

>> Good morning. I'd like to welcome everyone to today's webinar in the 2015-'16 series of the PA Community of Practice Series. Today's session is on integrated youth development and youth leadership. My name is Michael Stoehr. I work for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education through the PaTTAN system and the lead for Secondary Transition for the state. Just want to go through some logistical things regarding the webinar. First of all, we are using GoToWebinar technology. You should have, on your desktop screen, a navigation toolbar, a dashboard. With that, hopefully you are hearing me okay. If you are experiencing difficulty, you may want to switch to the telephone connection. That option is given there. Also, if you have any question during today's webinar, please go ahead and type those in. If it's a technical question, either myself or Patty Venuccio, who is my support person, will get back to you. Or if you have questions for the presenters, we'll periodically stop throughout today's presentation for you to ask those. If you do have any technical issues, a couple of things: One, you may want to reconnect to the webinar, so log out, log back in. As I mentioned, if you're having difficulty with audio, you may want to rejoin by phone. Sometimes though it is issues with technology from your end. You may want to just check with your IT person if you're calling from your office or school. Also, as I mentioned, you can send any questions through the question panel on your dashboard. Today's session is brought to you by the Pennsylvania Community of Practice on Secondary Transition. The PA Community of Practice on Transition is made up of various stakeholders from across Pennsylvania that include representatives from the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Labor and Industry and our friends through the OVR system, the Department of Health, as well as a number of parent advocacy and youth advocacy groups. I wanted to mention that you can find materials for today's session in two places: One, on secondarytransition.org. If we go to our website for the state for secondary transition, if you go under events ... Since today's event has already started, it's under past events. If you scroll down to the very bottom, you'll see today's date, April 13th. If you click on that, it'll take you to this screen. If you click on the hyperlink here, [Integrated Youth Development and Youth Leadership Webinar Powerpoint](#), that will take you to the Powerpoint that we're using for today. You can also find this information off of the PaTTAN website. If you go to the PaTTAN web site under training, you click on the calendar. You find today's date. You will find, under today's date, the webinar. You click on that. It'll take you to a page where the handouts can be found. Just wanted to mention that this session of PaTTAN is part of the Community of Practice on Secondary Transition. The mission of PaTTAN is to provide training and technical assistance, through the Bureau of Special Education, to our local educational agencies that serve students and special education, as well as their families and students that are currently in our schools. We are committed through the Department of Education to instruct all students in the least restrictive environment. For those of us working in secondary transition, that's a natural fit as we prepare our students to go on for further training, employment and to live independently in their communities. Reviewing the agenda for today, we have a very robust agenda. I appreciate our speaks all being able to join us. We're going to start with an overview of youth development and youth leadership followed by a presentation regarding Special Olympics Unified Sports. We're gonna talk a little bit about a project that we've been involved with through the Department of Education, the PaTTAN system for the last several years called natural peer supports. Following that presentation, one of the school districts that had been involved in that peer support is going to discuss their program called McFriends. It's from McGuffey School District. Following that presentation, we'll have updates regarding the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network and their restructuring that they're involved with. Then we'll wrap up with additional thoughts and takeaways on this topic of integrated youth development. With that, I'm gonna go ahead and turn the presentation over to Everett Deibler and Ali Hrasok. They are both involved with both the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network and the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living. With that, I'm gonna turn this over to Ali and Everett.

>> Sure. Thank you, Michael. Thank you for having me here today. I'm gonna turn this over to Ali in a little bit. But I want to start the Webinar today really talking about this Youth Engagement Continuum that we have. We found this with our work with the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network and the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living because the PYLN has been established and been around for a little over 10 years now. We really started to do some research into what does it mean to think about youth development and youth leadership in a real way? How to best engage you. We're gonna get into kind of some details about the continuum and what that looks like. Michael, if you wanna go to the next slide, you'll see ... We're gonna focus on the Youth Services Approach, the Youth Development aspect of it and the Youth Leadership. We're not gonna get too much into ... We're gonna get a little bit into Civil Engagement a little bit or Civic Engagement a little bit. I'm not really focused on Youth Organizing. If you go to the Powerpoint at secondarytransition.org or at PaTTAN, you can see the document that this continuum was straight pulled from and doing research. Looking at the lowest level of the continuum on the next slide is all about ... Michael, I think I'm having some difficulties getting to the next slide for some reason.

>> Just hang on, bud.

>> Okay.

>> I'll get it there. Almost, hang on.

>> Okay, okay.

>> We're kinda frozen, just give me a minute.

>> Okay.

>> Give me one second. I'm not sure what ... We're spinning a bit. Just give me 1 minute.

>> We have the spinning wheel of death. It's okay.

>> I do. Hang on. I may go out and come back in. I'm not sure why this is acting up on us here. Give me 1 minute.

>> Do you want me to just keep going, Michael? Because I can keep talking if folks can still hear me.

>> Yeah. Let me do this. There you go. All right.

>> The Youth Services Approach, it might sound ... Some of this stuff might be really, really simple to you. You might be like, "I kind of get this." But we just wanna break it down for ya. The Youth Services Approach is really focused on a service delivery model. It really would be looked at as a "traditional" approach. It's kind of like handling kids or handling young adults, youth, young adults, and kind of telling them what they need to be doing on a daily basis, allowing them to take control of situations and learn the skills and talents they need to grow and advance through their transition process. But to even take a look at this visually, for those of you that are into the seeing thing visually, on the next slide, it shows a different way to look at this. Defines youth as clients and provides services to address individual problems and things of young people. Programming delivered around the treatment and prevention of things. Really, when you're looking at engaging youth and doing youth initiative and youth development,

it's all about bringing the strengths of young people out and focusing on the positive and thinking about the future and thinking about goals and what their future is and what the positives are about the next steps of their lives. The next slide focuses on Youth Development, which really just is a coordinated set of activities to help youth gain skills and competencies. When I present about this though, I always like to focus and tell folks that Youth Development and Youth Leadership are two different things. Oftentimes, with our work with the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network, we have found that people skip a step. They forget about the Youth Development focus and what kind of skills and abilities youth need to develop in order to become leaders of their own lives or leaders of other people. When you're thinking about this, you want to make sure that as an educator or a VR staff or as a professional that's working with young people all the time is that you want to make sure that you're helping youth gain the skills and abilities they need to be making their decisions. A lot of times, you educators or you as parents or you as VR staff or other professionals, you have that knowledge and skills to pass on. You can give young people those skills to be able to develop and develop as young leaders. But now I'm gonna turn this over to Ali and let her talk to you a little bit more and try to delve a little deeper into what this whole Youth Development thing means for young people with and without disabilities. She might still be muted. Michael, is she still muted? Are you there, Ali? Can we just keep going again, Michael? If you look at this Youth Development, its services and supports opportunities for growth and development. You meet youth where they are, which really is, I think, is a key, key thing. You can't take youth down the road of Youth Development too soon, gotta find out where they are in the process. It really is about youth and adult ally partnerships. That is a mind shift for a lot, a lot of people sometimes. Michael, if you want to move them on to the next slide.

>> Sorry, I'm back.

>> If you look at again this Youth Development Process ... Ali, are you back now?

>> I am back.

>> Fantastic.

>> Technical problems are the word of the day.

>> Yeah, I love it. I love it.

>> All good.

>> Okay.

>> We'll talk about a bit, I think, throughout this whole presentation about the flexibility that you need when [INAUDIBLE].

>> [LAUGHTER]

>> There's times where ...

>> [INAUDIBLE], Ali.

>> Part of the Youth Development Process, because I think that's important to think of too, that it really isn't a think that just happened. It's a combination of a lot of different things that allow youth to develop. It says a coordinated and progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent. Thinking in totality, not just small scales, but as a person [INAUDIBLE]. Components of effective youth development programs that work on all of these things focus on decision-making for the youth. Socially, you want to work on interactions with other peers. That might be more or less important depending on the youth. You also want to help them to acquire a sense of belonging and purpose. Also experimenting with their own identity, which is part of ... Wouldn't be even disability specific, but just youth in general need help working on that. Socially, you want to help them with relationships to others and how they can foster good relationships, help them to participate in creative arts, physical activity and health education. There's physical aspects of Youth Development. As Everett has spoken about earlier, working on a strength-based approach as opposed to more of a deficit model. Next slide, Michael. As you can see here, Everett had also spoken to the fact that people jump to youth leadership and kind of forget about the development piece. But it says here that youth leadership is part of the development process. We're look to help youth control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions and help with youth development and leadership needs with inclusion as core components of transition programming for all youth, including youth with disabilities, looking at the whole picture. Next slide. That visual ... We want to build authentic Youth Leadership opportunities, not pieces where we tell youth that they're leaders. But we're not allowing them to actually have a say in their own lives or make those important decisions and help them ...

