

JHC REPORT • VOLUME 7

THE HARLESS REPORT

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY JUNE HARLESS CENTER FOR RURAL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT





JUNE HARLESS CENTER

**June Harless Center for Rural
Educational Research and Development**

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THE HARLESS REPORT

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The June Harless Center has been proudly serving the state of West Virginia for over two decades. In this edition of the June Harless Center report, we share current projects and celebrate the partnerships that serve as a catalyst for innovation. As an educational outreach center for the College of Education and Professional Development, our team is committed to providing the best resources and support to educators and children. We are grateful for all opportunities to serve.

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Message from the Director



Tarabeth Heineman, Ed.D.
Executive Director

I believe it is time for some optimism. We have weathered serious storms in our professional and personal lives in the recent years. In the news and in our own communities, we watched a pandemic lead to so much loss, and in the educational world, that translated to learning loss. According to Harvard Magazine, in an article titled Post-COVID Learning Loss (June 2023), “Math, reading, and history scores from the past three years show that students experienced a significant decline in learning during the pandemic. By the spring of 2022, the average student was lagging by approximately one-half year in math and one-third of a year in reading.” Even without the studies, we knew the impact that remote learning would have on our students. On a brighter note, it was through the pandemic that children demonstrated their resiliency and teachers proved their work in the classroom makes a huge difference in the lives of children and families.

Helen Keller once said, “Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.” My message is for all of us, in all our roles, to build a culture of optimism. This can be done in our classrooms, our school buildings, our communities, and our homes. We must help children believe they can achieve and build their confidence as they develop.

So, start simple. Here are a few helpful tips to shift to an optimistic mindset.

1. Expect the best.
2. Celebrate wins — even the small ones.
3. Take a positive view — a growth mindset perhaps.
4. Make every day count.
5. Be an encourager.
6. Appreciate yourself.
7. Don't forget to have some fun.

In this edition of the Harless Report, I hope you see the work that educators and students are doing in West Virginia and are encouraged by the innovation, determination, and learning that are occurring. We will certainly go further together if we can commit to building a positive culture where children and adults thrive. It is time for an abundance of optimism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tarabeth B. Heineman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Tarabeth Heineman, Ed.D.
Executive Director

PARTNERSHIPS FOR INNOVATION

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” – Helen Keller

This report features programs and projects of the June Harless Center. We want to recognize that innovation would not be possible without our dedicated and collaborative partners. West Virginia is fortunate to have many resources that are invaluable to our educational system, our educators, and our students. We are compelled to first acknowledge those partners who do so much to improve the lives of children in West Virginia.

Behavior Mental Health Technical Assistance Center
Cabell County Schools
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
Explorer Academy
Fayette County Schools
Florida International University
The Giving Palm
Hardy County
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Heritage Farm
Higher Education Policy Commission
Huntington Children's Museum
Jackson County Schools
Logan County Schools
Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center
Mingo County Schools
Marshall University College of Education and Professional Development
National Youth Science Academy
Science Adventure School
Southern Regional Education Board
STEAM Technical Assistance Center
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center
Upshur County Schools
Wayne County Schools
West Virginia Board of Education
West Virginia Department of Education
West Virginia Education Association
West Virginia Public Education Collaborative
Worldreader
Wyoming County Schools



JUNE HARLESS CENTER

Harless History

2000

Establishment of the June Harless Center (JHC) for Rural Educational Research and Development as a result of a gift from Buck Harless in memory of his late wife, June

2001

JHC Demonstration Site opens in Wayne County to focus on best practices for K-1 reading

2002

First Harless Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony honoring Dr. Bernard Queen, Mr. Buck Harless, and Dr. Jane McKee

2006

Science Inquiry for Teachers (SIFT) Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Project is funded for \$44K to provide professional learning in inquiry-based science to 12 elementary schools in Wayne and Mason Counties (FOSS Science)

