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What is An Intermediate Unit?

Established in 1971 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, intermediate units (IUs) are regional educational service agencies that assist Pennsylvania’s public and non-public schools. Each intermediate unit is different based on the needs of the local schools it serves. The IUs offers local school systems a high quality, cost-effective means to address functions that can be costly but are required for the successful operation of a school system. This cooperative approach results in economic savings for districts and relief from additional tax burdens for taxpayers as costs are shared among districts rather than passed along to local taxpayers.

Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 is one of 29 intermediate units across the commonwealth of Pennsylvania that provides support programs, training and therapy services to school districts, as well as the nonpublic schools in its service territory.

IUs are led by an executive director and governed by a board of directors. The RIU6 Board of Directors is comprised of a school board member from each of the 17 school districts served by the IU. IU board members have a separate fiduciary responsibility to the IU and are not intended to be representatives of their home districts.

IUs also serve as a bridge between the Pennsylvania Department of Education and local school districts. Although not regulatory, they work collaboratively with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to provide local school districts with technical assistance and professional development to support statewide initiatives and improve the quality of teaching and learning in Pennsylvania schools.

Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 operates on funds received from federal, state and local contracts, grants and subsidies. IUs, unlike school districts, do not have the ability to tax to support programs and services. In total, the RIU6 Business Office oversees more than 50 individual program budgets.

The General Operating Budget (GOB) is only one of the budgets, but it provides the foundation for all of the intermediate unit operations. This is the budget that school districts contribute to, vote on, and must approve. Funds are generated from district contributions; indirect costs generated from operation of federal programs; administrative fees generated from operation of state programs; and the IU’s ability to raise revenue through various workshops, trainings and services.

RIU6

FAST FACTS

Service territory includes school districts, career and technical schools and non-public schools in:
• Clarion County
• Jefferson County
• Forest County
• Venango County
• 3,200 square miles

RIU6 serves:
• 17 School Districts
• 3 Career and Technical schools
• 13 Non-public schools

Market Value and Personal Income Aid Ratio
• 0.6619
• 4th highest in the Commonwealth

RIU6 operates:
• 3 Partial Programs in 3 counties
• 4 Multidisabled Support classrooms in 3 school districts
• 6 Autism Support classrooms in 4 school districts
• 7 Emotional Support classrooms in 6 school districts
• 13 Life Skills Support classrooms in 7 school districts
• 14 Early Intervention classrooms throughout the service territory

RIU6 employs:
• 107 Professional staff
• 19 Administrative staff
• 78 Support staff
RIU6’s system of internal controls and fiscal records are reviewed annually in detail by an independent audit firm, in compliance with the Single Audit Act of 1984. The Intermediate Unit records are also subject to state and federal audit reviews as required by those agencies. RIU6 has a solid reputation for achieving successful outcomes based upon these reviews.

The Executive Director is the chief school officer of the Intermediate Unit. This position provides consultation services in school business administration and management to school districts upon request as well as overseeing each of the divisions.

**RIU6 Division Overview**

Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 is composed of four divisions: Administrative Services, Education Programs, Special Education and Technology and Auxiliary Services. These divisions coordinate the programs and services that are provided to the students, teachers and administrators within the RIU6 service territory. The Executive Director oversees each of the divisions.

- **The Special Education Division** provides a variety of high-quality instructional programs and support services that assist local school districts in fulfilling their obligation to meet the needs of students with disabilities. A staff of specialists works with students, parents, and school district personnel to assure the appropriate development of each learner.

- **The Division of Education Programs** provides customized curriculum and instructional support services that empower school districts to maintain high standards in their delivery of a Free and Appropriate Public Education to all students including those with exceptional learning needs. Riverview Intermediate Unit operates curriculum and professional development programs which serves students, administrators and teachers.

- **The Division of Technology and Auxiliary Services** provides a broad array of services including professional development, distance learning opportunities, and guidance regarding emerging educational technologies. This division also oversees the delivery of Math, Reading, Speech/Language and special needs consultant services for students in nonpublic schools. Auxiliary services includes guidance, counseling and testing services, psychological services, services for exceptional children, remedial services, speech and hearing services, services for the improvement of the educationally disadvantaged (such as, but not limited to, teaching English as a second language), and other secular, neutral, nonideological services of a supplementary and remedial nature.

