Helping Districts Help Students



November 2026-FINAL
Helping Districts Help Students is a monthly highlight of activities provided by IU13 in support of school district efforts.

Serving School Districts and Educators

IU13 AI Forum: Moving Forward Together: Building on the work of our initial AI Task Force, the IU13 AI Forum continues to bring educators from across our region together to learn, collaborate, and navigate the ever-evolving landscape of Artificial Intelligence. In this next phase, participants will have the opportunity to share current practices, discuss recent classroom experiences, explore emerging AI tools, review policy and guidance updates, and support one another through ongoing implementation efforts. Together, we can ensure that no school faces the challenges and opportunities of AI alone.
Participants: (21) ELANCO, PV, LS, IU13, MC, SOL, SDOL, MT, WAR, COC, PAL, CL, CV
For additional information: Megan Smith, 717-947-1102 or megan_smith@iu13.org, Tim Leister, 717-947-1854 or timothy_leister@iu13.org, Keith Royer, 717-947-1853 or keith_royer@iu13.org

The Foundation of Student-Centered Learning: The Student-Centered Learning (SCL) professional learning series began with a two-day *Foundations of Student-Centered Learning* workshop. Participants explored personalized instructional strategies for small-group, independent, and collaborative learning environments and left with practical tools and resources designed for immediate implementation within their specific grade levels and content areas.
Participants: (26) ELANCO, PV, LS, IU13, MT, CV
For additional information: Megan Smith, 717-947-1102 or megan_smith@iu13.org, Tim Leister, 717-947-1854 or timothy_leister@iu13.org, Keith Royer, 717-947-1853 or keith_royer@iu13.org

IU13 Enriched Virtual Forum: Monthly meetings of the Enriched Virtual Forum (EVF) are designed to support district cyber academies in providing high-quality, cost-effective educational programs that effectively compete with the cyber charter options available to families today. During the October meeting, discussions continued to focus on the Pennsylvania School Code requirement for weekly wellness checks for students receiving instruction exclusively through a district-operated virtual learning program. District representatives shared implementation strategies and lessons learned from their current practices. The group also reviewed sample school board policies and discussed steps necessary to ensure full compliance with the new regulations by March 2027.
Participants: (17) AC, CV, CL, ELANCO, MC, MT, PAL, PV, SOL, OTHER
For additional information: Tim Leister, 717-947-1854 or timothy_leister@iu13.org

Tech Media Integrators Collaborative: The collaborative meeting focused on building community, fostering connections, and sharing valuable information for the new school year. Participants received an update from a local educator on current Google Educator initiatives, followed by a discussion of trending educational technology tools and emerging innovations in classroom practice. Representatives from Merlyn demonstrated how their AI-powered assistant can streamline daily instructional and management tasks, and the meeting concluded with an exploration of Discovery Education's latest digital content and strategies for effective classroom integration.
Participants: (30) AC, CV, COC, CL, DON, ELANCO, ETOWN, EASD, HEMP, LS, IU13, MC, MT, PV, NL, SDOL, SOL, WAR, OTHER
For additional information: Megan Smith, 717-947-1102 or megan_smith@iu13.org, Tim Leister, 717-947-1854 or timothy_leister@iu13.org, Keith Royer, 717-947-1853 or keith_royer@iu13.org

IMS Lending Library Certification Training (Digital Portable Planetarium): This hands-on training session provided participants with certification for the IMS Digital Portable Planetarium. The primary focus was on the new digital portable planetarium system, which features a 4K projector and enhanced presentation capabilities. Through guided instruction and practical experience, participants gained the skills and confidence needed to successfully borrow, set up, operate, and troubleshoot the equipment for use in their schools and programs
Participants: (7) ELANCO, IU13, SDOL, HEMP
For additional information: Megan Smith, 717-947-1102 or megan_smith@iu13.org

Cleverlike Educator Workshops (Unreal Engine & Fortnite): This workshop focused on transforming students' enthusiasm for video games into meaningful curricular engagement and career skills development aligned with industry-recognized certifications. Participants explored strategies for leveraging gaming interests to create high-impact classroom projects while building future-ready skills in digital media and interactive 3D design. The intensive two-day workshop series consisted of four three-hour, hands-on sessions that equipped educators with industry-aligned tools, practical learning experiences, and ready-to-implement curriculum kits.
Participants: (12) MT, ELANCO, SDOL, ELCO, OTHER
For additional information: Keith Royer, 717-947-1853 or keith_royer@iu13.org