2007

New pilot K-5 model wing opened at Kellogg Elementary in Wayne County

2008

Shewey Science Academy established and funded by Fred C. Shewey and his sons, Bill and Robert

2012

Collaborative grant between Cabell County and MU Early Education STEAM Center funds a study abroad experience to Reggio Emilia, Italy

2013

Transforming Transitions grant partnership with Cabell County Schools funded by the Benedum Foundation focusing on pre-k to kindergarten transitions

2014

MU Early Education STEAM Center expands to satellite location at Peyton Elementary

2017

MU Early Education STEAM Center partners with Logan County Schools to create a pilot pre-k classroom at Chapmanville Elementary

2018

Marshall University Early Education STEAM Center at Explorer Academy is recognized as the first NAEYC Accredited pre-k site in a public school building in West Virginia

2019

JHC assumes the management of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for the state of West Virginia

2022

The JHC and WVDE hosted singer, songwriter, actress and early childhood literacy advocate Dolly Parton to celebrate the successful statewide implementation of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library at the Clay Center in Charleston, West Virginia

2023

The JHC is granted extra space in Corbly Hall at Marshall University and expands the Marshall University Early Education STEAM center to include children ages 2-3

Harless History

2003

Verizon gifts \$100,000 to continue the expansion of distance learning education targeted in McDowell and Mingo counties

2005

JHC staff travels to the Dominican Republic to provide rural educational outreach

2006

JHC and WVDE collaborate to host the first Reading Higher Education Symposium

2009

Appalachian Math/Science Partnership funds project with five counties to provide extensive science professional learning to teachers and administrators

2010

JHC takes over the management of the MU Early Education Center on MU's Huntington campus, renaming the pre-k site the "MU Early Education STEAM Center"

2011

Partnership with the CREATE Lab at Carnegie Mellon University establishes the June Harless CREATE Satellite

2014

JHC partners with Cabell County schools to create an incubator school that follows the EL Education model

2015

WVDE and JHC partner to create the West Virginia Leaders of Literacy: Campaign for Grade Level Reading

2016

Annual Statewide Campaign for Grade Level Reading Conference is established

2020

JHC is awarded \$250,000 from the Benedum Foundation to assist teachers as they support student learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

2021

Micro-credentialing program launches in Fayette and Summers counties focusing on mathematics instruction for elementary educators

2021

JHC named WVDE Early Learning Technical Assistance Center and expanded from five to six early and elementary learning specialists

EARLY AND ELEMENTARY LEARNING

Ready, Read, Write, West Virginia

In response to House Bill 3035, the Third Grade Success Act, passed in 2023, the West Virginia Department of Education created a new literacy initiative, *Ready, Read, Write, West Virginia*. This initiative is a collaborative effort bringing together educators, community leaders, and stakeholders from across the state. It is rooted in the science of reading, a body of research conducted over the last several decades that proves how the brain learns to become a proficient reader and writer. The science of reading includes what are known as the five pillars of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

The initiative was first introduced with a series of videos and a new website that launched in December 2022. It was elevated over the summer by INVEST 2023, a set of conferences conducted in both Morgantown and Charleston to provide professional learning to teachers and principals from across the state. To support the implementation of the science of reading statewide, county teams were created and provided science of reading content training at four regional conferences. Since then, all counties across West

Virginia have created plans to implement the science of reading in their districts. These plans include appropriate assessments to provide overall information regarding a student's proficiency in grade-level content as well as detailed information relative to the skills needed to master reading.

In collaboration with the WVDE, the literacy specialists at the June Harless Center have provided professional learning to educators at the aforementioned

conferences and are currently working with counties to support and strengthen their plans. We are excited to support the state initiative to increase literacy proficiency for all students.

To learn more about *Ready, Read, Write, West Virginia*, visit the website at wvde.us/ready-read-write.