- **The Administrative Services** at Riverview Intermediate Unit include the functions of the intermediate unit such as Business Office, Human Resources and Personnel, and Communications. The division provides leadership, coordination, and consulting services to the school districts in Riverview Intermediate Unit 6’s service territory.
In the realm of Pennsylvania Intermediate Units, the need to evolve so that we can continue providing the ideal services that our school districts and students deserve has consumed many board meeting conversations.

The willingness of Riverview Intermediate Unit’s staff to focus on the ever evolving culture of education in our state has brought about innovative change to our organization. Change, which is evidenced in high quality, cost effective solutions and required support to our districts to implement and train for statewide initiatives.

Early 2015 brought changes to the administrative side of our business as we explored the consolidation of a few services with neighboring intermediate units. The Communications and Finance departments were the first to develop into shared services between Riverview Intermediate Unit and ARIN IU 28.

Consolidation of services between our organizations has not only brought about cost savings, but has also recognized the strength of our employees who serve in these areas. Throughout this process, we have seen creative solutions developed in order to maximize services to the IUs working in partnership. We look forward to the continued creation of new partnerships that will challenge us to change our thinking on how we do business.

It is through these changes that we are transforming RIU6 into a cost-effective, innovative and highly qualified educational resource for our region. Our staff has been encouraged to develop new ways of thinking and is working to best meet the needs of the schools we service. They have risen to the challenge of change through the creation of new programs, improvement to our ongoing services, and an ongoing desire to be the best we can be.

Albert Einstein once said, “The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” So, we are changing our thinking to create a new world -- this means new services, programs, staffing solutions, etc.

Changing is always a challenge, but the RIU6 staff has set their minds to making us and consequently, our customers and students, successful. In the end, that is the mindset we value at Riverview Intermediate Unit 6. Those who imagine solutions to problems; think outside of the box; and develop creative and innovative programs are the leaders of change who will best support and equip our educators to teach Pennsylvania’s children.

That is really why we’re here and why we work so hard to be successful - the children. We are setting the examples and modeling the behaviors to help our children understand that change is inevitable and challenging, but well worth it when you begin to see positive results. After all, aren’t our children the ones who will carry on the tradition of changing the world?

I have to say, it is a privilege to serve such an amazing group of people who continue to embrace the challenge to think differently! I look forward to the 2015-16 school year as we all work together to bring exemplary services to schools and students.
MESSAGES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am pleased to present the 2014-15 Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 Annual Report. One of the most important factors in the success of a service provider is the performance of the staff. As you will see, the RIU6 staff is committed, dedicated and enthusiastic about providing programs and services to our customers and partners.

As I write this, summer is just about over and we are starting the 2015-2016 school year. There have been many changes at Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 with retirements, new hires and the addition of new services.

We are saying goodbye to some of our veteran employees who have chosen to retire and, at the same time, we are welcoming a new group of young energetic staff who are eager to start their careers and become part of the RIU6 team. We wish the best to the retirees who have provided so many years of quality and dedicated service to the students and schools that the IU serves.

As we look ahead, the challenges that we have faced over the past several years continue to be with us as we move forward. At this time, the state budget has not been settled and the outlook is that it may be several months before a budget is passed. While IUs are not a direct line item in the state education budget, this delay still affects the funding for various IU programs as well as obviously impacting our schools and state agencies. We are monitoring the activity in Harrisburg on a daily basis and determining our best course of action to ensure our services to students are not negatively impacted.

The future of Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 continues to look very positive. We are exploring new avenues to increase our capacity to ensure we are best meeting the needs of our schools, families, students and staff. One such new endeavor is the partnership we have developed with other intermediate units in western Pennsylvania. RIU6 is working closely with regional intermediate units and sharing services. Shared services allows the IUs to reduce costs and increase services which helps both the IUs and our schools. It also increases our ability to provide additional programs and services that we may not have been able to provide in the past.