>> Ali, can I jump in just for a second?

>> Absolutely.

>> This is really tough, I think, for some adults to shift from. I think Ali might be able to speak that a little bit too. When we say authentic, that means kind of letting young people have the opportunity to try things, take the lead. Maybe things don't go 100 percent ...

>> Right.

>> To plan. It's really, really big for adults to realize that promoting leadership and youth development is about giving young people the resources and skills, teaching them those skills and giving them the resources you have and then letting them try and learn to give them those real, authentic opportunities.

>> Right. Eliminating that fear of failure, which, I think, I mean, everybody has that fear of failure. But allowing the youth that we work with to learn from their own mistakes can many times teach them more than if you are trying to force them into something that they don't necessary know that they want to do yet. I think that's part of this last piece on this slide of building skills and capacity to really be decision makers and planners in their own lives. Next slide. From the research that's listed below, these are principles of effective youth leadership programs. Top of the list, you can see real life and authentic experiences, not just speaking to different situations that they might be in and trying to teach them, but actually allowing them to experience those things themselves. Next line speaks to the specific context. Tailoring to the needs of the youth and not lumping everybody all together, but really learning to understand each individual youth and work to that level. Giving the right level of challenge and risk. Everett and I had just talked about allowing youth to fail, but understanding their needs and their strengths and weaknesses and working to their level, meeting them where they are. Providing safe

spaces and support, being a role model for them, allowing space for reflection, so reflection on the experiences that they're having. Learning about history and values and beliefs of the different communities that they may be apart of, learning about different leadership styles. I think we see this ... A lot of times, people think that they can only be a leader if they can speak in public and they can lead a group. But there are so many different ways that a youth can be a leader and teaching them about those different ways is very important. Allowing them to have an awareness and understanding and tolerance of other people, providing experiential learning and opportunities and helping them provide service to others.

>> Okay. Thank you, Everett and Ali. We'll hear from you in a little later in the presentation. I appreciate it. Next up, we are going to go ahead and move on to our next topic for today's webinar. Joining us today is Mike Bovino. Mike works with the Interscholastic Unified Sports of the Special Olympics of Pennsylvania. With that, let me go to the next slide. Mike, you are on. Go ahead, Mike.

>> Excellent. Thanks, Michael. Welcome, everybody. [INAUDIBLE] the webinar this morning. [INAUDIBLE] Pennsylvania as senior advisor and to oversee our Interscholastic Unified Sports program, which also has what we call Unified Schools Strategy. They help to improve school climates by empowering youth with and without disability. Next slide.

>> Sure. Mike, if you could get closer to your phone maybe. The sound's a little bit weak.

>> Is this a little bit better?

>> That's a lot better, thank you.

>> Sure. Our Unified Schools, Special Olympics Pennsylvania partners with schools to develop inclusive sports, leadership and education programs for all students within a school community. What we're trying to do through a variety of Unified School components is to create an accepting and inclusive school community where everyone is valued for their unique strengths and skills and personality. Next. There are three components in a Unified School program the Special Olympics Pennsylvania incorporates when working in partnership with school districts. The first is Unified Sports. The mission of Special Olympics as a sports organization, it uses sports to achieve social justice and empowerment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities means that we utilize sports in a meaningful way. Unified Sports is a program where students with and without intellectual disabilities train and compete together on sports teams. They represent their school. What an Interscholastic Unified Sports team is established in a school, it is treated just like a varsity sports team. There could be a girls' soccer team, a boys' basketball team and a Unified track and field team. It is a co-ed program that allows students with and without disabilities and the entire school community to participate. The one question that's presented to us is that the mission of Special Olympics is to serve people with intellectual disabilities. How does that allow for students with other types of disabilities to be a part of a Unified Sports team? The answer to that question is a Unified Sports team is a fully inclusive team that allows for students with intellectual disabilities, without any disabilities or fostering inclusion and students with other types of disabilities, physical disabilities and others that are not intellectual disabilities to all be members of a Unified Sports team to promote inclusion, acceptance and respect. The second component is youth leadership and advocacy. In this particular component, Special Olympics works with the schools to establish what's called Unified Youth Committees or Unified Clubs. These are simply organized, structured clubs where students with and without intellectual disability come together and meet on a regular basis to determine ways to improve their school climate. They'll set forth goals that they will

look to achieve throughout the school year working with administrators and their peers in the school building. Then activities to help achieve those goals and bring attention to making the school a better environment for all. It's all about empowerment and giving youth a voice and especially youth with intellectual disabilities, who oftentimes stayed into the background in a school community. Most of the time, it's not purposely, just by virtue of some of the dynamics that exist in a school community. By making students with intellectual disabilities important contributors to a Unified Club, it gives them means to be a leader. The third component is Whole School Engagement. This is when a school itself undertakes activities that are designed to raise awareness and promote respect among all students. Probably the most popular campaign that Special Olympics does, along with Best Buddies, the campaign called Spread the Word to End the Word. These are activities done within a school building, which are led by students with and without intellectual disabilities, to shed the light on using respectful language. Most of the time, young people inadvertently use the word, or we call it the r-word, which is the word retard or retarded, which is very devaluing and demeaning to people with intellectual disabilities. The purpose of the campaign is for young people to communicate to their peers throughout the building through scanners and signage and activities and videos and setting up information tables in the lunchroom to really focus attention on using respectful language. To get students in the buildings to sign a pledge saying they will not use the word and that they actually will step in and educate somebody about the demeaning value of the word if they hear somebody else use the r-word. Those are the three components of a Unified School. Next slide. With Special Olympics and a Unified Strategy that is being implemented in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, we have found, over years, that the three components, when done together, really lead to better school communities. You'll see in this slide here the middle components are sports components, Unified Sports. Young Athletes is a program for 2 to 7 year old where students with and without intellectual disabilities develop motor skills and socialization and life skills at a young age that helps them be more successful when they begin learning more organized sports. These are all elements that contribute to the overall Unified School strategies and the three components: Unified Sports, Youth Leadership and Advocacy and Whole School Engagement. Next slide. Special Olympics Pennsylvania is working throughout the state to try to build partnerships with school districts and offer Unified School programs. We understand that there are financial barriers sometimes, impediments to offering new programming in schools because of how tight budgets are. We seek to try to alleviate that barrier by working with administrators in schools to provide funding and resource support. That includes technical support and guidance by members of the Special Olympics Pennsylvania staff, who are trained in knowing how to implement each of the three components. We provide coaches' training for those coaches who are going to be leading Unified Sports teams. We provide financial support for sports equipment and competition uniforms and coach stipends as well as whole school resources, materials for Spread the Word to End the Word campaign such as banners and t-shirts and wrist bands and stickers to really promote that messaging. We also provide resources to develop Youth Leadership and Unified Club within a school building. Then finally, a Unified Sports program is structured just like a varsity sport team. They practice two times a week. It parallels with the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association sports season. They're training and competing over a 10-week period. They do competitions after school, just like a varsity team. There is a culminating County Championship event in each of the regions. Then there's an opportunity for those teams to win the County Championships to advance to an Interscholastic Unified Sports State Championship, which we co-host with the PIAA. Next slide. We've seen a lot of growth in Unified Schools in the state of Pennsylvania. For a number of years, Special Olympics worked with the Philadelphia School District to do Unified Sports within those urban schools. We still have a very vibrant partnership there. In 2014 and '15 however, we decided to launch statewide. We were able to go into 33 schools in five counties, in addition to those counties, the cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. During this current school year, we are in 58 schools in eight counties plus Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. During the upcoming 2016-'17