West Virginia Phonics and Word Recognition Standards Companion: The design and implementation of a new tool for elementary teachers

With the support of the West Virginia Department of Education and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, literacy specialists organized and conducted a phonics cohort with 40 first- and second-grade educators to assess the overall effectiveness of the “West Virginia Phonics and Word Recognition Standards Companion,” which the team developed earlier this year.

The literacy specialists hosted a one-day training with participants at the West Virginia Reading Association Conference and provided in-depth information on how to use the West Virginia Phonics and Word Recognition Standards Companion while also providing literacy kits for each participant to use during small group phonics instruction. Additionally, the cohort will meet three times for technical assistance and guided conversations on how the resources are being used and what challenges/successes the educators are having.

In collaboration with the participants, the literacy specialists will collect classroom

data to not only analyze student outcomes from those who received supplemental phonics instruction using the provided resources and those who did not, but also to learn more about the perceptions and experiences of the first- and second-grade teachers regarding the effectiveness of the resources in improving early literacy skills among their students.

The cohort will plan to come together one last time to reflect and analyze the student data and receive teacher input in order to further refine the tools. You can find the resources at www.marshall.edu/harless.



Fostering a love of reading through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library



This year, to celebrate the first “Dolly Day” in West Virginia, The June Harless Center hosted a statewide read-aloud of a popular book from the program. Over 50 partners in various locations across the state invited families to join them for a read-aloud event to celebrate the program and to help spread a love of reading. Here on campus, Baseball Head Coach Greg Beals read “Find Fergus” to a group of local children to commemorate Dolly Day.

The June Harless Center also hosted an inaugural Dolly Dash at Ritter Park in Huntington, West Virginia, on Aug. 12, 2023, to promote and raise money for

Imagination Library in West Virginia. Over 100 participants walked or ran in support of the program, some of them being dressed as Dolly. The event raised over \$35,000, which will sponsor just shy of 300 children for the lifetime of the program, from birth to age 5.

The June Harless Center's continued partnership with the West Virginia Department of Education and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library fosters a love of reading among West Virginia's youngest children. If you would like to help support and sustain the program in our state, please visit: wvde.us/west-virginias-imagination-library.

Built on decades of research, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is rooted in the belief that having books in the home helps children develop literacy skills early in life. By providing children with high-quality books starting at birth, the program creates a positive impact on both literacy skills and early childhood development.

More than 60,000 West Virginia children under 5 years old are registered to receive a free book each month through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program. The free books are offered to all children in the state, from birth to age 5, regardless of family income.

Last year during a special event where Dolly Parton visited Charleston, West Virginia, to celebrate the statewide expansion of the program, Gov. Jim Justice declared Aug. 9 as Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Day.



Three-year pilot shows promising results

In partnership with the West Virginia Department of Education, the June Harless Center employs Instructional Support Specialists (ISS) in three West Virginia counties: Braxton, Hardy, and Upshur.

This three-year pilot project supports selected educators who serve children in Grades 1 and 2. The goal of this project is to use the coaching model to improve instructional practices and close the reading gap in the primary grades. Literacy specialists at the June Harless Center provide training, support, and mentoring for the ISS. The three ISS work with educators to help transform classrooms into highly engaging and effective learning environments focused on high-quality, evidence-based

literacy instruction. They also provide professional learning for their educators, schools, and county.

In the 2022-2023 school year, the specialists focused on providing instructional support and completing coaching cycles with their educators to support student achievement in literacy. Collectively, the three instructional support specialists collectively completed 14 coaching cycles that resulted in improved student outcomes. The specialists focused on the following teacher-selected goals: oral reading fluency for struggling first graders, increased student engagement in whole group and small group lessons, sentence structure in writing, and progress monitoring of phonics lessons.

One major focus at Hodgesville Elementary School in Upshur County was improving phonics instruction. When asked about the progress made at her school, Principal Sharon Lewis said, "We saw growth last year and are already seeing more growth this year. Our students are not just reading, but they understand the words and why they sound the way they do. This project has created deeper knowledge for both staff and students."