When you get right down to it though, at the very heart of Riverview Intermediate Unit 6’s success is our employees. They are the front line that represents RIU6 to our customers. Their great work and cooperation with the districts is why our districts continue to choose the IU as their partner.

As we move into the new school year, we will continue to look for ways to improve and increase our customer service levels, our programs and our services. As times have changed, so has the outlook of the way IUs need to be operated. We must take a business-type approach to the catalog of services we provide. We must be entrepreneurial. And we must hold our staff to the highest levels of performance.

Thank you for taking the time to review our Annual Report. I hope you enjoy seeing the pictures of our staff and students; reading about our programs and services; and learning more about Riverview Intermediate Unit 6. We are proud of our IU and it shows throughout this document. May you all have a wonderful school year.

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future. - John F. Kennedy
RIU6 Administrative Team
Jeff Brown - Executive Director
Joe Sciullo - Director of Special Education
Mary Anne Jordan - Assistant Director of Special Education
Kevin Watkins - Director of Education and Technology
Cliff Geary - Financial Director
Leigh Kerle - Assistant Financial Director
Chris Merryman - Human Resources and Personnel Manager
Tina Gibbs - Communications and Operations Manager
Teresa Baker - Secretary to the Executive Director

RIU6 Service Territory

School District
Allegheny-Clarion Valley
Brockway Area
Brookville Area
Clarion Area
Clarion-Limestone Area
Cranberry Area
DuBois Area
Forest Area
Franklin Area
Keystone
North Clarion County
Oil City Area
Punxsutawney Area
Redbank Valley
Titusville Area
Union
Valley Grove

Superintendent
David McDeavitt
Dan Hawkins
Robin Fillman
Mike Stahlman
John Johnson
Bill Vonada
Mark Heckman
Amanda Hetrick
Pam Dye
Shawn Algoe
Steve Young
Pat Gavin
Keith Wolfe
Mike Drzewiecki
Karen Jez
Jean McCleary
Jeff Clark

RIU6 Board Member
Craig Ashbaugh
Robert Cherubini
Kerith Strano Taylor
Julie Hartley, President
Mike Meals
Tom Neely
Lloyd McCreight
John Mehalic
John Phillips II
Greg Barrett, Vice-President
Winfield Lutz
Angela Scalise
Penny Pifer
Ann Kopnitsky
Dwight Proper, Treasurer
Brade Guntrum
Cindy Swendsen

Career and Technical Centers
Clarion County Career Center
Jefferson County-DuBois Area Vocational-Technical School
Venango Technology Center

Directors
Aaron Kline
Marsha Welsh
Mario Fontanazza
PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 offers our regional school systems high quality, cost-effective solutions to address functions that can be costly but are required for a successful operation. Working in partnership or a consortium results in economic savings for districts and relief from additional tax burdens for local taxpayers as costs are shared among districts.

These solutions include:

- Multi-district Special Education classrooms
- Special Education supervision services
- Psychological services
- Speech Therapy services
- Regional conferences
- Regional Wide Area Network connectivity
- Outsourcing substitute placement
- Consortium purchasing
- IU to IU shared services
- Localized and customized professional development opportunities
Customized Professional Development

Trainings and workshops for school administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals are customized to best meet the requirements of state initiatives and individual school districts’ needs as they align and design learning opportunities for students. Examples include: The Text-Dependent Analysis Professional Development project which is a significant part of the transition to PA Core Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA); and the Educational Technology training series which provides information on iPad applications for the classroom and Google Apps for Education.

Math Design Collaborative

The Math Design Collaborative is a complete package including professional development, classroom coaching, and an extensive collection of tasks needed to transform traditional classroom practice into 21st century learning opportunities. The framework gives teachers a way to build lessons that engage students in reading, thinking and writing about math applications in real-life models. Students learn the why as well as the how by developing their math reasoning and problem-solving skills.