Sphero Blueprint Engineering & Bolt+ Workshop: This comprehensive workshop offered a hands-on exploration of the Sphero Blueprint Engineering continuum and Bolt+. During the morning session, participants experienced the vertical progression of mechanical and electrical engineering, starting with foundational concepts in Snap and scaling up to middle school and then high school level complexity using Blueprint Engineering kits. The afternoon shifted focus to advanced Engineering Design with BOLT+ and concluded with "open-sandbox" time.
Participants: (16) SDOL, MC, NL, LEB, CL, HEMP, ELANCO, OTHER
For additional information: Keith Royer, 717-947-1853 or keith_royer@iu13.org

Science of Reading Academy Session #2: This professional learning series was designed to equip teachers with knowledge of the Science of Reading and structured literacy instruction. Participants engaged in a blend of full-day learning sessions, job-embedded activities, and professional learning community (PLC) meetings aimed at strengthening and refining literacy practices. Through this sustained learning experience, educators developed the knowledge and skills needed to implement evidence-based literacy instruction and ensure all learners have the foundational skills necessary to become successful, proficient readers.
Participants: (19) EASD, PM, PV, NPS
For additional information: Liz O'Brien, 717-947-1686 or Elizabeth_Obrien@iu13.org

IU13 School Climate Network Session #1 (What is School Climate?): This session provided an overview of the foundational norms, expectations, and practices that shape the school experience for both students and staff. Participants explored perceptions of school connectedness and examine how these serve as the foundation for a positive and supportive school community. Time was dedicated to reviewing school-level data, allowing teams to identify strengths, uncover areas of need, and begin determining priority focus areas for action and continuous improvement.
Participants: (22) MT, NL, PAL, SOL, WAR, NPS
For additional information: Brian Booker, 717-947-1078 or Brian_Booker@iu13.org

Teaching with Muddy Boots (A Blue Green Connector Learning Experience): During this two-day workshop, middle and high school educators immersed themselves in the innovative stream restoration and scientific research taking place along the Blue Green Connector, a transformational project along the Little Conestoga Creek in the heart of Lancaster. This site is the first of many that will serve as an outdoor classroom and field location in close proximity to many schools.
Participants: (9) COC, COL, CV, EASD, SDOL, SOL, OTHER, NPS
For additional information: Lauren Miller, 717-947-1417 or Lauren_Miller@iu13.org

What Does Freedom Mean to You?: Local middle school students explored the lives and legacies of Thaddeus Stevens and Lydia Hamilton Smith at the Center for History and Democracy. Through the examination of historical sources, participation in a GooseChase scavenger hunt, delivery of speeches in a historic setting, and exploration of museum exhibits, students engaged with key themes of freedom, equality, and democracy. These interactive experiences encouraged students to deepen their understanding of the past while reflecting on the meaning and relevance of freedom in today's society.
Participants: (45) CL, ELANCO, ELCO, EASD, LS, LEB, MC, PAL, PV, WAR, NPS
For additional information: Meredith Yoder, 717-947-1182 or meredith_yoder@iu13.org

STEM in Action (Microscopes, Microcontrollers, and Meteorology): Students explored college-level STEM at Millersville University through three engaging hands-on experiences. They used a scanning electron microscope to view microscopic objects, visited the Weather Information Center to learn about weather forecasting and climate trends, and programmed BBC micro: bits and sensors to create automated systems. Through these experiences, students gained valuable insight into real-world STEM applications, university labs, and potential future career opportunities.
Participants: (33) CL, DON, ELANCO, LEB, PAL, PV, SOL, WAR
For additional information: Meredith Yoder, 717-947-1182 or meredith_yoder@iu13.org

Fraktur Birds on 10/29, Elementary School: Students explored Pennsylvania German Fraktur, a traditional folk-art style, and learned about life in 1700s Lancaster County and the birds that inspired these designs. They used pen and ink, watercolors, and light boards to create their own Fraktur-style bird artwork while gaining an appreciation for the region's history and artistic traditions.
Participants: (33) ELANCO, ELCO, LEB, MC, PAL
For additional information: Meredith Yoder, 717-947-1182 or meredith_yoder@iu13.org

