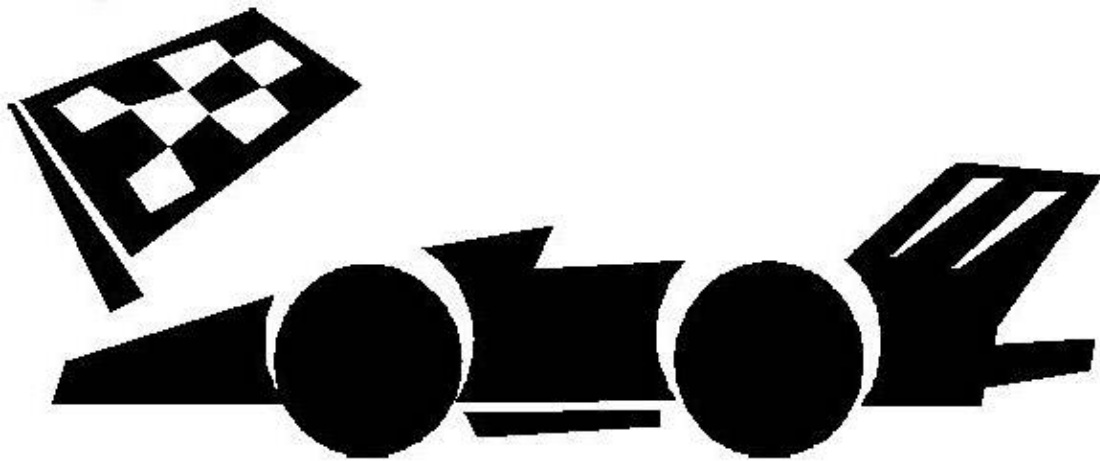


PROJECT TOGETHER

PIT CREW UPDATE
MARCH 2008



Project Together is a program of the S. June Smith Center

PROJECT TOGETHER PIT CREWS

FUNDING PARTNERS

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I would like to personally thank the school administrators, counselors, teachers, and community members that saw Pit Crews as a positive vehicle to support their missions.

Above all, I would like to thank the many students that have breathed life into the program. Without them, this would not have been possible.

Conestoga Valley School District:

Fritz Elementary School
845 Hornig Road
Lancaster PA 17601
(717) 397-5246

Principal: [Mrs. Colleen M. Hovanec](#)
Pit Crew Facilitator: [Ms. Jennifer Cangialosi](#), Guidance Counselor

Update: As a result of the great prep work done to get the pit crew started, Ms. Cangialosi was able to assume the role of the facilitator after an extended absence.

The pit crew has a membership of seven. These students were selected from the four general education gym classes where the focus student currently participates. The goal of the pit crew is to include their peer in as many school activities as possible. This is done two ways. First, the crew members take turns going to some of their peers' classes, e.g. music. They know when it is their turn as the focus student will send a reminder note to the student next in the rotation. Second, the focus student is involved in as many specials and activities as possible.

Each Cycle Day 6 the pit crew membership eats lunch in the cafeteria with the focus student. This created an inclusive situation as the student had never eaten in the cafeteria prior to having the support of the pit crew. This also affords the pit crew membership opportunities to brainstorm ideas, problem solve, or ask questions. Rather than trying to meet another time, the membership has opted to use these scheduled lunches for informal meetings. Doing so allows for a continuum of ideas and discussion.

The most recent participation was a whole school activity. The 5th grade Honor Students had a hot dog party. Since the focus student had been working toward and meeting goals, they were invited to participate in the event. Everyone was very welcoming of the focus student and simply viewed their peer as a fellow honor student.

Conestoga Valley School District:

Leola Elementary School
11 School Drive
Leola PA 17540
(717) 656-2068

Principal: [Mrs. Colleen Pavlovec](#)

Pit Crew Facilitator: [Ms. Shirley Weakland](#), Special Education Consultant, IU 13

Update: This focus student already has a presence in the school, participating in some specials e.g. music. The student's home school district is Conestoga Valley giving the crew the ability to continue in the future.

Numerous students expressed an interest in this elite membership. Mrs. Pavlovec sees membership as reinforcement for all of her students to maintain specific standards, e.g. completing assignments, maintaining attendance, etc. In other words, pit crew membership is Mrs. Pavlovec's big chocolate chip cookie. Cancellations and school delays have impacted this pit crew. However, forms were sent home with interested students on February 26, 2008.

One goal of the pit crew is to create a means for their peer to communicate to their parents the events of the school day. The crew has been given until the end of the school year to complete this task. Another goal is continue support after the bell rings by introducing their peer to after school/extracurricular activities.

Eastern Lancaster County School District:

Eastern Lancaster County School District Office
669 E Main Street
PO Box 609
New Holland PA 17557
(717) 354-1514

Contact: [Mrs. Nadine Larkin](#), Director of Special Services

Update: ELANCO School District students are currently involved in pit crews in their educational settings.