RIU6 trainers deliver high quality instructional tools, professional support services and guidance to workshop participants who are helping their students meet the ambitious goal of becoming college and career ready.

PA Learns

RIU6 and Apple instructors provided an introduction to iTunes U and Pennsylvania Learns as well as showing participants how to better organize teaching materials into courses that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Pennsylvania Learns on iTunes U is an easy-to-use tool that provides resources and activities designed to enhance what Pennsylvania students learn and help bring classroom lessons to life.

Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Series

In the Teacher Effectiveness workshop, participants are shown how to navigate the new teacher evaluation systems. Administrators learn a collaborative evaluation process which focuses on four domains of effective teaching: planning and preparation, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and commitment to the professional responsibilities of teaching.

In the Principal Effectiveness workshop, superintendents and principals gain insight about performance standards for effective leadership using the Framework for Leadership tool. They explore student data resources to prepare for conversations about the connectedness of multiple data sets, and they learn to write accountability goals based on student achievement and growth measures. Information and evaluation tools are provided to accurately and objectively assess the performance of principals on the essential duties of the building leader.

Shared Services

In an effort to reduce costs, many IUs are are looking to share services. RIU6 and ARIN IU 28 have joined forces to share services in the Finance Department, Payroll and for Communications services. By consolidating services, both IUs are able to save money while expanding their services. Additional shared services are being explored for the 2015-16 school year with regional IUs.

Source4Teachers

RIU6 has contracted with Source4Teachers to provide substitute staffing services for professional and support positions within the classrooms and at the IU headquarters. They assume the responsibilities of recruiting, credentialing, training, managing, and evaluating substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff.

Education Leadership Conference

RIU6 introduced the 2015 Education Leadership Conference: STEM - Educate to Innovate. The conference focused on the integration of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math into the classroom and brought together nearly 200 college students, K-12 public and non-public educators, administrators, technology staff and technology vendors.

The conference included a keynote address from Thomas Murray who stressed the importance of future ready professional learning and teaching. To support Murray’s message, following the keynote address, participants chose from 35 breakout sessions as well as visited various vendor and demonstration tables to explore STEM based and educational technology products and services.
RIU6 provides a wide variety of services to schools and students. From special education services to professional development opportunities, RIU6 offers many options to suit both time and budgets. In addition, customized services to school districts are available upon request.

RIU6 services include:

- Social Work
- Psychological
- Vision
- Act 89 - Nonpublic schools
- Curricular Support
- Fingerprinting
- Transportation
- Professional Development
- Legislative Liaison
- Vocational Training
- Community Service Projects
- Physical and Occupational Therapy
- Speech
- Gifted
- Hearing
- Assistive Technology
- Professional Development
- Legislative Liaison
- Cooperative Purchasing
- Vocational Training
- Educational Technology

The RIU6 classrooms include:

- **Early Intervention** is a state and federally mandated program for children with developmental delays between age three and public school entry age. Any child, residing in the districts served by the IU, with a vision, hearing, speech/language, social problem-solving, physical or emotional delay may be eligible for services. Eligibility is determined by the results of a developmental screen and/or educational evaluation, which is performed at no cost to parents.

- **Life Skills Support** is designed for students whose intellectual ability falls below average and requires a functional curriculum. Academics, daily living skills, prevocational/vocational skills, social skills, and recreation activities are presented within the classroom. Skills learned within the classroom are rehearsed through community based instruction and vocational experiences. Service learning is also a component of the program.

- **Emotional Support** is for students who are in need of services to address emotional needs which interfere with the instructional process. Eligibility may be characterized by aggressive, self-abusive, and withdrawal behaviors. The goal of these programs is to provide access to quality education with first emphasis on behavior management.

- **Multidisabled Support** is designed for students whose intellectual ability falls significantly below average and/or have multiple impairments. These conditions adversely affect educational, social, and physical performance which results in the need for extraordinary support and service delivery.

- **Autism Support** is designed for students with a severe neurological disorder characterized by qualitative distortions in the development of cognitive, language, social or motor skills. Determination of
autism/pervasive development disorder includes a full assessment and comprehensive report of diagnosis by a physician qualified to render a diagnosis and by a public school psychologist specifying the nature and degree of the disorder.