We are excited to see the continued growth of educators and students who play a role in this pilot and know we are one step closer to closing the reading achievement gap by providing an enhanced, intentionally focused coaching model that can be replicated across the state.

Donate Now: Imagination Library for ALL WV Children

Give the Gift of Reading

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
JUNE HARLESS CENTER

IMAGINATION LIBRARY
WEST VIRGINIA

— YOU CAN NEVER GET ENOUGH BOOKS INTO THE HANDS OF ENOUGH CHILDREN —

Dolly

Check the first Box: *I would like to designate to a specific Imagination Library affiliate.*

Choose West Virginia - any County



EARLY EDUCATION STEAM CENTER

Expanding our Early Childhood Program

The MUEE STEAM Center was established in 2010 as an exemplary model of innovation and early childhood education. On Oct. 2, 2023, we proudly opened a third classroom to complement our two existing universal Pre-K sites. While our flagship classrooms are collaborative with Cabell County Schools and serve children ages 3-5, our newest room enrolls children between the ages of 2 and 3 only.

The new classroom is located in Room 103 of Corbly Hall, formerly the Edge Center, and was previously office-type space used by college students. In the summer of 2023, Marshall University's provost, Dr. Avi Muhkerjee, advocated for the MUEE STEAM Center to procure the recently vacated room and soon after, the Marshall University Physical Plant received approvals to begin renovations to transform the office space into an early childhood classroom.



Our vision for a functional and beautiful space for children to learn and play became a reality two short months later when we opened our doors to the community. The environment, inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, is set up to be the "third teacher." When children entered on our opening day, the walls were a blank canvas to be filled with their own artwork as the year progressed. Children in our program feel a sense of ownership when they see their personal work adorn the walls. Children feel pride and learn responsibility and independence because the materials they need are intentionally and accessibly placed throughout the room.

Soft lighting and a variety of comfortable spaces to sit and play create a calm atmosphere we believe to be conducive to learning. A priority of our classroom teacher, Mrs. Stacy Hacker-Hicks, is to incorporate the natural world as much as possible into daily routines inside the classroom. On any given day, children can be observed working with materials such as wood, water or sand. They are encouraged to explore the world around them by bringing the outside in, as well as taking ample time to investigate the natural beauty our campus has to offer.



Our center holds the belief that all children deserve access to high-quality education, and our staff believes that it is the right of every child to be able play.

"Being able to open a classroom to a severely underserved sector of the early childhood community means opening more opportunities for toddlers to learn through play," Hacker-Hicks explained. "Most infant and toddler programs struggle financially to maintain accreditation and qualified staff that allows a play-based approach to thrive. We're really blessed to have had overwhelming support from our university to meet both of these requirements for high-quality childcare."

This classroom is licensed to serve 12 2- and 3-year-old children and after just one month of being open, we filled the classroom and have started a waiting list for future school years. Our toddler program is open 7:45 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, 12

months a year. Priority enrollment is offered to Marshall University students, staff and faculty, but we accept applications from the community at large.

We are thrilled to be able to expand and give more children in our area the opportunity to learn through play in a child-directed environment. It is equitable for our community to help raise and support children to be active problem-solvers, innovators and leaders. With this new classroom, we are furthering our mission to make sure all children have access to high-quality education and hope to empower our children and support the economic and communal growth at Marshall University.

For more information about our program, contact our program coordinator, Mrs. Kelcie Blankenship, at jones506@marshall.edu.

"Early childhood education is all about young children making connections to the outside world and creating neural pathways for future learning. Every experience at this age helps shape the brain and sets children up for success socially and academically. For younger children who are not yet able to think abstractly, it's more beneficial to offer real, tangible materials to make connections. When you bring the outdoors in or the indoors out, they're able to make stronger connections to their culture and community that they can continue to build on well into adulthood."