school year, we plan to be in 90 schools in 14 counties and a few cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Of the 90 schools, 83 of those schools will be high school and seven will be middle and elementary schools. We are working to develop programming in high schools. We see that as the best opportunity to begin the programming for Unified Schools based upon a variety of factors. Part of our goal is as those students graduate from high school, they transition into the community. They continue to be leaders within their communities, whether they go off to college, whether they stay within their towns or cities and continue to advocate for accepting and respectful communities. Next slide. So the need for Unified School Strategy really comes down to a couple of factors. First of all, we're trying to create school settings where students can experience social and emotional growth. That means that you're providing environments that are nurturing, environments where students feel that they are safe, environments where students feel that they are supported and that they have a voice in how their schools operate and function. We also want to make sure that students with intellectual disabilities, who oftentimes do not have a voice, are given the means to communicate their feelings and their ideas and to be true leaders in the community, working side-by-side with their peers without intellectual disabilities. We see throughout the country that young people are facing a number of issues which detract from their quality of life. We'll talk about some of those in a moment. For students with intellectual disabilities, the problems that we're gonna talk about, including health and wellness issues, are even more pronounced than we see in the general school population. Next slide. So one of the things that we see students with disabilities face is a degree of isolation and disengagement. While there has been legislation to continue to promote inclusion, the reality is there's still this social disconnect that we see. One of the most powerful outcomes of Unified Sports that we see is that it is an excellent facilitator promoting social inclusion. Students with and without intellectual disabilities that play sports together form a bond, develop a commonality of interests, form a deeper understanding of each other and have relationships that carry over into the community. Unified Sports is not a new program. It has been offered by Special Olympics since 1989. What Special Olympics has done more of over the last 8 years is to focus nationally on bringing Unified Sports into the schools. We have seen through the research that's been conducted, primarily by the University of Massachusetts Boston, phenomenal results when schools offer Unified Sports as well as the other two components of Youth Leadership and Whole School Engagement. This leads to more accepting school environments and makes students come together and no longer be isolated. Couple of statistics here, which are noteworthy on this slide, is that even though we try to promote inclusion in this country, only 10 percent of all youth have a classmate with an intellectual disability. We see that there's not the level of engagement that we hope for. People get to know each other when they're with each other. They're actually having meaningful conversation. We also see that students with disabilities are less likely to participate in school-sponsored sports and clubs and organizations, which is a concern for us as well. Next slide, Michael. Just have to go back. This slide's got some animation issues that allow us to kind of come in. I see that they're on top of each other. Really what we're trying to say here is that inactivity and obesity are huge issues for all students. But what we do find is that students with intellectual disabilities are at a greater risk ... Thank you, Michael ... Are at a greater risk for health and wellness concerns, including an increased percentage of heart disease and diabetes and, most significantly, obesity. If we see that only 29 percent of high school students are engaging in a recommended amount of daily physical activity, we should all recognize, and I think we all do, that we're facing a crisis in this country. Only 15 percent rarely participate in any physical activity on a regular basis. When you look at what has been a delivery system in the past for all high school students, which if physical education classes, less than half of high school students are attending phys ed classes each week. Next slide. Here's where we as an organization have a significant amount of concern. If we want to go back, Michael, just one other slide, to our health and wellness slide, before we go onto bullying. I'd appreciate it. There we go. Perfect, thanks. Because students with disabilities report rates of physical activity 4 1/2 times lower than their peers without disabilities. You

think about that, 4 1/2 times lower than their peers without disabilities. We already talked about only 29 percent of all students getting the necessary physical activity. We're facing an even more pronounced challenge with this that we're trying to fight. It goes back to students with disabilities are less likely to be involved in school-based physical activity. This is why Unified Sports is such a critical component in a school community. It brings together students with and without intellectual disabilities to train together and practice together. It's why we require that students must practice a minimum of two times a week. We would like them to practice more, but it's a minimum of twice a week. We know that they're getting the physical activity as well as competing against other schools. We also, from a Youth Leadership standpoint, see that if you're a leader on a sports team, you carry that into the community as well. So you start to deal with some of the social challenges that we see with our population. Next slide. This leads into bullying and safety. We know that in schools, this is a problem for all students. One in three students ages 12 to 18 reported encountering a bullying incident during the school year. Bullying is not restricted to physical contact. Bullying can be cyberbullying, emotional and psychological abuse, name calling. These all are bullying. These all make students who are targets feel less about themselves and experience deeper emotions about isolation and a lack of self-confidence. Looking at the statistics, 71 percent of youth say they've seen bullying in the schools. Looking at the statistics with cyberbullying, that's become an increasing problem. Students with intellectual disabilities are at a higher rate of being bullied than their peers without disabilities. As an organization and a movement that values using sports to promote social justice and empowerment for people with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics sees this as being a major issue and one that we want to address through our Unified School Strategies. We all are seeking to make the world a better place. Unified Schools Strategies, driven by youth and led by youth, have shown us that it's been a very successful means to do this. Unified Sports is the foundation, using sports as a way to promote social justice. But there's a combination of effective youth-focused programs through the other two components, which reduces bullying and isolation. We find that Unified Schools promote healthy activities and interactions. Stereotype stigmas are combated. Hurtful language in schools is eliminated. There's engagement classes that young people are participating in very social activities that lead to improved behavior and school climate. For example, you'll see in different schools that do Unified Strategies throughout the state where you'll walk into a school building. You'll see students with and without intellectual disabilities walking the hallways together as friends, as teammates. They are leading the charge to make their school a better place by doing activities like a Spread the Word to End the Word campaign. Sometimes, they'll do campaigns that are designed to promote respect for all students or to raise awareness about diversity. Sometimes they'll do activities to make their school a better place simply by looking at an issue like the cafeteria is less dirty or messy, oftentimes by students who don't particularly care or pick up their trash. We find Unified Clubs stepping in and the voices of the students telling their peers that having an accepting school climate starts with having physical surroundings that are conducive for people being together and wanting to respect not only each other, but also their school. Next slide. Inclusivity is a core value that is something that young people seek. Sixty-one percent of 12 to 24 year olds see it as being that we're all in this together, so we're all one. Ninety percent, when surveyed, felt that it's a person's responsibility to do the right thing even if they could get into trouble by doing that right thing. We have a generation of young people that are focused on ethical and moral outcomes, which is extremely encouraging for all of us to see. We want to give students a pipeline in order to be able to express their sentiment and make some meaningful changes. The pie chart on the right was asked of students. I think it's very enlightening when you see that 74 percent of the students said they'd rather make the million dollars from an invention that benefits almost everyone rather than making 20 times that amount from an invention that only benefits the few. It shows us that they're valuing trying to help as many people as possible rather than individual self-fulfillment. Next. Special Olympics has launched a 5-year strategic plan, which started in January. The vision to that plan is that sport will open hearts and minds towards

people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities all over the world. A global organization that reaches 4 1/2 million people with intellectual disabilities. Unified Sports is a driving factor in the growth and expansion of the Special Olympics movement throughout the world. We see Unified Sports being done in more than 150 countries. In some countries, there still is a lot of concerns in terms of segregation and isolation. We're starting to lay the groundwork to building Unified Sports programs there and seeing some meaningful changes. Then the quote, in terms of why we do what we do, is "When we combine higher quality sports with a wider audience and connect more people with our athletes, it changes attitudes. What Special Olympics ultimately seeks it to be a driving force for social inclusion. For us, this means people with intellectual disabilities of all abilities are welcomed in their communities and join with others to learn, work, compete and play with the same rights and opportunities as others." Some of those key words are rights, the rights of people with intellectual disabilities, social inclusion, being welcomed in their communities, using sports as a means to change attitudes. Next slide, please. We mentioned in our Unified Sports program that there is a culminating state championship event for our Unified Sports. The way Special Olympics is structured is that we do Unified, indoor bocce in the winter season. That runs from early December through the end of February. In March, there's a Culminating Unified Indoor Bocce Championship event, with teams that are the county champion, who advance and participate in this event as part of the PIAA Boys and Girls State Basketball Championship. All the Unified indoor bocce teams that qualify, who have won the state championships and advance to Hershey, actually participate on the same basketball court where the boys and girls play their games, in the 10,000-seat Giant Center. In the spring, Special Olympics Pennsylvania and school districts offer Unified track and field. It is a team model where students with and [INAUDIBLE] intellectual disabilities train together. But most interestingly is they compete against each other as equal peers. They are placed in divisions based upon similar ability levels and compete against each other. Based upon their performances, they earn points for their team. There are no individual awards. Everybody is invested in the outcome of their team and scoring points for their team. They score points based upon where they finish in their competition division. The team with the most amount of points at the end of the meet is declared the winner. It's a 10-week season that runs from March through the end of May with county championships and a culminating state championship event that's hosted with the PIAA Boys and Girls Track and Field Championships. Last year was the first year that we did that. These are three of the teams that [INAUDIBLE] in the back, which is wonderful, is there are 3,000 people in the stands who are now exposed to Unified Sports and the values that these young people, with and without intellectual disabilities, showcased. Next slide. Thanks, Mike. Unified Sports outcomes that we see or produced are the following. Most importantly, as I mentioned earlier, it fosters social inclusion. Teammates with and without disabilities become friends. you look at this great photograph here. These are two of our participants in the Special Olympics Philadelphia Unified Sports program, where they play soccer. They had an opportunity to play as part of an MLS exchange game against the team from Washington D.C. You see two of these athletes that have become friends with each other through their Unified soccer experience. It fosters social inclusion. Students not only train and compete together, they go to the movies together. They go to a football game together. In some schools, they go to the prom together. We've seen some phenomenal things with schools out west who have done some pretty cool things with social activities and functions like proms and dances. We see those outcomes when people come together as teammates. We see that Unified Sports also creates school climates that promote respect, acceptance and diversity. When students play sports together, they are valued for their unique talents and skills. Everybody on a sports team can contribute to the outcome of that team. Whether it be through a specific skill or tactic or through their personality and their leadership skills that they demonstrate on and off the field of play. Next slide. Some other outcomes that we see when schools offer Unified Sports is that it helps to reduce bullying because students do become empowered and aware and engaged. There was a study done several years ago in