- **Partial Program** is designed to provide intense therapeutic support during the educational day along with a setting to continue the student’s educational program. Students are assessed for admission to the program with referrals from parents, schools, physicians and other facilities.

- The **Community Based Instruction Program (CBI)** is specially designed to teach students ages 5-21 the skills of everyday living. The **Community Based Vocational (CBV)** program is designed to train students ages 16-21 for possible job placement following high school graduation. Through CBI/CBV, students learn skills that are identified on the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) helping them to transition to adult life. This program is currently being modeled statewide.

**Transition Council**

RIU6 proudly announced the formation of a regional Transition Council during the 2014-15 school year. The purpose of this collaborative group is to gain resources and information that will help in better preparing young people with disabilities for the transition from school to adulthood. “Transition” includes the education, legal information, planning, and community connections our students who receive special education services need in order to achieve those adult goals. The transition process prepares students with disabilities for adult life by focusing on the specific areas of post-secondary education, employment, community participation, and when appropriate, independent living skills.

The Riverview Transition Council (RTC) is comprised of school staff and administrators, community partners, and parents who work with and/or are responsible for the transition needs of students with disabilities.

**Legislative Services**

RIU6 provides legislative liaison services to school districts by coordinating events and meetings with state legislators.

Area superintendents and IU administrators travel each year to Harrisburg to share with legislative leaders the challenges and successes of our small and rural school districts. The purpose of the trip is to discuss education concerns, provide suggestions for improvement and offer thanks for positive funding and initiatives. RIU6
Exemplary Services

is one of the few intermediate units throughout the state that coordinates a legislative trip such as this and the group has been going to Harrisburg annually for close to twenty years.

The trip was just one of several legislative events coordinated by RIU6 with the mission of building relationships and increasing awareness of schools with state legislators.

Newly elected state legislator, Representative Cris Dush attended a Superintendent Advisory Council meeting to discuss various education topics including the education budget, cyber/charter school funding accountability, and state mandates.

Northwest PA Superintendent Summit

RIU6, along with Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4, Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5 and Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit 27 partnered to host the first annual Northwest Pennsylvania Superintendents’ Summit. This event provided regional superintendents with a forum to learn about current education news and initiatives from Acting Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera, PASA and PARSS; and discuss current education challenges regarding mandates, teacher effectiveness and the role of the PA Department of Education. The goal of the conference was to create solutions to be offered to legislators to ease the burdens on school districts in our region.

RIU6 also worked with local superintendents to provide testimonies at the Basic Education Funding Commission public hearing at Clarion University. Testimony was provided by Joe Bard, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools (PARSS); Mike Stahman, Superintendent of Clarion Area School District; Jean McCleary, Union School District; Amanda Hetrick, Superintendent of Forest Area School District; and Ron Cowell, President of the Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC)

Educational Technology Initiatives

Riverview Intermediate Unit coordinated meetings, professional development trainings, and events designed to promote technology integration in the classroom.

Technology Integrators: RIU6 coordinated a new group for educators interested in discussing educational technology initiatives and participating in upcoming technology trainings and workshops. The Technology Integrators group is made up representatives from each school district in the RIU6 service area. Topics included: Bring Your Own Devices, Coding in the Classroom, Google Apps for Education (GAFE), iPad Apps to Transform the Classroom, iTunes U, and Nearpod.

Building a Stronger Pennsylvania: Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 hosted the regional Governor’s PA STEM Competition. The competition provided school districts from Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4, Beaver Valley Intermediate Unit 27, and RIU6 with a unique opportunity to explore careers utilizing Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) under this year’s theme of “Building a Stronger Pennsylvania”. Teams of students were challenged to research, design and present a device/project that was capable of making the quality of life better for citizens of Pennsylvania. Five regional high school teams competed for a seat to the statewide
finals including: Ambridge Area, Central Valley, Cranberry Area, Redbank Valley and Seneca Valley. The students interacted with their local community to learn about STEM related careers and the skills needed to be successful in those careers. Supported by their findings, students made a series of presentations at the regional competition and provided a hands-on demonstration of the practical applications of their device.