-Lead Studio Educator,
Stacy Hacker-Hicks



Inspiring Reggio practices

Early childhood educators in Upshur County have been working to transform the Pre-K learning environment. Not only are they focused on changing the physical space, but also transforming their philosophy to be more developmentally appropriate. During the 2022-2023 school year, Upshur County educators participated in on-site visits at the Marshall University Early Education STEAM Center. During these visits, they had time to observe and interact with children who were engaged in project work, early literacy and numeracy experiences, and outdoor learning opportunities. After each observation, the visiting teachers and administrators participated in debrief sessions to discuss next steps and how to implement new ideas into their daily practice.

Educators in Upshur County are continuing this journey during the 2023-2024 school year. In fall 2023, they attended professional learning workshops focused on best practices in early childhood education including implementing a Reggio-Inspired approach, creating an environment that serves as the third teacher, and creating developmentally appropriate learning experiences that integrate the West Virginia Early Learning Standards through science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math.



Working with county school systems is a great opportunity for early childhood education outreach across the state. We are confident that the transformation in Upshur County Pre-K classrooms will inspire other schools and districts to partner in the future.

If your school or district is interested in professional learning for early childhood education, please contact Mrs. Elizabeth Crawford at houck26@marshall.edu.



“The partnership between the June Harless Center and Upshur County Pre-K classrooms has encouraged our teachers to focus on Reggio Emilia-inspired practices. Teachers have been asked to reflect on their view of children, how the classroom environment supports children’s independence and exploration, and how documentation can illustrate the classroom experiences.”

– Lori Woods,
Pre-K Supervisor, Upshur County Schools

“The June Harless Center at Marshall University has been fundamental to the integration of Reggio Emilia practices into our Pre-K classroom at Hodgesville Elementary School in Upshur County. Before Upshur County collaborated with the June Harless Center, the thought of navigating how to change my mindset, environment, and teaching practices to reflect those of Reggio Emilia seemed unattainable and daunting; however, with this mentorship, I’ve been able to transform our classroom environment into one that serves as the third teacher, prepare open-ended provocations for our students, and shift my frame of mind. I am forever grateful for the June Harless Center staff members who have and continue to guide me in my journey as a Reggio Emilia-inspired educator.”

–Taylor Tenney,
PreK Teacher, Upshur County Schools

Outdoor Learning: “There’s no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothing”

One of the primary goals of the Marshall University Early Education STEAM Center is to provide engaging, relevant experiences in the outdoor learning environment. While children take on the role of active participants, educators are viewed as facilitators of learning by asking open-ended questions to extend the learning, setting up inviting provocations, and helping children make connections. The children are offered a variety of opportunities to explore their natural world. The outdoor learning environment is considered to be anywhere the children can investigate and discover new findings. It’s important to us to provide children the opportunity to get outside, no matter the weather. Going on walks is a favorite experience of the children, whether it’s walking to the local fire station, running with the squirrels on campus,



measuring the growth in the garden, dancing in the rain, using clipboards to tally the number of bugs found, or experimenting with ice when it’s cold. While outside, children explore cause-and-effect, collaborate with peers, take risks, engage in cooperative play, and ignite all their senses.

“I love exploring the outdoors with children because it sparks a love for learning. It invites the children to freely explore, move, and discover the world around them,” said Holly Adkins, lead studio educator at Explorer Academy. “Children have the right to learn outdoors and



experience all types of weather. Working in the rain or snow teaches the children how to dress appropriately and make safe choices while still laughing and learning with their friends.”



K-12 STEAM OUTREACH

Collaboration and inquiry

Our STEAM Team is implementing two collaborative inquiry projects that allow educators from across the educational leadership spectrum to bring their collective experience and expertise to bear on issues of student achievement. Funding from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation has allowed members of our staff to be trained in two processes developed by the Harvard University Graduate School of Education—Instructional Rounds and Data Wise.