Ephrata Area School District:

Ephrata Middle School
957 Hammon Avenue
Ephrata PA 17522
(717) 721-1468

Principal: [Mr. Kevin Fillgrove](#)
Pit Crew Facilitator: [Ms. Emily Langelo](#), Teacher

Update: The success of the pit crew in the Ephrata High School has made the process easy and efficient for other schools in the district. I received notification of the start of this pit crew in the Middle School on January 2, 2008, they had the focus student and pit crew members identified by January 24th and had conducted their first meeting January 31st!

The students had seen each other in the past. The crew thought they should get to know each other better, making this their first goal.

The second goal was planning and executing a “party” after school for their peer whose birthday has just recently passed. At the “party,” which took place on February 27, 2008, the crew socialized, talked about future goals, ate snacks, and made a craft.

The next pit crew meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2008.

Ephrata Area School District:

Ephrata High School
803 Oak Boulevard
Ephrata PA 17522
(717) 721-1478

Principal: [Ms. Joane Eby](#)
Pit Crew Facilitator: [Mrs. Patrice Laboranti](#), Teacher

Update: This pit crew started the year off strong and hasn't stopped!

This Pit Crew meets about twice a month. They designed their own T-shirts to wear on meeting days as a visual reminder to others. They have been setting goals and achieving them. They have gone to Pizza Hut, the students attended Tim's birthday party (on their own – Mrs. Laboranti heard about it after the fact), went bowling and their next activity will be movie. All of the students seem very happy about the goals and what they have been able to accomplish. Mrs. Laboranti knows that even though they are high school students, they sometimes have unrealistic thoughts about goals (such as Disneyworld). She told them that maybe they could plan a group trip in the summer to Knoebles since it's free except for the ride there. Then the students would each be responsible to pay for rides and food while there.

They are in a large environment being in a high school. They have about 1,400 students, so the Pit Crew is not known by many of the students. There was an article printed for the residents in their community that will be printed in the future. The newspaper would like to take a picture of the students while at an activity.

Mrs. Laboranti is sure that the Pit Crew will continue next year, but has not spoken to the students about this yet.

Mrs. Laboranti has really found the entire experience to be positive and extremely beneficial to all the students involved. They are in the process of starting another Pit Crew at the high school for another student. Many teachers and parents have asked me about the Pit Crew and I raved about how successful it has been. The parents of Tim* have had many positive things to say about the Pit Crew as well.

Parent Update: Pit Crew (which we casually refer to as “The Boys’ Club” too...to reinforce that we don't think it's a good idea to add a bunch of young ladies at this point...:>)) has been great. Tim's* 16th birthday was last weekend and he wanted to invite the Pit Crew to his party...so we had about a dozen guys from church and

school—most of which have been friends of his over the years—and most of which are also on his Pit Crew. It was the best birthday party we've ever had...what a GREAT bunch of guys...and the connections they've already established just through the first few meetings are really evident (mostly "re-established" as many of these were Tim's friends when he was in elementary school but he lost touch with when he went to Life Skills in Warwick for 3 years...). I got a great group picture at the party...I'll send it to you as soon as we download them from the camera (which, I hate to admit, but I don't know how to do that...).

When we scheduled Tim's party, we weren't sure how the social dynamics would really go...so we just scheduled it from 7pm to 8:30. The kids were having so much fun, they didn't want to go home. Finally, we had to take them home eventually because their parents were expecting them... :>). We had an Elvis/rock n' roll theme...Tim's favorite...and they spent a good amount of time just "touring" Tim's room and looking at his collection of Elvis paraphernalia. They were just great about that and sincerely supportive of his interests. Later they went down to our basement and played x-box, and jammed on Tim's drum set, played fooseball etc. A great time was had by all. They all brought wonderful gifts too...and both the gifts and the cards reflected that they truly understand and appreciate Tim's interests...they all involved things that he liked...and I was touched to see that.

Thanks for what you do on Project Together and Pit Crew...we appreciate you!

*Student identified with the consent of student and family.

Lampeter-Strasburg School District:

Martin Meylin Middle School
1600 Book Road
Box 428
Lampeter PA 17537
(717) 464-3311

Principal: [Mr. Michael Burcin](#)

Pit Crew Facilitator: [Ms. Kerri Eberly](#), Guidance Counselor

Update: This Pit Crew has a membership of eight students. They started by meeting weekly, then bi-weekly, now monthly. They are chugging along at a steady pace.

The current goal is to get the focus student socially involved during lunch and recess. The focus student sits and eats lunch with a few of the crew members and engages in conversation with them. Once warm weather arrives and the students go outside for recess, the crew will have increased opportunities to get their peer involved.