**Itinerant Services**

RIU6 provides a variety of services to students with special needs including: hearing, speech-language, vision, occupational and physical therapy, and social work.

- **Hearing** services are available for students who are deaf or have a hearing impairment that adversely affects their educational performance. Itinerant and classroom programs provide access to quality education with emphasis on the communication modes of sign language and lip reading.

- **Speech-language** services provide specialized instruction for students who have challenges with language, voice and/or speech - such as stuttering, impaired articulation or a language or voice impairment - that negatively impacts their educational progress.

- **Vision** services are for students who need to address their blindness or visual impairment which interferes with the instructional process. RIU provides functional literacy and visual assessment, Braille or assistive device training, the provision of low vision aids specific to the individual student, and mobility training.

- **Occupational therapy** (OT) focuses on skills required for activities of daily living, writing and reading. Environmental adaptations are made, as needed, to increase the child’s success. OT’s help students to perform activities, from using a computer to caring for daily needs such as dressing, cooking and eating.

- **Physical therapy** (PT) focuses on developing motor/mobility skills that allow students to participate in educational programs, while meeting the physical needs of a student through consultation with teachers, parents and others. PT is a health profession which provides services to prevent or minimize disability, relieve pain, develop and improve sensorimotor function, control postural deviations, and establish/maintain maximum performance within the individual’s capabilities.

- **Social workers** act as a link between school, home and community resources. In addition, social workers specialize in educational group work with students on topics such as grief, social skills, anger management and problem solving.
Support of Statewide Initiatives

Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 serves as a bridge between the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and local school districts. Although not regulatory, we work collaboratively with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to disseminate information to schools.

RIU6 provides local school districts with technical assistance and professional development to support statewide initiatives and improve the quality of teaching and learning in Pennsylvania schools. This includes ensuring IU staff attends trainings as needed, participates in focus groups, and provides ongoing feedback.

Current Initiatives include:

- eMetric
- Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System (PVAAS)
- School Performance Profile (SPP)
- Standards Aligned System (SAS) Portal
- Principal Effectiveness
- Data Governance/Quality
- PA Core Standards
- Non-Teaching Professionals (Specialists)
- PA Student Learning Objectives (SLO) Deployment
- Safe Schools Initiative
- Comprehensive Planning and School Improvement
- Keystone Exam Project Based Assessment
- Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS)
- Positive Behavior Support/Intervention
- Multi-tiered Systems of Support
- Dashboard Early Warning System
- BrainSTEPS

SafeSchools Online Training System

SafeSchools is a training and compliance management system specifically designed for school employees. RIU6 employees complete a variety of online trainings that can be assigned by staff member or job alike group.

The system automatically tracks and documents course completions and provides reports to see who has or has not completed their assigned training.

RIU6 has also begun using the system to reduce the output of paper and track policy documents such as the Employee Handbook and CBI Manual. Both documents are available through the SafeSchools site and deliver policies and procedures for online review and acceptance.

BrainSTEPS

The RIU6 BrainSTEPS (Strategies Teaching Educators, Parents, and Students) Brain Injury School Re-Entry Consulting Program assists schools in creating educational plans for students following acquired brain injury.

Acquired brain injuries (ABI) are brain injuries that occur after birth and include both traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and nontraumatic brain injuries (nTBI).

After a brain injury, students may return to school with temporary or lifelong impairments that have a significant impact on classroom performance. BrainSTEPS has been designed to consult with school teams and families in the development and delivery of educational services for students who have experienced any type of acquired brain injury.

The BrainSTEPS Team accepts referrals from school districts, agencies, parents, physicians, early intervention service providers, or any other service providers.

Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS) and PennData

The Pennsylvania Department of Education’s statewide data system is improving data capabilities by enhancing school districts’ capacities to meet student-level data reporting requirements and provide robust decision support tools. Whether tracking regular education, student demographics or special education information, PIMS and PennData allow school districts to track, record and monitor their data.

