Office of Professional Learning

— March 2026 Education Bulletin —

Welcome to the March 2026 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 of the OPL Education Bulletin provides a recap of our team's attendance at the 2026 PA Educational Technology Expo and Conference (PETE&C - https://www.peteandc.org).

Don't forget to subscribe to the OPL Education Bulletin!!!

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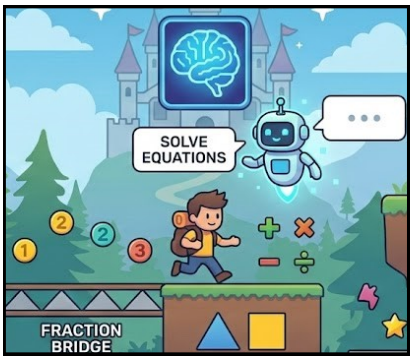
Mathematics

Game On: Canva for Math Fluency

Presented by Cassandra Lewis, Elementary Special Educator from Huntingdon Area School District (https://huntsd.org/bild), Game On: Canva for Math Fluency describes the Bearcat Institute of Learning and Development (BILD) online mathematics program. The initiative is built on a highly flexible foundation designed to meet students at their exact level of readiness, utilizing a specialized model for grades K-6 and a distinct approach for grades 7-12. What makes this program particularly innovative is its creative engine; it leverages Canva's (canva.com) suite of growing Artificial Intelligence tools to generate instructional content. By using AI-driven design prompts, the curriculum incorporates high levels of game-based design specifically intended to boost student engagement and curiosity. Once visually rich tasks are created, they are ported into the Canvas Learning Management System for streamlined classroom delivery.



The program's effectiveness relies on what creators call its "one-two punch": the integration of the gamified learning tasks with SpringMath Accelerate (https://springmath.org/how-it-works). While the Canvas-based lessons provide the instruction, SpringMath serves as the data-driven engine that offers essential fluency practice and regular benchmarking. This partnership allows the program to analyze resultant data and automatically generate personalized learning pathways for every student. By combining the aesthetic, gamified appeal of AI-generated content with the rigorous, adaptive scaffolding of SpringMath, the program ensures that no student is left behind in a digital environment. I highly recommend you explore Canva and their AI tools to support your daily instruction. Educators get special access to content beyond the typical free account.

Lesson Planning

Accelerate Lesson Planning w/ Google Gemini

During a session led by Google's education team, we explored how their AI toolkit is drastically accelerating the instructional design process. The workflow begins with Deep Research, a powerful tool for gathering high-quality information across the web, which can then be funneled into NotebookLM for your choice of communication methods, like a podcast. Likewise, NotebookLM enables educators to organize multiple sources, ranging from PDFs to YouTube videos, into a cohesive "thinking partner" that generates summaries and citations. The final piece of this workflow is Canvas in Gemini, where these organized insights are transformed into comprehensive unit plans. This streamlined "research-to-plan" loop allows teachers to move from raw data to a structured classroom strategy in a fraction of the time it once took.

The efficiency of this workflow is further enhanced by the deep integration of Gemini across the entire Google Workspace for Education suite. Educators should keep an eye out for the distinct Gemini symbol (the four-pointed star) appearing within Docs, Sheets, Slides, and Drive. It is particularly impactful for assessment and visual design: Gemini can now automatically generate assessments directly within Google Forms, while also "spicing up" Google Slides by generating original imagery and slide layouts from simple text prompts. While these features act as a force multiplier for creativity and planning, it is important to note that specific access, such as the ability to use Gemini in the side panel, may vary depending on an individual school's Google Workspace subscription.

Student Access

WCAG-Based Digital Accessibility Model

Cassie Brusch from the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit (MCIU) presented *From Policy to Practice: A WCAG-Based Digital Accessibility Model*. This program is a dedicated framework designed to move digital accessibility from a high-level compliance requirement to a sustainable, everyday habit for all educators. It acknowledges that while policies like WCAG 2.1 AA and Title II of the ADA provide the legal foundation, real equity happens through the intentional design of the materials we share daily. These resources are designed to meet educators where they are, offering high-impact strategies, such as mastering heading styles, writing meaningful alt text, and ensuring color contrast, that transform digital content into a bridge rather than a barrier for students.