Lancaster School District:

McCaskey East High School
1051 Lehigh Avenue
Lancaster PA 17602
(717) 396-6810

Principal: [Mr. Damaso Albino](#)

Pit Crew Facilitator: [Mr. Christopher B. Stetler](#), Small Learning Community Facilitator

Update:

The students of this group are fulfilling requirements as a Small Learning Community Project. The project supports students that participate in the after school program at United Support Group (USG).

It's a win-win situation for everyone, says Mr. Stetler. Participants of the after school program are being engaged with their same-age peers, high school students are mentored by the after school program staff, most of which are college/university students themselves, and McCaskey East can offer seniors after school experiences that they may otherwise not have access.

Currently two students whom themselves have learning disabilities are involved in the project. These students are currently providing support in other facets of the high school.

Mr. Stetler and [Mrs. Joanne R. Yeager](#), both of McCaskey East, are collaborating in the identification and coordination of students as well as communicating with [Ms. Megan O'Hare](#), Assistant Agency Director and Program Supervisor of USG's after school program.

The partnership is in its infancy this year; however, beginning with the 2008-09 academic year, Mr. Stetler sees this as a great opportunity for his students. Seniors with a primary focus on education as a career path will be asked to fulfill their hours supporting their peers in this after school program.

Mr. Stetler is pleased with the manner in which the partnership with USG is evolving.

As an added note, local and out of state program coordinators are interested in learning about McCaskey's overall model for small learning communities.

Lancaster-Lebanon IU 13:

Burle Business Park
1020 New Holland Ave
Lancaster PA 17601
(717) 606-1600 (Main Switchboard)

I would like to thank the following individuals. Their partnership, including providing a forum for the (first) Pit Crew training is greatly appreciated. They are one of Pit Crews largest supporters, committing to the growth and expansion of the program.

[Ms. Sherry Zubeck](#), Director, Special Education Services

[Dr. Molly Finley](#), Program Director, Instructional School-Based Programs

[Ms. Melissa Jenkins](#), Administrative Assistant

[Ms. Lori Blantz](#), Program Supervisor

[Ms. Carol Freeman](#), Special Education Teacher

[Mrs. Angie Gornish](#), School Psychologist

[Ms. Loris Grogan](#), Special Education Teacher

[Ms. Joni Hilbert-Hess](#), Special Education Teacher

[Ms. Pat Smedley](#), School Psychologist

[Mr. Phil Van Orman](#), Program Supervisor

[Ms. Shirley Weakland](#), Special Education Consultant

Manheim Central School District:

Manheim Central Middle School
123 E Gramby Street
Manheim PA 17545
(717) 664-1700

Principal: [Dr. Scott A. Deisley](#)

Pit Crew Facilitator: [Mrs. Candace Suarez](#), Guidance Counselor

Update: Due to circumstances beyond their control, this pit crew has had difficulty getting started.

The group hopes to have the opportunity to engage in activities by the end of the year.

They are also going to regroup to include 5th and 6th grade students, rather than the original plan of just 6th graders. This will enable pit crew supports to be ready day one of the 2008-09 school year.

Solanco School District:

Providence Elementary School
137 Truce Road
New Providence PA 17560
(717) 786-3582

Principal: [Mrs. Shirley Hunter](#)
Pit Crew Facilitator: [Mrs. Angie Gornish](#), School Psychologist

Update: This pit crew of seven very enthusiastic 2nd graders had its first meeting February 26, 2008. When the pit crew asked their peer how they could be of support, the peer said, “I want help with stuff I can’t do.”

This focus student is already known to the pit crew as many specials are shared. The subjects of interest to the crew are art, gym, library, lunch, music and recess. Being the enthusiastic bunch, the membership wanted to tackle everything during the first meeting!

Mrs. Gornish recommended that the crew discuss one subject at a time, art being the first. The discussion revolved around “trees” which is the current activity in the class. So, how do you help someone draw trees? It’s simpler than you think! Students created their own assignment to help their peer. One is going to draw a tree for their peer to color or paint, another to trace, and yet another to create a dot-to-dot picture for their peer to outline.

Writing notes presented a challenge for the students. A simplified note taking system was created that involves very little writing. This form will be tested on March 25th, the date of their next meeting.

[Mr. Eric Uberseder](#), Guidance Counselor for Providence Elementary School is going to become involved in the process, as he will assume the role of Pit Crew facilitator beginning the 2008-09 academic year.

Solanco School District:

Swift Middle School
1866 Robert Fulton Highway
Quarryville PA 17566
(717) 548-2187

Principal: [Ms. Suzanne Herr](#)

Pit Crew Facilitator: [Ms. Jennifer Pearson](#), Guidance Counselor

Update: Under the leadership of Ms. Pearson, focus student and peers have been identified. The pit crew will have a membership of five students.

The group is in the process of identifying a set of goals, one of which will be to determine a meeting schedule.