the state of Maryland where they asked students who had not participated in Unified Sports if they would do if they saw somebody being bullied.

In the research study, this question was worded in a way that it gave students a variety of different options. When students were asked that question, 60 percent said they would not step in and physically stop the bullying for fear of being targeted themselves, but they would say something. That was encouraging to see. But what was truly phenomenal was when we interviewed those same students after they were a member of a Unified Sports team for a 10-week season and got a chance to become friends with students with intellectual disabilities, that number changed. It went from 60 percent to saying something to 92 percent of the students saying they would not only step in and say something, they would stop the activity. They would stop the bullying. When asked why that had changed prior to their Unified Sports experience, the answer was quite simple: They acknowledged that they became friends with students with intellectual disabilities and gained a greater understanding of what it was like to be different and some of the challenges that they face. As friends, they felt that need to be able to step in and stop bullying wherever they saw it. We see that it has that type of impact and effect. Unified Sports improves health and fitness, especially for students with disabilities facing higher risks. We're tackling some of the national epidemics for inactivity and health and wellness concerns. Being a member of a Unified Sports team as well as being part of a Unified Club or Whole School Engagement, all of those lead to character development and life skill development and enhancing one's own self-esteem by feeling that they are contributors to the school community. Next. These are some photographs of Spread the Word to End the Word. Going into 2016, there have been over 575,000 online pledges, by students throughout the country, to stop using the r-word. These are photographs of students, how students have organized, campaigned, tables that are set up in lunch rooms where students sign banners pledging to Spread the Word to End the Word, students gathering together and bringing teachers, administrators together to make them aware of it and incorporating that as part of school culture. So a whole school engagement activity that is really produced changes in levels of awareness and respect. Next slide. Finally, wrapping up, Special Olympics Pennsylvania is very excited to be working with school districts throughout the state to promote youth leadership and preparing high school students to become leaders in their community as they transition out of their schools and start to work in their neighborhoods or in their universities to promote change for acceptance and respect and ensuring that young people with intellectual disabilities also have a voice. As we like to say in Special Olympics, "Play Unified and Live Unified." Thank you.

>> Okay, Mike, we just had a couple questions that came in. If a school would be interested in connecting with Unified Sports, how would they go about doing that?

>> Michael, if you could share my e-mail address and contact information with the group, they can contact me. Then I will begin working with that school district with our team of members on the Special Olympics Pennsylvania staff.

>> Sure, I can do that. If somebody would be interested in volunteering for Special Olympics, is there a way to do that?

>> Absolutely. If somebody went to the Special Olympics Pennsylvania website. They just Google Special Olympics Pennsylvania. On that site, there is a section that says, "Ways to get involved." It actually is broken up by what we call local programs, which are really county-based programs. That individual would look at where they live. They would click on the link to their county program, which is on the website. It would take them directly to that county program, that local program managers contact

information. They would simply send that individual an e-mail. That local program manager would get that individual involved with their Special Olympics program in the county.

>> Okay, great. A final question that came in, or actually we have two more. One of them dealt actually specifically with students that have disability that also have social phobias. Have you seen their involvement with Special Olympics Unified Sports helping? I'm assuming so, but just wanted to throw that out there.

>> That's a great question. The answer is yes. It's been fascinating to see that students without intellectual disabilities that may have some other challenges like social phobias see Unified Sport as a more conducive environment where they feel safer. When I say safer, nothing in terms of physical. Safer in terms of being able to express themselves in an environment where they feel supported, an environment that's diverse. Looking at the screen of students here that's in front of us, there's a diversity of students, boys and girls, students with and without intellectual disabilities, students who have different levels of social skills. We find that in a Unified setting, students do feel very comfortable in doing that. We've had parents, throughout the country, of students without disabilities, who have talked about the meaningful changes that they've seen in their sons' or daughters' lives because they've either had social challenges. Or in some cases, students that were obese or overweight that felt very uncomfortable with going out [INAUDIBLE] varsity team, instead went out for a Unified Sports team, became a part of that team, and started gaining health practices and improving their weight reduction. We've seen that as well.

Students have really been the strongest voices about how valuable they see their experience in working together with students that are different in many respects, but the same in most all respects.

>> Great. A question came in. Is there a way for someone to obtain or get more information, like the banner on Spread the Word to End the Word?

>> Yes, absolutely. There's a way to do it. They can actually get in contact with me and our Special Olympics Pennsylvania team. They can also go to a website. If they go to the Special Olympics website. That's our global headquarters, just www.specialolympics.org. There is a section called Project Unify, which is what this program is called. Under Project Unify and Unified Schools, they'll see a link for the r-word campaign. And if they click on that link, it will actually show them how they can order banners and t-shirts and wristbands through Special Olympics. That would be probably the easiest way to do that, is going to the Special Olympics website. Michael, if you wouldn't mind sharing that with folks in the follow-up e-mail. It's www.specialolympics.org. Clicking on Project Unify or Unified Schools, that will take them directly to a series of links. One of them would say, "Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign." They could order banners and materials through that particular link.

>> Okay, great. I am sending to the entire audience. If you look in [INAUDIBLE] chat box, you'll see Mike's e-mail at Special Olympics PA. Another question came in. What about young people with physical disabilities who can't participate in many sports, but can if carefully chosen, connected, modified sports?

>> An excellent question. I could have shown another photograph here which would have shown a young man who uses a wheelchair and a young lady who used an assisted walking device. The reason why Special Olympics Pennsylvania shows Unified bocce and Unified track and field for the sports is because it's fully inclusive and allows students with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, to meaningfully participate. If you picture the sport of bocce, somebody who uses a wheelchair or

somebody who has maybe more significant challenges and maybe uses a wheelchair, but may have some cerebral palsy and some other challenges, are able to participate on a bocce team because in bocce, you can use a ramp where a ball is placed on top of a ramp. That individual can push the ball down the ramp. It allows them to contribute to their team's score and outcome. We see a variety of disabilities can meaningfully participate in the sport of bocce as well as track and field. Track and field has a variety of events that allows students who use wheelchairs, assisted walking devices, visual impairment, hearing impairment to be able to train and compete meaningfully. As I mentioned earlier in the webinar, this is the one program that Special Olympics offers that is fully inclusive for every student in a school building. While our mission is to serve students with intellectual disabilities, this does allow students with other types of disabilities and students without disabilities to be members of a team. I will just emphasize that a Unified Sports team must have half of it's members to be students with intellectual disabilities, since that is our mission. The other half of a Unified Sports team should be composed of a majority of students without disabilities. We know that's very, very, very important in order to promote true inclusion in a school building is that we need to have students without any disabilities to be a part of that team. However, there's also slots on a Unified track and field team and Unified bocce for students with physical disabilities. That National Honor Society student who uses a wheelchair, who doesn't have an intellectual disability, would be welcomed to be a part of a Unified Sports team so we truly have a fabric of diversity of students on that team.

>> Great. That's all the questions, Mike. I greatly appreciate you taking the time to share with us today information regarding Unified Sports with Special Olympics. Thank you so much.

>> Thank you, Michael. Thank you everyone for your interest. I really appreciate the opportunity to present today.