Beyond the Grade, Actionable Feedback that Drives Real Growth: This full-day session was designed specifically for building and district leaders which explored how to establish the ideal conditions for growth-minded feedback within the Danielson Framework. Through interactive, turn-around experiences, principals walked away with practical strategies to immediately engage the team in actionable, reflective conversations.
Participants: (8) NL, CL, CV, ELANCO, PV, OTHER
For additional information: Amanda Hann, 717-947-1229 or amanda_hann@iu13.org

Beyond the Curtain, What Instructional Excellence Looks Like: K-12 principals and district leaders explored what exemplary practice looks like across all four of Danielson's domains, both "on stage" and "off." Participants brought examples from their own context to practice calibrating evidence and sharpening their instructional leadership lens. They also dug into Danielson's framework together and used their own observation data to identify real growth areas and design intentional, targeted professional development for their district and team.
Participants: (10) CV, ELANCO, MT, NL, PV
For additional information: Amanda Hann, 717-947-1229 or amanda_hann@Iu13.org

Ed Tech Pool Counsel Training: At the October counsel session, Mr. Mark Walz of Sweet, Stevens, Katz and Williams, LLP delivered a presentation titled *Pennsylvania's New Cyberbullying Requirements - Scenario-Based Practice.* The session examined Pennsylvania's recently enacted cyberbullying provisions, which were introduced as part of the state budget that will establish updated expectations for school response, documentation, and disciplinary action. Participants explored the statutory changes, clarified what now constitutes cyberbullying under the law, and examined the intersection of these requirements with First Amendment protections. Through realistic, scenario-based discussions, attendees analyzed complex situations involving off-campus social media posts, group chat harassment, anonymous accounts, and AI-generated content. The workshop provided school leaders and educators with practical, legally grounded strategies for responding to increasingly nuanced cyberbullying incidents with confidence and consistency.
Participants: COC, COL, CV, DON, ELANCO, ELCO, IU13, LancCTC, PAL, PV, WAR, OTHER
For additional information: Jaime Torres, 717-606-1675 or jaime_torres@iu13.org

Technology Coordinator Meeting: This meeting provides a forum where technology coordinators can connect and network with others regarding technology issues in their schools. At this meeting, updates are provided regarding upcoming events and deadlines as well as information of importance to technology coordinators.
For additional information: Jaime Torres, 717-606-1675 or jaime_torres@iu13.org

Megawords: Multisyllabic Phonics Intervention: Megawords, a program designed for Grades 4-12, teaches the reading, spelling, and contextual use of multisyllabic words through a systematic progression of skills. Participants will learn about these various components of the Megawords program and practice using the program with peers.
Participants: (27) CV, ETOWN, HEMP, PAL, WAR
For additional information: Chrissy Desimone, 717-947-1447 or christina_desimone@iu13.org

Coaching and the Brain: Struggling students often know what to do but can't seem to do it. From planning and organization to self-regulation and task initiation, executive function (EF) skills are foundational to student success, especially at Tiers 2 and 3 of an MTSS framework. This practical workshop will explore how to identify executive function challenges, implement EF-informed strategies, and scaffold supports that empower students to thrive. Participants get to walk away with concrete tools, interventions, and coaching techniques to support the most complex learners with targeted executive functioning needs.
Participants: (22) EASD, ETOWN, COC, CV, DON, ELCO, LEB, LS, PV, NPS
For additional information: Chrissy Desimone, 717-947-1447 or christina_desimone@iu13.org

Key:			
AC	Annville-Cleona	NL	Northern Lebanon
COC	Cocalico	OCT	Octorara Area
COL	Columbia Borough	PAL	Palmyra Area
CV	Conestoga Valley	PM	Penn Manor
CL	Cornwall-Lebanon	PV	Pequea Valley
DON	Donegal	SDOL	School District of Lancaster
ELANCO	Eastern Lancaster County	SOL	Solanco
ELCO	Eastern Lebanon County	WAR	Warwick
ETOWN	Elizabethtown Area	LanCTC	Lancaster County Career & Technology Center
EASD	Ephrata Area	LebCTC	Lebanon County Career & Technology Center
HEMP	Hempfield	LLLVS	Lancaster-Lebanon Virtual Solutions
LS	Lampeter-Strasburg	PDE	Pennsylvania Department of Education
LEB	Lebanon	IU13	Lancaster-Lebanon IU13
MC	Manheim Central	NPS	Nonpublic Schools
MT	Manheim Township	PaTTAN	Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network

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