RIU6 provides support services and training on both PIMS and PennData.
Special education services work best when a partnership exists. It may be a partnership between the intermediate unit and a school district; or one between a teacher and paraprofessional; or one between a student and a therapist. The “Bright Spot” recognizes the successful partnerships and teamwork that is needed to encourage student success.

Each year, RIU6 recognizes a student who has shown remarkable progress, as well as the team of professionals and support staff who have contributed to the student’s success throughout the years.

Students are eligible to be nominated if they are receiving one or more RIU6 services in a special education classroom. From the youngest students in the Early Intervention program through those that will soon be graduating - all are eligible to be nominated.

With help from technology, teachers, support staff, therapists and the will to learn, students with disabilities are continually impressing their peers, their families and themselves with their progress.

“I can't begin to tell you how thankful we are to have such an incredible program. Without the intermediate unit, I honestly don’t know where we would be today. Thank you to IU6 for everything they have done - from PT, OT and speech to helping me with all of the transitions along the way.”

Mason’s Mom
RIU6 Classrooms

Planning activities, aligning to the Pennsylvania Core Standards, and differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs can be challenging when addressing students with a variety of special needs. Finding activities that are age-appropriate but also developmentally appropriate adds additional challenges for special educators. RIU6 educators and therapists are conquering these challenges by using a variety of techniques and services.

Project MaX - Unique Learning System

The purpose of Project MAX: Maximizing Access and Learning for Students with Complex Instructional Needs is to increase the capacity of schools to provide all students, including those with complex instructional needs, with maximum access to the general education curriculum and PA Core Standards. Through this project, participants were introduced to Unique Learning System - an online, interactive, standards-based curriculum specifically designed for students with special needs. This system allows teachers to adapt lessons to include learners at all levels. Each unit contains special education lesson plans and interactive materials teachers can implement into classroom learning activities.

The Life Skills Support students at Titusville Middle School plan a Waffle Day each year for the school staff. Through classroom lessons, students learn to measure, mix, cook waffles, take orders and provide customer service. Using a picture board with images illustrating the ingredients, measurements and process, nonreaders are able to follow the instructions to make the waffles and actively participate in the lesson.

The learning system is also being used by Speech Language Pathologists to improve the verbal skills of students. In one example, the therapist and student read a book about the circulatory system and used a communication board as they were reading. Students are able to complete a fill in the blank worksheet about the book by cutting and gluing pictures in the blanks while the therapist reads the sentences.

Autism Support Services

Another area designed to provide a range of services and supports to children with learning and behavioral challenges is the Autism Support program. RIU6’s Autism Support program has been consistently growing since its inception in 2008. In the classrooms, students receive intensive intervention that draws out and strengthens their communications and social skills with a goal of returning to their home schools.

The RIU6 Autism Support team is comprised of professionals who have a common interest in the student with Autism. The team plans trainings on topics relevant to Autism so that staff may receive information applicable to their needs in this area. They also provide training for teachers and paraprofessionals and offer consultation services and recommendations to districts on how to best support students diagnosed with ASD so that they can be educated with their academic peers. RIU6 is an accredited provider of the Competent Learner Model (CLM) for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
Early Intervention (EI)

RIU6 operates an Early Intervention program designed for children from age three up to kindergarten registration. The EI program consists of services and supports designed to help families with children who have developmental delays. Delays may include: speech, language, problem solving, vision, hearing, social, physical and/or emotional. EI staff works with the child and their family to enhance the child’s development and learning.

Through various inclusive practices such as family involvement, community partnerships and program publicity, RIU6 is able to reach students that would otherwise not receive services.

The RIU6 staff of special educators, therapists, social workers and psychologists deliver services to preschoolers with special needs and offer support to their families. Developmental screenings are offered at no cost to the family.