>> Great. Thanks so much. Next we're gonna move on and talk a bit about Natural Peer Supports. Natural Peer Supports is a project that we have been working on through the Department of Education Bureau of Special Education with the PaTTAN system in collaboration with Dr. Erik Carter, who is an associate professor at Vanderbilt University. The purpose of the project was to look at how to develop and encourage positive relationships among students with and without disabilities in middle school and high school settings. The ultimate goal of the Natural Peer Support process in middle school and high school was to create authentic student relationships that would exist both in the school setting as well as outside the school setting and become lasting relationships, connections for students with and without disabilities. It is a planful process. And it's a way to integrate using Natural Peer Supports in a classroom setting. It develops a deeper understanding and mutual benefit for both the student with and the student without disabilities. Over the past 3 years, the following LEAs, school districts, have been involved in this process. You can see the list on the screen. These school districts really represent districts from across the state. They also represent districts in a variety of settings: suburban, rural, urban settings. I wanted to also share with you that on the PaTTAN site, we do have a series of videos, that Dr. Erik Carter recorded, that help to support implementing a program of natural peer support in middle schools and high schools. If you go to the link that's on the slide, that will actually take you to the PaTTAN sight. You can locate that series of videos as well as additional information regarding the Natural Peer Support program. We're now going to actually switch to one of the school districts that have been involved in the Natural Peer Support project. They created a group within their school district called McFriends. Joining us today will be Megan VanFossan, supervisor of special education in McGuffey School District, along with two students from McGuffey, Nathaniel Stout and Eric Jackson and one of their teachers that has been involved in the Natural Peer Supports project, the McFriends project,

Jamie Bobik. Hang on one second. Let me turn this over to Megan and her students and staff. Megan, over to you guys.

>> Good morning. I'm actually gonna turn this quickly over now to Nate Stout, who is our McFriends president. Then we have Erik Jackson, who is also in the McFriends club, and Mrs. Daily or Mrs. Bobik, who is the life skills teacher at McGuffey.

>> Hi, my name's Nate Stout. I'm a senior this year at McGuffey. I'm just gonna talk a little bit about the McFriends program and everything we do and everything we plan on doing in the future. If you wanna go to the next slide. A little bit about myself. When the McFriends program started during the 2014 and 2015 school year, I was really excited to have the opportunity to spend time with the students that would be involved. I didn't care what job I had within the program. I just wanted to help out with it any way I could. I actually ended up becoming a mentor alongside the student president of the program at the time. We had a lot of fun at all the activities during the year. When the end of the year came, I got asked if I would become the president. Without even thinking about it, I agreed. That was one of the best decisions I've made. These kids had such a positive influence on my life last year. I wanted to be able to spend as much time with them as I could. This program taught me a lot about working with my peers and even more about working with students that have disabilities. I couldn't be more thankful for the opportunity. Next slide, please. Last year was started by Camden Fletcher, who's on the left and myself's on the right. Then our buddy last year was David Wheeler. He's in the middle. He did a great job of starting off the program and getting a lot of the activities planned. He started it off strong. He gave me a lot of information about what I was gonna be doing this year. I can't thank him enough for everything that he's done for me, even this year, still giving me more ideas of what we could do and everything like that. Next slide, please. One of the reasons why we wanted to start this program was that it would focus on fostering meaningful relationships between students with complex educational needs and regular education students. We believe that a peer buddy program would not only provide an increase in fun and personal enjoyment for all of our students, but that it would also increase the understanding of disabilities and foster relationships that would hopefully carry over into the community. Next slide, please. In the program, we form relationships with students that have disabilities and help them to learn social skills that they will use for the rest of their lives. We also show them that they aren't so much different than everyone else and that they can still socialize and interact with everyone. Daily, we interact with all of the students and form relationships that not only do we have inside of school but outside of school too. Next slide, please. There are two ways to be a McFriend. One is a Peer to Peer McFriend. That would just be one or two students without disabilities who would volunteer to interact daily with the students with disabilities. Those would just be your closest friends that you have. Every time you see them, you welcome them with a hug or whatever. Another way is just any McFriends who would just be students who volunteer to help outside the scenes with planning, like the parties and the activities and anything that goes on outside of school. These students can also interact with the students. They can still be their friends, even if you're not a mentor. No matter what role you play in the program, you're gonna get some kind of leadership opportunity whether it be planning the activities, being a mentor or fundraising. If you're running the Twitter or Facebook accounts, you're gonna have some access to being a leader throughout the program. Next slide, please. Last year, we started off with a grant. We just ran out of that money. We've been working on different fundraising ideas. Special education students have been selling coffee and hot chocolate every Friday to our teachers and administrators. We've just been taking in donations from anywhere that could give them. The Lions Club is one of the biggest donors. They gave \$1,000 a couple weeks ago. Talking a little bit about the future, the McOlympics, one parent gave \$2,000 for it. We've received other donations of \$500.

>> Then another piece that we did, in terms of fundraising, was we did a GoFundMe account, which to our great surprise actually, more McGuffey staff members donated to that than outside support. We were very surprised. It was amazing how much our own teachers and paraprofessionals donated to the McOlympics. We'll talk a little bit later about McOlympics. But that is one activity that costs a great deal of money to run.

>> Next slide, please. Just getting into what kind of activities we do and everything, this year and last year, we have taken the kids Christmas shopping. They would bring in their own money and shop for any family members or friends that they think they need to get something for. Then after that's done, it's around noonish. We bring them back to school. We take them to the conference room here at McGuffey. We wrap their presents for them. They don't have to worry about doing any of that stuff outside of school.

>> It's all the kids together. All the kids that go to the mall and get the gifts. Then they come back and have lunch and then wrap the different presents. We keep them so we don't have presents that are unwrapped going home, right? The Christmas presents are a surprise under the Christmas tree on Christmas day.

>> Next slide, please. One of the bigger events that we did was we took everybody to the Pirate's game last year. It was a great experience for everyone involved. Some of the kids have never even been to Pittsburgh or a Pirate's game. It was a good first-time experience for everybody. We all had a lot of fun. I think everybody enjoyed it.

>> We are doing it again this year.

>> We are doing it again this year. May 26th, we'll be going to the Pirate's game.

>> The students actually raised all the money for that. One of the entrepreneurial activities that the life skill program has at McGuffey is they go out. They do the coffee cart. They sell coffee. What's an interesting statistic about our special ed program in general at McGuffey is 92 percent of our students spend 80 percent or more of the day in the regular ed environment. When we talk about programs, we're talking about services we take to kids instead of kids coming to the service. We have pretty strong inclusive practices and have for the last 10 years.

>> Next slide, please. Another activity we did last year is our Etiquette Lunch. We held it at a conference center in one of the nearby hotels. It was a great opportunity that allowed all of the students to practice table manners and communications and social skills. We had teachers and staff that help run the program. They instructed all of the students of what and what not to do while sitting at the dinner table. We took them out to lunch. It was a great opportunity because not a lot of kids get the opportunity to go to a fancy lunch or dinner. It was a good experience for everyone involved.

>> One of the things, the kids had to dress up prior to this activity. As Nate said, we did etiquette lessons, where we talked about manners and communication. This actual activity was sponsored. Newton Consulting, which is a business here in our community, provided financial support. PDE then also helped us with the transportation costs. There was some joint funding that went into this activity. Although very expensive to do, the kids, when you hear them talk about the McFriends program, they quite frequently talk about this activity, which they will be doing again here in the next couple of weeks.

>> The Etiquette Lunch?

>> Mm-hmm.

>> End of May.

>> End of May.

>> Next slide, please. Last year, we had an End of the Year Picnic, which we will be doing again this year. It was held at Mingo State Park. We had the teachers each bring a covered dish. One of our teachers grilled for it. We had hot dogs and hamburgers.

>> He's coming again.

>> He'll be back to do that again. Everybody just had a great time hanging out at the park. We played games like kickball and ...

>> Excuse the interruption. At this time, students should report to period three.

>> Kickball and volleyball and wiffle ball. We had footballs and soccer balls. Whatever kind of activities you wanted to do, you could do that there.

>> With the End of the Year Picnic, we then, because we still had some funding from PDE, we took the kids then for our Extended School Year. Although during the summer, we had more McFriends than kids who were actually attending ESY. We took them swimming to ... We actually went to a waterslide park where there were waterslides. Every student was ... They buddied up. Then we had one staff member for each of the students that got into the water, which was a pretty nerve-racking from an administrative perspective experience, but one that was a real hit. I hear kids all the time ask if we are going to go swimming again. It was nice because it wasn't during the school year, and yet we had tons of kids asking to meet us at the park and go swimming with us. That was a pretty phenomenal experience.

