

# All-in!

## NEWSLETTER



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## Our Mission

CAIU provides innovative support and services in partnership with schools, families, and communities to build capacity and model courageous leadership to help them be great. #BeGreat

## Our Vision

Recognized as a trusted and influential partner in achieving life-changing outcomes in the Capital Area. #ChangingLives

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**On the Cover:** Kids enjoying Critter Connections at Fall Fest on Saturday, October 28, 2023.

Do you have a story about staff or students living our values out loud, being great, and changing lives? Share your Giving Voice to Our Values stories, student successes, #begreat and #changinglives moments and more! Email stories for All-In or social media to [communications@caiu.org](mailto:communications@caiu.org).

**Deadline for December All-In: Friday, November 17**

## All-in! NEWSLETTER

Executive Director Report  
All-In! Newsletter  
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**Please like us on social media!**





## Committed to a Culture of

## Belonging and Dignity



Most of you know that the CAIU has committed to creating and nurturing a culture of belonging and dignity for all. To accomplish this work, the CAIU has a committed group of volunteers that have taken on the task of planning and carrying out the actions, as well as, identifying and sharing the skills that lead to an increased sense of belonging and honored dignity in our spaces for everyone.

Knowing that the process of strategic planning would assist us in carrying out our vision, the committee came together in the summer of 2022 and spent an entire day creating our first [Blueprint for Belonging](#). This blueprint contains our goals and action steps organized by our pillars of practice: Organizational commitments and practices, equitable access, partnerships and building capacity.

Strategic planning is a circular process of planning, doing, studying and acting on the results. Essentially, every year we meet to determine what we think will be the best goals for the coming year based on our progress from the year before, as well as our current needs and the priorities we have identified. Consistent with this well-settled process, the committee got together again on a sunny July day in 2023 and revisited the first of our blueprints. At this meeting we reviewed our progress, identified areas we needed to revise to make more progress, and identified those places that needed additional conversation to ascertain what we need to do differently.

First we looked at what we had accomplished. One of our goals was to complete a second survey to compare the results from our first survey completed in 2022. In the spring of 2023, all staff were again asked to complete the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) Scale (Goodenow, 1993). 236 of our 625 (+/-) staff completed the survey (in 2022, 412 responded). All the questions are linked to the four indicators of belonging, namely feeling accepted, feeling that you are treated fairly, feeling appreciated, and feeling validated. The comparison between the data from 2022 and 2023 demonstrated modest gains in three of the four indicators. Given the low survey responses, however, we determined that going forward we needed to identify more authentic ways to demonstrate how staff were feeling and that included finding more ways to hear from staff.

Last year as part of our plan, we strove to ensure that all staff had the basic concepts and vocabulary of belonging by making the day-long training an expectation for all staff. Huge kudos to our social workers that worked to develop the training and then delivered the day long sessions to over 600 staff members.

Other goal work led to the development of a resource page on our [website](#) which contains a wide variety of resources for educators, classrooms, professional development, and learning more about belonging, in a variety of media, print, video, and audio. This website is in the process of being transferred to the home page where new materials can be added regularly to ensure we are always providing the best cultivated resources available.

Moving on to this year, for the [23-24 Blueprint for Belonging](#) we continue to seek to share information in a variety of modalities and have added new strategies to get more feedback from staff in what we hope will be more authentic ways. We also are seeking to engage and empower more ambassadors to lead a number of different kinds of opportunities to continue the learning of all staff to expanding our understanding. Our action steps include offering new book studies, short, targeted skill development sessions offered at different times of day, and even a movie night. 🍏



*Andria Saia*  
Dr. Andria Saia,  
Executive Director

**Want to get involved?** We need you! We are looking for additional passionate committee members as well as ambassadors that would like to engage in the work. If you are interested, the full group meets every other month, with our next full group meeting being Jan. 23 with in person and Zoom options for participation. On the alternative months, the subcommittees meet. Please reach out to me to join us.

**GET INVOLVED!**

# Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

On a blustery day in early November, years of hard work came to fruition with the official launch of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in the Capital Region.

Through the indefatigable work of Geri Shaffer, the Center for Advanced School Teaching and Learning (CASTL) and Catherine Hershey School for Early Learning took the Imagination Library from concept to reality.



***"We are so excited*** to have been the driving force behind bringing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to the Capital Region," Dr. Andria Saia, CAIU executive director, said. "We know from copious amounts of research that early access to books in the home is one of the single biggest predictors of academic success, even positively impacting employment later in life, and ***Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is unparalleled*** in providing access to these books."