Services include: infant/toddler transition, instruction, speech/language therapy, psychological, physical and occupational therapy, vision and hearing support, social work, parent information and school-age transition.
You may be wondering what it takes to win an employee of the year award. According to Siri - you know, Siri, the cell phone personal assistant - it takes “a lot of hard work”. Google will tell you there are four categories one should excel at: 1) extensive job knowledge; 2) strong interpersonal and communication skills; 3) maintaining enthusiasm; and 4) exceeding expectations.

This year, both of our nominees are hailed in their nomination letters for a variety of skills that fall into each of these areas. Phrases regarding positive attitudes, working well with peers, and a willingness to go above and beyond “traditional” job duties are mentioned throughout the letters and in conversations with their peers. Both nominees are praised for their job knowledge and willingness to continually expand their skills and knowledge.

Both nominees participate in a variety of special projects and committees. And both nominees are focused on doing what is best for our staff, students and the IU. And although both sound very much like the other at this point, they are very different from each other.

Kathy Walton has been with RIU6 for eight years as an Occupational Therapist. Over those years, she has consistently taken on additional duties and committee responsibilities so that she can best help her department and the IU as a whole.

The nominations all touted her positive attitude and work ethic; while each and every comment that was provided highlighted her dedication to providing quality services to her students, IU staff, and district staff. Some of the quotes included:

• “She always brings a fresh and unbiased perspective to situations”
• “Kathy always treats her students and colleagues with respect”
• “She has established a great rapport with the staff and administrators in the districts” and gives her time to assist in all areas of student success”

Based on Kathy’s itinerant position, you would think she would never be seen or known by portions of our staff, yet because of her involvement, positive work ethic, and willingness to help out whenever it’s needed, she is not only known, but liked and respected by her peers.

Joan (Joni) Sharrow has been with RIU6 for fifteen years and over those years, has transitioned through a couple of positions. In her current role, as a Training and Consultant Team member, she has direct contact with IU staff, students, district staff and peers across the state. At each level, she is known for her job knowledge, go-get-'em attitude and willingness to dive right into a problem to solve it.

The resounding qualities highlighted in Joni’s nomination letters are the positive attitude and motivating

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This year, both of our nominees are hailed in their nomination letters for a variety of skills that fall into each of these areas. Phrases regarding positive attitudes, working well with peers, and a willingness to go above and beyond “traditional” job duties are mentioned throughout the letters and in conversations with their peers. Both nominees are praised for their job knowledge and willingness to continually expand their skills and knowledge.

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The resounding qualities highlighted in Joni’s nomination letters are the positive attitude and motivating
character she brings to the IU. Whether working on project teams or filing paperwork, this employee typically has a smile on her face.

Some of the quotes include:

- “She is very knowledgeable in her arena and is receptive to new ideas and positive changes”
- “With Joni’s positive demeanor, she always has a smile on her face regardless of how busy she is”
- “She is respectful to others, is very organized and always provides quality work regardless of whether it is for IU or district staff”

It was clear in the nomination letters that Joni shows respect and in return receives respect from her clients and co-workers.

Congratulations to the two Riverview Intermediate Unit 6 Employees of the Year...Occupational Therapist - Kathy Walton and TaC Team member - Joni Sharrow.

Perfect Attendance

Mary Miller
Andy Lugg
Marilyn Kay Hannold
Patricia King
Jean Foth
Not pictured: Tara Martin

Years of Service

20 Years
Susan Burger

25 Years
Judie Vogus

Years of Service

15 Years
Kathy Wise
Jody Wilson
Stacey Truman
Joan Sharrow
Carrie Forsythe
Susan Dailey
Lacretia Lachnicht
Tracey Colwell
Shannon Gallagher
Mary Kay Hagerty
DeWayne Harbaugh
Amy Krizon
Statement of Nondiscrimination
The Riverview Intermediate Unit will not discriminate in educational programs, activities or employment practices based on race, color, national origin, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, ancestry, union membership or any other legally protected classifications. Announcement of this policy is in accord with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Employees and program participants who have an inquiry or complaint of harassment or discrimination, or who need information about accommodations for people with disabilities, should contact: RIU6 Board Secretary, Riverview Intermediate Unit, 270 Mayfield Road, Clarion, PA 16214.