>> This is Jamie, special education teacher, life skills teacher. I was one of the teachers that went on the trip, wore my bathing suit and everything. The kids absolutely loved it. They loved being able to have their teachers and their friends going down the slides and jumping in the water. It was a really, really great time. we really want to try to do that again this year.

>> Yeah. We actually rented a pavilion and let the kids do minigolf.

>> Water boats.

>> Water boats. If you go to the next slide, there's actually some pictures of some of the things that we did during that activity.

>> You can see people in the paddleboats. There was a lake by the pool. We rented out the paddleboats and took them on that. We rented out a pavilion. We had lunch. It was a whole day full of different activities that we got to enjoy together. A couple other things pictured here are some of the special education students volunteer in Claysville, which is where we're located, just at some of the local

businesses doing any kind of work that they need to get a sense of what it's like working out in the real world.

>> Eric, what's your favorite thing about some of the activities that we've done?

>> Introduce yourself, yeah.

>> I'm Eric Jackson. I like ...

>> Friends.

>> Like my friends. One of the activities that I liked to do was ...

>> Okay. Come back to us. Okay, here it goes. You're on. You're okay. What was your favorite activity, honey?

>> Going to the park.

>> Tell us what you said earlier about what your favorite thing about McFriends is, getting to what?

>> Socializing with my friends.

>> Good deal. Eric also participates in basketball, track and field and weightlifting here at school.

>> Yeah.

>> He definitely interacts in the ...

>> Excuse the interruption. Middle school softball girls could take their mitts to the high school office to be ...

>> Sorry, sorry.

>> Today. Coaches will go over the procedure for future games on the bus.

>> Eric has come to school to tell me about weekend fun with his basketball buddies. He doesn't just hang out with them here at school. They do things after school as well.

>> Anything else you wanna share?

>> No.

>> Okay.

>> If you could go to the next slide, please.

>> Sure.

>> Just to touch on future plans, we're just going to continue to keep doing some of the same activities that we've done this year and past years. We're gonna keep expanding the program just to make it bigger every year, hopefully. From the first year to this year, there was about another 50 people who joined. It grew a lot even just this one year. I can't wait to see where it goes in the future.

>> How many kids are in it?

>> There's about 90 kids in it now.

>> We have 90 students without disabilities and 13 students with disabilities.

>> There were some questions that came in, Megan. Are the activities that they do, are they held during the school day? Are they after school?

>> Well, there's been a mix. They've had activity afternoons, where it is after school. They do things that are in the gym. That is managed by ... The students do it with the adults. There's a mix. When they've got Christmas shopping, that has been during the day. The Pirate's game will run late. Some kids went to Kennywood. That ran into the late evening. It's a mix of different activities. What we have seen is, from student reports, is that these friendships have really grown into activities outside of school and participating in social media, birthday parties, graduation parties. We've just seen a wide variety of interactions.

>> Could you talk a little bit more about funding? I know last year you have the small peer-to-peer grant through PaTTAN, but how are you working on funding for it currently?

>> We had, last year, the \$10,000 grant from the Department of Ed, which was an amazing opportunity for us to kick this off, although we have some informal activities going on the last 10 years with our inclusive practices. When we look at funding this year, it has been only by donations and our entrepreneurial activities that the kids are doing. For example, Nate, who is the president of McFriends, he is the one who went and talked to the Lions Club. It was an amazing, first of all, for him to go up and really talk passionately about our program. They were only initially going to give a donation of a couple hundred dollars. Then all of a sudden, we got a donation of 1,000. Student leadership has played a big role. When we look at the GoFundMe that we did, our kids were pushing that out. The staff were pushing that out through their Facebook pages and Twitter. One parent of a ... The parent that gave us the \$2,000, she is a McFriend. Their daughter is a senior who is also a McFriend and out of the blue, called Mrs. Daily, who's our life skill teacher, and said, "How can we support you? At a minimum, we will give" ...

>> [INAUDIBLE] students, [INAUDIBLE] report to room 275 for make-up testing at this time.

>> Sorry about this, it's PSSA time for us.

>> [INAUDIBLE]

>> We were donated \$2,000 for the McFriends. Does that help at all?

>> I'm sorry. Just another question came in too. What are the age range of the students involved in this? is it just high school?

>> Middle school and high school. The McFriends are 9th through 12th graders, who are regular ed. Then the children with disabilities are middle school and high school students.

>> Great. Megan, are you okay if I share with the audience your e-mail contact? A couple people have asked to talk to you about just more information on how you got the project started.

>> Sure, that's not a problem.

>> Okay. I think that's it with our questions. I don't know if any of you have any closing comments you want to make.

>> We just appreciate the opportunity to share experience. It has been ... With having strong inclusive practices, this just kind of was the cherry on the top. This really, really provided one of those critical pieces that we were missing. It's been very interesting. It's student leadership that has made this work, with the adults facilitating. It's been pretty magical for everyone when you listen to what kids have to say in regards to the program.

>> Okay, great. I wanted to thank you all for joining us. We had some really nice comments too just about your program and both of the student presenters. Thank you so much for being on today. Thank you, thank you all.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Next up, we are going to move back to Ali and Everett. Just give me one second and unmute their mics. Guys, you are on. Over to Ali and Ev.

>> Awesome. Ali, are you there? Did we lose connection yet?

>> No, not yet.

>> Okay. We are gonna talk about the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network and how it relates to the work that they have been doing with the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living. So, Michael, if you wanna go to the next slide. Those of you that have been around the [INAUDIBLE] community and have been on webinars have probably seen this logo, the I'm a Leader project. We'll get into the details about what we've done so far this year and kind of give you some highlights. For those of you that don't know, the imaleaderpa.org web site and the I'm a Leader campaigning is really a campaign being supported by PE and the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council to promote leadership skill development for all students across Pennsylvania. The things that we're gonna talk to you about today are really gonna focus on promoting leadership and youth development for all students across Pennsylvania. The website, if you go to imaleaderpa.org, you will find lesson plans that our standards aligned, but that are focused on leadership, education-based things. You will find videos about leadership for youth and professionals. You will find information about an annual I'm a Leader contest where we ask students to answer the question, "What does leadership mean to you?" How they answer that question is entirely their choice. They can do a video. They can do a song. They can do a painting. They can take a photo. It's really a fun and neat experience. Just to give you some highlights of the project on the next slide. Go

ahead, Michael. You can move on to the next one, sorry. This project is about 3 years old now. In the past year, we have done 30 presentations to students and education professionals really focused on promoting youth leadership and youth development for all students. So we've done presentations for classrooms as small as five students. We've done professional development sessions. Then we've done entire school assemblies. It depends on what the school would like us to do and what they have time for. We know that schedules are tough, especially with testing and other things that are happening all the time. If you're on the phone and you're from an agency or a school and you're like, "I would love to have a youth-led, youth-driven presentation about youth leadership and youth development and disability awareness and disability acceptance, our contact information is in the PowerPoint from today. Through this initiative, in the past year, we've been able to train over 1,200 people in leadership self-advocacy and self-determination. You see there a list of counties that we've been in this year. To be honest, Ali and I were putting together the list and thought, "I don't even know if this is all of them." It just kind of gives you an idea of we have no bounds as far as where we can go in Pennsylvania to try to get this information out there. As I've mentioned, we do the I'm a Leader Contest. This past year, we got 60 entries to the contest from over a dozen schools across Pennsylvania. And the entries were given to us from students in 3rd to 12th grade. I talked to you also about [INAUDIBLE] leadership education resources. In the past year, LVCIL and PYLN has created over 10 education resources that are being shared on the website. And that does not include the lesson plan and things that are there that have benefit shared by folks from schools across the commonwealth. It has really been a busy project. I think Michael and Ali can both speak to the power of seeing this done and going in the schools and promoting youth leadership for all students and really making sure that people with disabilities are a part of that process. The thing we're gonna really focus on today, with the end of this presentation, is looking at how this project has supported the development of a new structure for the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network. You may already be aware of the PYLN. It has been around for about 10 years now. Before this project, I would say the primary focus of the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network was to work with students with disabilities entirely. As PYLN is a partner on this project and thinking about inclusive leadership and leadership for all students, that the group that is now PYLN said, "You know what, if we're gonna talk about inclusive leadership and leadership for everyone, we have to model that within our organization. We're gonna talk to you a little bit about the impact and where PYLN sees itself going in the future. Ali, I don't know if you wanna take over and kind of talk about the next piece of this.