The premise of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is simple: Parents register their children, and those children receive one book every month until age five. The books are free of charge to the parents. The Library is funded through corporation donations, individual donors, events, and grants.



"Academically, ***children growing up in homes without books are on average three years behind children in homes with lots of books***, even when controlled for other key factors such as income and parents' education. Having books in the home has been shown to increase a child's academic success, vocabulary development attention, and even job attainment later in life," Dr. Saia said. "Research demonstrates that 61% of America's low-income children are growing up in homes without books, and many live in 'book deserts' where there are no libraries in their schools or communities as well. The percentage of families living in poverty in the capital region is alarming, ranging from 7.3% in Cumberland County to 9.8% in Perry County, and 13.2% in Dauphin County."

It costs about \$80,000 to fund one county per year to start and then costs about \$500,000 to run annually. Thanks to donations and sponsorships, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is available to children in Dauphin and Perry counties, but not yet in Cumberland County. CASTL continues to work to fund the library there. To donate to funding Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Cumberland County or to register a child, click the links below. 🍏

[Donate](#)

[Register](#)

## How Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Started

In 1995, Dolly Parton, inspired by her own father's inability to read or write, started the first Imagination Library in her home of Sevier County, Tenn. In 2000, a national replication effort began, and in 2003, the organization sent its one millionth book. As of June 2023, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which includes more than **2,700 local program partners** nationwide, has gifted more than **2,408,432 books** to children in the United States.



# A Structured Literacy Model Train the Trainer

By **Ami Healy**, *Training and Consultation Supervisor*

For decades, understanding how the brain learns to read and why some students struggle has been settled in the reading science field. Yet a research-to-classroom gap prevents educators from knowing the research, implementing evidence-based strategies, and utilizing programs based on reading science. The amendment to Chapter 49 calls for educators to be trained in structured literacy, an evidence-based approach to teaching reading that benefits all learners. The Training and Consultation (TaC) team has worked hard over the past several years to deliver professional development aligned with the science and supports educators with the implementation. Currently, TaC is building capacity within districts by offering a Structured Literacy Train-the-Trainer model to help district meet the Chapter 49 Structured Literacy requirements. Legislation (with the potential passing of House Bill 998 and Senate Bill 801) will likely require districts to ensure evidence-based reading instruction and assessment is in place.

In October, Dr. Greg Milbrand, Assistant Superintendent at Cumberland Valley School District, was invited to speak at the Appropriations and Education Committee Joint Public Hearing on School Funding. Dr. Milbrand shared the work that Cumberland Valley has undergone and its support of the bills. He publicly acknowledged the Capital Area Intermediate Unit for the training and support provided to CV educators.

Additionally, Dr. Meghan Gierka, former literacy coach for CV and current consultant for the AIM Academy, testified in support of the bills as well. Dr. Gierka has always been a voice sharing the guidance and training she received from the CAIU that has fueled her passion. 🍏



*Recently, several TaC were invited to the Pennsylvania State Capitol for Dyslexia Awareness Day. Legislators, organizations, and school district personnel supported the pending legislation.*

## Dyslexia Summit

The CAIU is proud to host the Dyslexia Summit on Dec. 4 from 8:30am - 3:30pm. Join us for an opening welcome followed by a screening and discussion of *The Right to Read* documentary. You don't want to miss this FREE event! Space is limited, so scan the QR code below to register early!



## The Neurodiversity Movement in Schools

## Merging Evidence-Based Practices with

*Dignity and Belonging* By Dr. Irene Reedy, Program Supervisor

As our understanding of human cognition, behavior, and learning continues to expand, the recognition of the diverse ways in which our brains function becomes more important than ever. This appreciation of neural variance has given rise to the neurodiversity movement, which seeks to acknowledge and celebrate the cognitive and behavioral differences within each individual. Particularly in educational settings, the neurodiversity movement is reshaping how schools approach teaching and student support. It emphasizes the need for schools to embrace neuro-affirming practices that not only promote an environment of acceptance and belonging but also incorporate evidence-based interventions to foster student success.