We look forward to hearing great things!

Warwick School District:

Warwick High School
301 W Orange Street
Lititz PA 17543
(717) 626-3700

Principal: [Mr. Brian Ginter](#)
Pit Crew Facilitator: [Mrs. Carol Freeman](#), Teacher

Update: Involvement with Warwick High School began with an inquiry from a parent.

Five members of the staff participated in our exploratory meeting on February 27, 2008.

I presented the history of Pit Crews and shared ways that other districts are utilizing the program.

By the end of our meeting staff was already identifying additional students that would benefit and thought that a program such as Pit Crews may be of interest to district staff responsible for coordinating senior projects.

As I was leaving, Mrs. Freeman was already emailing colleagues to identify the level of interest in the High School.

By the time I returned to the S. June Smith Center, Mrs. Freeman had spread the word about Pit Crews and requested another meeting with staff who were unable partake in the discussion that morning. Approximately nine members of staff will attend the meeting on March 5th.

Community Program:

Our Lady of Lourdes Church
150 Water Street
New Holland PA 17557
(717) 354-4686

Update: Recruiting members for this pit crew has been difficult. Although the focus student was actively engaged with peers over the summer months, the dynamic for the fall/spring program operates under different leadership with a different set of guidelines.

One peer contacted the focus students' family asking to be part of this membership. This peer has already met the family and student on a more personal level and is anxious to participate. The family is happy to report that this peer has accepted the role of pit crew leader to aid in the identification of additional participants.

The focus student has a legion of supporters from the faith community who have expressed an interest to assist with increasing the overall inclusion of the focus student.

Community Program:

United Support Group (USG)
935 E. Walnut Street
Lancaster PA 17602
(717) 392-5670

Executive Director: [Ms. Rhiannon Giberson](#)
Pit Crew Facilitator: [Ms. Megan O'Hare](#)

Update: Megan O'Hare, Assistant Agency Director and Program Supervisor for the after school program has entered into a partnership with [Mr. Christopher B. Stetler](#) and [Mrs. Joanne R. Yeager](#) of McCaskey East High School.

United Support Group's After School Program staff will provide opportunities for seniors attending McCaskey East High School to fulfill community project hours. In turn, seniors will create opportunities for after school participants to engage in activities with same-age peers.

For detailed information, refer to the update from Mr. Stetler.

Project Together Pit Crews

E-Mail Information

Fritz Elementary School	Conestoga Valley School District
Mrs. Colleen M. Hovanec	colleen_hovanec@cvsd.k12.pa.us
Ms. Jennifer Cangialosi	jennifer_cangialosi@cvsd.k12.pa.us
Leola Elementary School	Conestoga Valley School District
Mrs. Colleen Pavlovec	colleen_pavlovec@cvsd.k12.pa.us
Ms. Shirley Weakland	shirley_weakland@iu13.org
District Office	ELANCO School District
Mrs. Nadine Larkin	nadine_larkin@elanco.k12.pa.us
Ephrata Middle School	Ephrata Area School District
Mr. Kevin Fillgrove	k_fillgrove@easdpa.org
Ms. Emily Langelo	e_langello@easdpa.org
Ephrata High School	Ephrata Area School District
Ms. Joane Eby	j_eby@easdpa.org
Mrs. Patrice Laboranti	p_laboranti@easdpa.org
Martin Meylin Middle School	Lampeter-Strasburg School District
Mr. Michael Burcin	mike_burcin@l-spioneers.org
Ms. Kerri Eberly	kerri_eberly@l-spioneers.org
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Ms. Pat Smedley	pat_smedley@iu13.org
Mr. Phil Van Orman	philip_vanorman@iu13.org
Ms. Shirley Weakland	shirley_weakland@iu13.org
McCaskey East High School	Lancaster School District
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Mr. Christopher B. Stetler	cbstetler@lancaster.k12.pa.us

Mrs. Joanne R. Yeager	jryeager@lanaster.k12.pa.us
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Project Together Pit Crews

E-Mail Information

Manheim Central Middle School	Manheim Central School District
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Providence Elementary School	Solanco School District
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Mrs. Angie Gornish	angie_gornish@iu13.org
Mr. Eric Uberseder	eric_uberseder@solanco.k12.pa.us
Swift Middle School	Solanco School District
Ms. Suzanne Herr	suzanne_herr@solanco.k12.pa.us
Ms. Jennifer Pearson	jennifer_pearson@solanco.k12.pa.us
Warwick High School	Warwick School District
Mr. Brian Ginter	bginter@warwicksd.org
Mrs. Carol Freeman	carolyn_freeman@iu13.org
Our Lady of Lourdes Church	Community Programs
To be determined	
United Support Group	Community Programs
Ms. Rhiannon Giberson	RhiannonUSG@cs.com
Ms. Megan O'Hare	MeganUSG@cs.com