>> Sure. So as Everett kind of spoke to, the reason why this project was able to influence the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network so much is because we've really been able to see it close up. We've been very much involved from day one. Each of the 3 years, we've helped select I'm a Leader Contest winners. We got to see the broad range of entries across all three contests. We've also participated in the development and presentation of the assemblies that he spoke about for all students. These are students both with and without disabilities. We've also participated in the trainings for educators. I've been able to speak about this inclusive leadership model. We've also represented the project at Youth Leadership events across PA. These were leadership-focused events as opposed to disability-focused events. These included organizations such as the 4-H, the PA Student Council Conference and the Family Career and Community Leaders of America Conference to name a few. We've also, through this project, been able to help develop resources for the project's website. Michael, you don't have to click on that video there. We're in the development process of making videos for each of the eight characteristics of a leader. We've put on this slide one of the drafts for one of the characteristics of character. Looking at short, little videos that you can show people and that describe what each of these characteristics mean so that youth can get a better understanding of them.

>> Just real quick, Ali. The submissions for the I'm a Leader Contest, you can find them on I'm a Leader PA. There are the examples, actually, I believe, several of the videos that were done are posted there. And you can link to the video that you're talking about too.

>> There will be another contest. I think we just ended. It'll be a little bit next school year until we have another contest. You can go to the imaleaderpa.org website and look for that in the next school year if you'd like to participate in next year's. I want to speak a bit about specifically how the project has impacted PYLN. Everett had mentioned it a little bit earlier. It's really been able to show the group the power of an inclusive leadership model. While we have participated and presented at these events, we've been able to see how inclusion can actually lead to greater change. I think all of the presenters that came before us spoke to the inclusive model and how impactful it can be for all of the parties involved. We really got to see that first hand. Additionally, we've been able to connect with even more schools. Over the 10 years that's PYLN has been in existence, we've been able to connect with a lot of different people across the state of Pennsylvania. This project specifically allowed us to have deeper connections with schools across the state. It also develops these ongoing relationships throughout the 3 years of the project and has shown us how much these deeper connections and these ongoing relationships with the youth, young adults and professionals that are providing them with supports, what that can really do and how important that relationship is and learning a bit about how to foster that kind of relationship. Lastly, in totality looking at it as a whole, we've been able to see the type of system change that can occur when you have this direct involvement with the schools and teaching and speaking about inclusive leadership models and working with students with and without disabilities. Go ahead, Michael. Thank you. All of those things that we've learned from the project got us thinking about something that we hear, I think, every year, everywhere we go, people speak to us, members of PYLN, and say that they love when we're able to come out and do these presentations or run events. Then unfortunately, we leave. we're only one group of people. We can't be in all parts of the state at all time. There's really this need that people explain to us for some kind of support throughout the year across the state. In thinking about the project and then this problem, we've decided that it may be more beneficial to create a network of affiliate groups across the state of Pennsylvania. Then PYLN, as it was known before, or the Governing board, the small group of people which support this network of affiliate groups using the inclusive leadership model as well as the youth-led youth-driven model. Now that's a bit about what I will be talking about on the next slide. We have even adopted a new mission. It's very similar to our previous mission, but it adds a few things. Now it is that the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network to coordinate a network that is led and driven by inclusive organizations of youth and young adults with and without disabilities across Pennsylvania. PYLN promotes advocacy, self-determination and [INAUDIBLE] areas of transition, employment, education and community engagement. Adding those pieces about inclusive organizations and stating that we will no longer be a singular group, but rather the Governing Board will help to support affiliate groups that would like to join across the state. Next slide. This is a new development. We are in the process of supporting and building this new structure. But we have some of the basic elements right here. There will be a Governing Board, which is made up of young adults, with and without disabilities, ages ranging 18 to 35. Now I know that that age range can be shocking to a lot of people because 35 seems, as we call Everett, old. We took a lot of time to think about this. We are planning this structure in a way that we're able to develop youth who can eventually join the governing board and really help lead. Eventually, as has happened over the past 10 years with PYLN, we've had people who've become young professionals and gone on to do really amazing things in this field and other fields. That's the age range for the Governing Board. Then the affiliate groups are a little different. They would be made up of youth or young adults, with and without disabilities, ages middle school to 35. We'll talk a bit about how that gets broken down. We picked middle school as opposed to a direct age because we recognized that in middle school

it could be a couple different ages. We feel that that encapsulated the ages in school-aged children that we would want to target. I know many people here are from schools. We are looking for affiliate groups that are primarily in schools since that is a lot of our connections. We also want to open it up to community agencies or colleges and universities. Really anybody who is looking to join that already either [INAUDIBLE], which you heard about earlier today, or if it's some youth within a community that want to get together and form a group, then that would be welcome as well. Lastly, we want to focus on inclusive model most importantly that is youth-led and youth-driven. Go ahead, Michael, sorry. This slide is a bit about becoming an affiliate. I would call these kind of like criteria. In order to become an affiliate, we would need to make sure that the group is youth-led and youth-driven. The student ages would be middle school to 17. [INAUDIBLE] and 18 to 35, which would be considered the Young Adult Affiliates, spreading them out a little bit and making them two groups. Highlighted here is the inclusive model. we've heard a lot today about what that means to different groups and what makes the most sense to them. For us, we have that we would like the groups to strive to maintain a 33 percent people with or without disabilities. This kind of allows the most flexibility in that groups could be primarily people with disabilities, but that they're encouraged to have 33 percent people without disabilities. The group could be primarily people without disabilities. They would strive to maintain about one-third people with disabilities. Additionally, they would have to have one adult ally with all their required clearances under the Act 153, which is standard. The group must complete one service learning project. Additionally, they would complete one project that's related directly to the PYLN mission every year. That mission I had read earlier to you. Including any of those different pieces. Additionally, this piece, I think, is most important, which is to be able to maintain consistent contact with somebody to make sure that we are providing the supports that are necessary. We would have one student from each of the group that's identified that would be the person who maintained consistent contact with the members of the Governing Board.

>> Ali, before we go on, can you give an example of a service learning project?

>> Sure. It's really broad range, but type of service learning project could be volunteering in your community. I'm trying to think of some that we heard today. I believe it was the McFriends who volunteer or even the wrapping of Christmas presents, you could have somebody who opens up to be able to wrap Christmas presents for people in the community for free. It could be planting trees. It could be a different number of things.

>> I think some folks have done food banks. They've volunteered in their community at different activities, connected with different volunteer groups too in their communities. I think it's that whole idea of just giving back ...

>> Right.

>> Whatever would make the most sense in your particular location.

>> The reasoning [INAUDIBLE] is that we do want the groups to somehow be [INAUDIBLE] engaged and be volunteering and giving back, as Michael had said. That project doesn't have to be related to anything specifically. It can be whatever the group decides. Then they would complete the one project that's directly related to the PYLN mission. Okay, Michael. Obviously, the question then is, "Why would I become an affiliate? I've seen PYLN before. They've done these talks." We're really building a structure to be able to support these affiliate groups, that they can serve the people in their area all year long. We are in the process of gathering all the materials that we've developed over the years, cleaning them

up a little bit. We would put them on a network page that would just be accessible to the affiliate groups. These types of materials would include videos on different topics, one-page descriptions, which are just brief descriptions of different topics, examples of presentations that they could do and even more. I don't know if, Michael, you want to go into it. It might slow your computer down. Here are examples that you can go into on this slide of the presentation on leadership. Our members worked extremely hard to gather all of the material and presentations that we've done on leadership and put it into one cohesive presentation model that included presenter notes and slides that are already done for you.

>> That didn't work, sorry.