***“The future of education lies in its ability to adapt, evolve, and recognize the innate potential in every student.”***

**Embracing the Spectrum of Neurodiversity**

Traditionally, many educational systems have sought to mold students into a one-size-fits-all framework, with the "average" student in mind. This approach is inherently limited and overlooks the vast array of learning styles, behaviors, and needs present within a classroom. Neurodiversity suggests that conditions such as ADHD, autism, dyslexia, and others are not defects, but rather natural variations of the human brain.

When schools begin to see neurodivergent students through this lens, they move from a deficit model, focused on what a student lacks or struggles with, to a strengths-based perspective, where the unique capabilities and assets of each student are recognized and utilized.

**Merging Neuroaffirming Practices with Evidence-Based Behavior Supports**

For the neurodiversity movement to be effectively realized in schools, educators must ensure that neuro-affirming practices are rooted in evidence-based methods. Neuro-affirming practices focus on creating a supportive environment that recognizes and respects neurodivergent

identities. It's about creating spaces where students feel seen, heard, and valued for who they are.

However, the recognition of neurodiversity does not negate the need for behavioral supports. Many neurodivergent students still face challenges in the classroom, whether in academic tasks, social interactions, or emotional regulation. These challenges can hinder their educational journey, making it essential to implement strategies that can assist them.

Evidence-based practices, those strategies and interventions that have been rigorously tested and proven effective, serve as the backbone of these supports. Schools have a plethora of evidence-based tools at their disposal, from behavioral interventions for children with ADHD to multisensory reading instruction for those with dyslexia.

The key is to employ these practices in ways that respect and honor a student's neurodivergent identity. This means avoiding punitive measures that may further alienate or harm the student and instead adopting a proactive, collaborative approach. Students should be involved in the creation and adaptation of their support plans, ensuring that they feel empowered and in control of their learning journey.

### **Promoting a Culture of Dignity and Belonging**

Every student, regardless of neurotype, deserves to feel a sense of belonging in their school community. Embracing neurodiversity extends beyond the classroom and should permeate the entire school culture. This involves comprehensive training for staff, educators, and administrators on neurodiversity and the specific needs and strengths of neurodivergent students.



Moreover, it's essential to foster peer understanding and acceptance. Peer mentoring and inclusive extracurricular activities can be effective in building bridges and promoting mutual respect among all students.

A crucial element in promoting dignity is to recognize that every student has something valuable to contribute. By tapping into their strengths, passions, and talents, schools can provide platforms for neurodivergent students to shine, whether that's in academics, arts, sports, or other areas.

The neurodiversity movement brings to the forefront the need to recognize and celebrate the ways in which our brains function. John Dewey viewed schools as social institutions where students learn not only academic content but also democratic values, critical thinking, and cooperative skills essential for active participation in society. Therefore, the educational system plays a critical role in this movement. By merging evidence-based practices with neuro-affirming principles, educational institutions can provide a robust framework that supports the diverse needs of all students while promoting a culture of dignity and belonging. The future of education lies in its ability to adapt, evolve, and recognize the innate potential in every student. With the neurodiversity movement as a guiding philosophy, schools can shape a more inclusive and empowering landscape for all learners. 🍏





# ThoughtExchange

 **Share**

 **Star**

 **Discover**

The CAIU is interested in hearing your feedback! ThoughtExchange is a unique tool that gathers feedback from you, the participant, in three distinct phases. In the first phase, titled “**Share**,” you will anonymously share as many responses to our survey question that you would like to share. After you have completed sharing your thoughts, you will move on to the next phase, titled “**Star**.” There, you will be able to see all thoughts, again anonymously shared by all participants in the survey group. During this phase, you will assign a rating to each thought on a scale of 1-5 stars (1 star = little agreement; 5 stars = total agreement). After you have completed this phase of assigning value to participants’ thoughts, you will move on to the final phase, titled “**Discover**.” Here, you will be able to review trends that are apparent from the feedback.

Thank you for completing the survey and for taking the time to provide us with meaningful feedback!



What is one change that could be made to make the CAIU an even better place to work, learn, or partner?

**Submit an Answer**

## Situational Awareness

### Points2Ponder

- ▶ If I have safety concerns regarding a student during the school day, I can go to a counselor, social worker or administrator. What do I do if I have safety concerns after hours?
- ▶ Do students have a way to anonymously submit concerns to the school?
- ▶ Do I know what Safe2Say Something is?

For details and a greater understanding of the **Safe2Say Something** resource, go to [www.safe2saypa.org](http://www.safe2saypa.org) or click the image to the right.