A key highlight of this approach is the "My Accessible Brand" model, which encourages staff to reflect on the human experience behind their digital work. By integrating these practices across all roles, from teachers and coaches to IT and administrators, their "Digital Accessibility Implementation Guide" ensures that accessibility becomes part of a school culture rather than a specialized task. This framework is often coupled with practical tools and AI-assisted workflows, such as using Gemini to help draft descriptive alt text or audit slide decks for readability. By shifting the focus

from "checking a box" to "designing with empathy," the program empowers educators to create inclusive learning environments where every student, regardless of their visual or physical needs, can navigate and interact with content seamlessly.

Tina Gelso (tgelso@liu18.org), Stacey Raijski (sraijski@liu18.org), and Rich Mackrell (rmackrell@liu18.org) are the Luzerne IU leads for all things related to WCAG 1.2 Level AA. Feel free to reach out any of our team if you need support in the generation of accessible digital content.

STEELS and the Arts

Engaging Schools: ELS Standards and the Arts

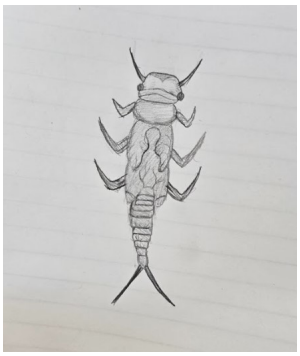
One of the standout networking features of PETE&C is the Poster Sessions. Integrated into topic-specific summits, these sessions allow educators to engage directly with presenters in a casual, conversational setting between traditional presentations.

At this year's STEELS Summit, Dr. Rich Mackrell from the Luzerne Intermediate Unit led a poster presentation highlighting a grant-funded project through the Department of Environmental Protection. This initiative connects students to the PA STEELS Environmental Literacy and Sustainability standards through the lens of visual arts. To bring this to life, Dr. Mackrell partnered with the Pittston Area and Wilkes-Barre Area School Districts, a local artist-in-residence program, the EPCAMR, the DCNR, and a local fine arts festival.

The project will culminate in a showcase of student-created artwork made from upcycled materials, designed to raise awareness about local water security and safety. These pieces are the result of a unique collaboration between students, science and art teachers, environmental specialists, and professional artists. We invite you to view the showcase this May at the Wilkes-Barre Fine Arts Fiesta, held in conjunction with the statewide 2026 Remake Learning Days celebration.







The Keynote

AI-Powered Classrooms

To kick off the conference, PETE&C invited Holly Clark, author of *The AI Infused Classroom*, to present on current trends in education and generative AI. Clark highlighted a significant shift in AI usage: according to the *Harvard Business Review*, using AI for "therapy and companionship" became the top use case between 2024 and 2025, while "generation of ideas" dropped from first to sixth place. Within education, she noted both the promise of AI, such as generating accessible content and automating differentiation, and the risks, specifically students using AI without proper guidance.

Holly Clark

AI-Powered Classrooms: Where Curiosity Meets Infinite Possibility

How do we prepare students for a future that's evolving faster than ever? This inspiring talk delves into how AI is transforming education by enhancing learning, fostering creativity, and connecting students to real-world challenges. Through powerful stories, practical examples, and a look at groundbreaking technology, you'll discover how AI can ignite curiosity and unlock the boundless potential of every student. Whether you're an educator seeking innovative approaches or a leader shaping the future of education, this will leave you motivated to embrace the transformative power of AI.

With these shifts in mind, the conference posed a central question: *"How do we use AI to level up education for every learner in our classroom?"*

To navigate this, Clark promoted the AI Moment Map that positions the AI tool as the tutor and the student as the editor. The process is broken down into three essential phases:

1. Sparking Curiosity and Ideas: Before a new topic is introduced, students use AI to build or verify background knowledge, effectively leveling the playing field before the teacher's lesson begins.

2. Checking In and Giving Feedback: Students engage with generative platforms, prioritizing chatbots those that promote learning through inquiry rather than simply "giving the answer", to verify their understanding.

3. Scaffolding Deeper: This phase allows for differentiation based on a student's pace and curiosity. The model pushes "fast finishers" toward deeper mastery while providing struggling students with personalized support on challenging concepts.

Throughout this process, accountability is maintained by assessing evidence of student thinking. Clark suggests keeping this simple: ask students for one takeaway and one new question, or have them use the "I used to think..., but now I think..." framework. By making learning visible, teachers gain a clear understanding of student progress, empowering learners under the expert guidance of a caring educator.

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