>> It's okay. It's okay. Additionally, you'll see the lesson plan. We would have lesson plans that are paired with each of these presentations that include a pre and post-activity and discuss the goals and major questions for all of those. That would be all available on a network that would be open to only affiliates. Additionally, affiliate groups would get the communication with the Governing Board. Our group of Governing Board members have had years of experience in running youth groups. When we talked about failure a little bit earlier, we failed at different things [INAUDIBLE] other people learn about best practices. Then we would offer the affiliate groups consisting communication, multiple contacts throughout the year. Not only communication with the Governing Board, but also communication with each other. Open to affiliate groups that have already been established such as ... At the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living, there's a group called S2L, or School 2 Life. They would be able to share with the network their experiences with the specific work that they do too. Our idea is that we create a network of people who are able to share and learn and grow from each other. I know lastly on that slide, I had something about opportunities to attend events, presentations and connect with other groups. Beyond communication with Governing Board and other groups, we would also try to connect people on different events that would be happening across the state that they may be interested in. Okay, Michael. Here is a SurveyMonkey. If anybody would be interestd, you can click on that SurveyMonkey and fill out your information. This is not necessary you saying, "Okay, I'm agreeing to this." It's just something that we would like to be able to contact you and give you more information on it as we are planning on kind of really starting this thing up in July at the Transition Conference and next school year, obviously. Go ahead. Just to give you an idea of those who have expressed interest so far, we have been talking about this, I think, only for a few months that it's really been in development. Already we have had this list of schools or agencies that have been interested and that have contacted us to ask for more information. You can see by county that it really spreads across the state. We're already on the way to making a really great network of people to be able to communicate about inclusive leadership. Next slide. If you would like more information, then please fill out that SurveyMonkey because that will help us directly contact you. Additionally, you can visit pyn.org, which is still in process of putting more things on that website. As Everett had mentioned earlier, the imaleaderpa.org for more information specifically on that project. You could also contact Everett Deibler at that e-mail or myself at the e-mail below.

>> A question came in just regarding funding. Ali, I don't know if I can address that a little bit. Most of the funding does come in through special projects that PYLN has been involved with. [INAUDIBLE] Valley Center for Independent Living is now the fiscal agent for PYLN. They help to facilitate those funds. As an affiliate group however, the funding would need to come from your own organization. There is funding that is going to go on to the affiliate groups. What PYLN and the Governing Board is able to do is maintain the website, maintain the materials that are available. It's not going to be able to fund local affiliate groups. With that, Ali, we'll move into the additional takeaways.

>> Yes. Michael, Everett had mentioned to put the SurveyMonkey in the chat box too, so that people could maybe access it a little easier.

>> Sure. I can do that.

>> Thank you. We just want to kind of wrap up with additional thoughts and summaries about what we discussed today. This whole webinar, the reason people are on this is because we want to talk about getting youth engaged. We have listed here some things that occur when youth are most engaged. When youth feel like they're being listened to, they're very engaged. This is more than just the nods and the "Uh-huh, okay, sure, Jenny, we hear you." This means really acting on what you're hearing from them. Make them feel supported in that way. We talked a bit earlier too about making their own decisions, not just telling youth what to do with regards to their own life, but allowing them to make decisions and potentially fail and also be successful. When they are being respected, they feel engaged. That's all a part of that listening and allowing them to lead their own life. When they're a part of the conversation, I think many times we talk about this in relation to IEP meetings and how our students are in the IEP meetings, but they're not really a part of what's being discussed when really, they're the subject of the whole meeting. Not being judged is another thing. This could include a number of things: Not being judged about the different aspects of their disability, but also not being judged that they're a young person. I was in class the other day. One of our professors had mentioned that youth are the most marginalized population that there is because people really don't listen to them or allow them to make decisions. Asking their opinions, allowing them to be involved in the planning process. This one is most important to me: being spoken to in an age-appropriate manner. I think a rule that the PYLN tries to use at all times is to always assume that people are at a higher level. Then you can meet them where they are once you get to know them a bit better. Next slide. What are some of the challenges to youth engagement? Go ahead, Michael. There are plenty of misconceptions regarding youth. There are stereotypes about young people: That they're stubborn, that they don't know anything, that they aren't listening to you. Which sometimes, that may be true. A lot of times, youth really are listening. It might just take longer for them to really hear you and act on it. Other questions are why are young people left out of decisions that may directly affect them? I think it correlates directly back to some of the stereotypes. Also many of the adults that are helping youth, especially in schools and even in the community, they've been doing it for many years. They feel that they know how to best support the youth, which they do. Allowing the youth to have a voice as well may lead to better results. Perceived barriers in anybody's role to provide meaningful engagement to youth. A lot of times, we think of these barriers. We think that they're not able to be overcome. When we think creatively and work with the youth, they can be. Go ahead, Michael. Additionally, there are system limitations and just logistical issues that may come up when working with youth [INAUDIBLE]. There's obvious scheduling conflicts that can occur. Many people are at jobs from a certain time. That's when they can really get to supports for youth or have meetings with youth. Youth are in school or could be at work at that time. They need to have meetings, for example, at the end of the day. Being able to be flexible in that and work with people to find the best available time. Additionally, there's transportation issues. Youth who don't drive yet may need to have [INAUDIBLE] activities. Additionally, Youth with disabilities might have impairments that create boundaries for them to get transported to other places, even making sure the activities are accessible once you do transport them is important as well. That's part of the accommodations, being sure that they can participate in all of the activities. If there are speech barriers or physical barriers, making sure that you address those needs and that they're able to participate. Now we're gonna list some key components of a successful youth engagement program. We talked a lot about this today, about being youth-driven. That doesn't just mean, okay [INAUDIBLE]. If little Johnny is

the head of a group and you're saying that, then you really need to support that, allowing whoever is the leader to be able to speak and to make decisions. That might be with the whole group as well, allowing them to really participate and to drive the conversation and drive the activities. Additionally, they're usually needs-based. Thinking about the needs of group and working towards not only accommodating them so that they can create a program or be engaged in some kind of project, but also that the activities of the program or project are related to that. You want to offer a safe and neutral atmosphere. Be sure that you engage parents, peers, teachers and others in the community. This is something that we have found over the years that while we want to be youth-driven, and we are, and we focus on the youth voice, it doesn't really work unless you have the parents and other peers and teachers really on board with the whole idea. We want to help to develop critical life skills, including work skills. Make sure that you're up-to-date on information of issues critical to youth. Something that may have been an issue previously may not be the most salient issue for them now. You want to help them develop social networking and language skills. Social networking and the Internet in general is so huge nowadays that it's really important to work with youth on how to engage with that activity appropriately. You also want to provide opportunities for civic advocacy and service projects, which we spoke of a little bit earlier about that idea of giving back and really engaging with their community can create them to be more engaged for their project in general. Some more key components include engaging youth in the design, implementation and evaluation. This means from the ground up, really including the youth in the different programs that you may want to start, or any kind of group [INAUDIBLE] challenge. Making sure you meet the needs of all of the members. Build connections among youth across societal divides, ensuring that these connections are genuine and that you recognize the differences between the youth that are in your group, but fostering connections between them that are real. Provide opportunities for youth to take the lead. Not just one person, but people in the whole group. As adults, stepping back a little bit and allowing them to do so. Combining learning and social action with fun activities. Not just work, but also being able to have fun and work towards some kind of goal. All that sort of builds skills and self-confidence. Additional key components includes the pursuit of partnerships, businesses, government and community partners. I heard a bit from the McFriends about how they're joining in with the Lions Club. They're asking different people in their community to help support this project that they're working on. That really leads to successful programs. Working with public officials to create a positive, enabling environment. It's these pieces of getting everybody on board with your idea and with your work, which will keep the youth engaged as well as allow your program to be successful. Providing good volunteer and paid opportunities for employment, raising visibility in the community and recognizing their contributions. Not only allowing the youth voice to be heard within the group, but allowing the community and people around them to hear what they have to say and what they're doing. Lastly, building social capital.

>> Hang on one second. Thank you, Ali. I appreciate you and Everett presenting today both on the PYLN information, but I think as well as how to best engage youth in this process and develop meaningful youth leadership types of programs. Just wanted to close with a couple of reminders. Our next webinar in this webinar series for this year is coming up on April 27th. The topic is going to be Assistive Technology for Youth with Complex Needs. I also wanted to remind folks that our annual transition conference call is occurring this summer, July 20th through the 22nd at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College. Look for the conference brochure and that information regarding family and youth scholarships sometime around the middle of May. We're targeting around May 16th for that. You'll be able to find that information both on secondarytransition.organization as well as the pattan.net website. I want to thank you for joining us on today's webinar. Please plan on joining us for our last session later this month. Also as a reminder, this session, as well as the other sessions in this series, have been recorded. This session will be closed captioned and posted along with the others in this series. It

usually takes a couple weeks. Look for that on both the PaTTAN website as well as secondarytransition.org. If you have any additional questions, my contact information is on the last slide. I want to thank all of the presenters for today, the folks from McGuffey School District, Special Olympics and PYLN, Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living. Thank you for joining us today. Thank you for your participation in today's webinar. Have a great rest of the day.