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OR A FRIEND**

FOR AVAILABLE POSITIONS VISIT  
[WWW.CAIU.ORG/EMPLOYMENT](http://WWW.CAIU.ORG/EMPLOYMENT)

**AND WE’LL  
PAY YOU \$250\***

\* YOU WILL RECEIVE A **\$250.00 AMAZON GIFT CARD** AFTER  
THE NEW EMPLOYEE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY ONBOARDED.



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FOR DETAILS**



# Belonging: A Work of Art

By **Danielle DeSantis**, ANPS School Counselor

This fall, a unique collaboration between an ANPS school counselor and art teacher at Saint Joseph School resulted in a powerful art project rooted in belonging. Students in preschool through eighth grade engaged in a co-taught lesson utilizing the children's book *Maybe Something Beautiful*. Following engaging discussions about connection, collaboration and the joy art can bring to a community, every student, staff member, and teacher had the opportunity to create a puzzle piece that represented them or something that brings them joy. School staff and students voted on a meaningful mural title. While the puzzle is currently made up of more than 500 pieces, it will continue to grow as the edges were intentionally left unfinished. This will allow inclusion of new students and staff to be added to the puzzle in the years to come! 🍏



*Pictured: Denise Aubert, SJS Art Teacher and Danielle DeSantis, ANPS School Counselor*



***Maybe Something Beautiful*** is based on a true story written by Isabel Campoy, Theresa Howell, and illustrated by Rafael Lopez.



The CAIU's Annual Fall Fest was held on Saturday, Oct. 28. It was a beautiful, sunny day filled with fun and excitement. A big thank you to all of the volunteers that helped the event to **#BeGreat!**



# Training and events



The Capital Area Intermediate Unit (CAIU) hosts numerous innovative events and conferences throughout the year. Our team of consultants, staff, and specialists values and supports lifelong learning.

All events and conference offerings are available in the [Frontline Registration System](#) or in Eventsforce.

Check out our [Events & Conference](#) page often to see what opportunities are available to you!

## Here are some of our upcoming trainings:

### 12/1/2023 - [Issues in Autism](#)

*Audience: Any educator wanting to support neurodivergent individuals*

*Due to the recent shift in the Autism Community, is it time for educators to change their perspective on supporting neurodivergent individuals? Join us for a few minutes before you start your day to discuss issues in Autism.*

### 12/4/2023 - [CAIU Dyslexia Summit 2023](#)

*Audience: Everyone!*

*Join us in the morning on Dec. 4, with an opening Welcome followed by a screening and discussion of The Right to Read documentary.*

### 12/5/2023 - [Secondary Principal's Network](#)

*Audience: K-12 Principals, Assistant Principals, Deans of Students, or other building level administrators*

### 12/8/2023 - [Ready, Set, Explore!](#)

*Audience: Educators, administrators, and other staff involved in providing educational services to English Language Learners*

*Join the CAIU and WITF for the Professional Learning Mini Conference and Service Provider Fair, a day of interactive learning and collaboration aimed at elevating your expertise in multilingual education.*

### 12/14/2023 - [Executive Functioning Training](#)

*Audience: Instructional Coaches, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Administrators, paraprofessionals, and related service providers*



# Opportunities to *do good*

## CAIU Service Projects! (July 2023 – January 2024)

CAIU staff are encouraged to give back to the community by participating in a CAIU Service Project. These projects must be completed after July 1 and on or before our CAIU All Staff Day in January. In exchange for your participation, you get the afternoon of All Staff Day off!

Service projects are not just about doing good things, they are also about building relationships and community.



### ALL STAFF DAY **Kid's Shop at Fort Hunter**

*Multiple dates/times available in December!*

**Audience:** CAIU Staff

Helpers will serve as "elves" to assist children in shopping for gifts for family members. Other "elves" will help with wrapping gifts in gift bags. Seasonal attire is welcome! [SIGN UP HERE](#)



### ALL STAFF DAY **Live Nativity Participation**

*Multiple dates/times available in December!*

**Audience:** CAIU Staff

Help with the production of a Live Nativity display. Your participation will include set-up/clean-up, assisting with costumes, greeting and directing spectators, serving hot chocolate and cookies, and assisting with the live animals during the event. [SIGN UP HERE](#)



### ALL STAFF DAY **Wreaths Across America**

*December 16, 2023*

**Audience:** CAIU Staff

Volunteers will lay wreaths on the graves of US service men and women who are interred there. A small ceremony precedes the laying of wreaths. [SIGN UP HERE](#)

