science/Coding, and PE/Health Lead.



LIU OPL NETWORK TRAININGS (JAN 2024 — FEB 2024)

Did you know that the Office of Professional Learning regularly offers workshops at several locations? Areas of educator support include all core content areas, support for students with special needs, and classroom management.

- Mindfulness Practices for Everyday Teaching, 1/10/2024
- Behavior Series—Behavior Based Interventions, 1/11/2024
- An Introduction to the STEELS Standards: Grades K-5, 1/23/2024
- An Introduction to the STEELS Standards: Grades 6-8, 1/30/2024
- Text-Dependent Analysis Workshop: Grades 3-5, 1/30/2024
- AT Consideration in the IEP: Why and How, 2/6/2024
- Text-Dependent Analysis Workshop, Grades K-3, 2/6/2023
- K-5 Fluency in Mathematics Development, 2/8/2024

All registrations are through MyLearning Plan. Visit our website at www.liu18.org and head to “Programs and Services”. From here, go to “Event Registration” to find out more about these opportunities and to register.

We also hold monthly network meetings for Curriculum Coordinators and quarterly network meetings for school Principals.



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