[Click HERE for CAIU Service Project Process and Forms](#)

# Welcome *New Hires!*

ibelong  
@caiu



**Doreen Hand** is Physical Therapist at the Enola office. She has 3 children; 2 in college and 1 in high school.



**Sean Letterlough-Brown** is a Mental Health Worker at Hill Top Academy. He loves to travel and read.



**Madeline Maloney** is an EPP at LYDC. She loves jigsaw puzzles.



**Yeraldin Mueses** is a Systems Administrator at the Enola office. He likes ice skating.



**Samantha Renee** is a PCA at Middle Paxton Elementary. She has her own swimming pool and uses it as much as she can during the summer.



**Jessica Sharpe** is an Inclusion Consultant at various locations. She lived in Germany for 7 years as a child.



**Jamilah Tennant** is a PCA at Cougar Academy. She loves teaching.

YOU'RE *one of* US NOW

## Compliment Corner!

#ChangingLives

Here at CAIU we like to brighten someone's day with a compliment. CAIU Compliments is a Capital Area Intermediate Unit initiative that allows CAIU staff the opportunity to share words of thanks, tout successes, or tell a story about what makes us great as an organization, our people.

### #Service

#### **Rebecca Slavinsky, School Social Worker**

To see Rebecca in action is to see service come to life. People listen when Rebecca talks because they trust her guidance and lean on her in the most difficult and emotionally-charged times. Her commitment to putting everyone else's needs before her own is commendable and her dedication to serving others is inspiring. Having Rebecca on our team is such a blessing and she truly lives her life serving others. - *Lindsey Waters, ANPS School Counselor*

### #Dedication

#### **Erin McAleer, Occupational Therapist**

Erin has been an amazing asset to the OT/PT department. She consistently demonstrates positivity, teamwork, and flexibility in her responses and attitudes. She has brought passion and commitment to our teams and a palpable joy in her work with students. Erin is always willing to help our department succeed, and I am very grateful she joined the CAIU. - *Brittany Galosi, Occupational Therapist*

### #Partnership

#### **Jean Foley, Educational Consultant**

Jean partnered with an SLP and I to make sure an IEP was completed correctly. The particular IEP was a complicated case. When I asked Jean for help, she did not hesitate to work with us to ensure everything was complete and accurate. - *Bridgid Wills, Program Secretary*

### #Service

#### **Rick Voshall, IT Support Technician**

Rick was a lifesaver with our new tech in the room that was malfunctioning. He was very fast, attentive, and helpful. His commitment to service in helping our classroom team was so appreciated. Thank you so much for your kindness, understanding, and dedication! - *Jennifer Sciacca, Special Education Teacher*





# 2024 PA CREATIVITY CONFERENCE

Join us for a day of collaborative learning sessions about the power of creativity in the K-12 classroom. Educators and vendors will be sharing ideas and experiences in hands-on workshops about the fostering of creative thinking in students.

**APRIL 8, 2024**

**8:30 AM - 3 PM**

Capital Area Intermediate Unit  
55 Miller St,  
Summerdale, PA 17093

## REGISTRATION:

- Cost: \$99 (*Groups of 5 or more - \$85 each*)
- Main presenter - Free
- Includes lunch and make & take items

## EVENT WEBSITE:

visit [bit.ly/pacreatecon](http://bit.ly/pacreatecon)  
for more information  
on proposals and  
registration



A collaborative event presented by PA Intermediate Units 12, 13, 15 and 24  
Questions? Contact your IU representative: Nicole Bond & Abbey Lichtenberg (IU12); Keith Royer, Megan Smith, & Tim Leister (IU13); Karen Ditzler & Scott Snyder (IU15); Erin Cummings (IU24)

WITF Presents

# Ready • Set • EXPLORE! Multilingual Literacy

witf



Connect with  
Teachers and  
Resources

Enjoy  
Multilingual  
Story Times

Get  
On-the-Spot  
Early Intervention  
Screenings

Practice Literacy  
Skills Through Robotics

**FREE Family Event  
Designed for Ages 3 to 14!**

**December 8 • 4:30 - 7pm**

Capital Area Intermediate Unit  
55 Miller Street  
Enola, PA



Meet  
WordGirl!



**RSVP Now!**  
Or at [witf.org/RSXenola](http://witf.org/RSXenola)

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