INSTRUCTIONAL ROUNDS

Instructional Rounds are a collaborative professional learning strategy. The practice—borrowed from medical schools and teaching hospitals—engages a network of educators to objectively observe and analyze current instructional practices related to the host school’s self-identified problem of practice. The rounds process lets the group identify pervasive patterns of practice that empower or impair transformative learning and ultimately compare where the school is vs. where it wants to

be. The network then co-designs recommendations for moving instructional practice forward to close the gap between the theory of action and theories in practice.

Our team, in collaboration with the Office of District/School Improvement at the West Virginia Department of Education, has been piloting the implementation of rounds in four counties. We have been building and training a network that consists of teachers and administrators from the host schools, district office staff, educators from other districts, and staff members from the WVDE and June Harless Center. To date, over 75 educators have been trained.

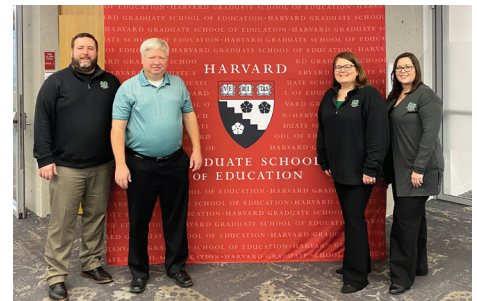
DATA WISE

Staff members attended a weeklong Data Wise workshop at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education learning this approach with educators and system leaders from around the world. Each day consisted of a deep dive into the Prepare, Inquire, and Act stages of the program and collaborating with

Harvard Graduate School faculty and Data Wise coaches to develop a framework for sharing this approach with West Virginia educators.

The Data Wise Improvement Process is a comprehensive and practical approach to using data to measure, understand, and improve student learning in schools. This model helps educators and district leaders identify student learning needs, develop and enact instructional interventions, and measure the effectiveness of those solutions.

Both programs are designed to empower educators to collectively move instruction forward so EACH WV student can thrive.



Strong partnerships lead to statewide STEAMPOSIUM



After months of planning and collaboration, a statewide, workshop-style conference focused on science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics became a reality in July 2023. A team composed of educators from the June Harless Center, the STEAM Technical Assistance Center (STEAM TAC) at the West Virginia Public Education Collaborative, and the Office of Student Enrichment at the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) hosted STEAMPOSIUM free of charge to PK-12 STEAM educators at the Stonewall Resort in Roanoke, West Virginia.

Nearly 200 educators from across West Virginia came together to expand their skills in hands-on STEAM learning at the third STEAMPOSIUM Conference. When STEAMPOSIUM was initially created, sessions were focused only on early education. Through strong partnerships, the conference has evolved in the third year to include PreK – 12th grade STEAM content. The one-day conference kicked off with a thought-provoking keynote address from Gregg Behr, founder and co-chair of Remake Learning, and Ryan Rydzewski of the Grable Foundation. Gregg and Ryan are co-authors of

“When You Wonder, You’re Learning,” an exploration of the beloved Mr. Rogers’ tools for learning that have been deemed essential for schools.

Participants were also offered small, personalized grade-level workshops, standards-based lessons focused on enhancing students’ critical thinking and problem-solving, and the opportunity to network with fellow educators and STEAM specialists. Topics for sessions provided by the June Harless staff included utilizing STEAM to solve real-world problems, integrating STEAM into the outdoor classroom, Reggio-inspired practices and connecting through STEAM exploration, and combining literacy with STEAM experiences. Additional sessions allowed participants to work with specialists from the STEAM TAC to engage in middle and high school emersions. Other relevant sessions were provided by WVDE Career and Technical Education staff.

Without the coordinated effort of several entities, this conference would not have been possible. Donna Peduto, executive director of the West Virginia

Public Education Collaborative, shared the importance of collaboration to offer excellent professional learning opportunities for West Virginia teachers.

“The dynamic partnership between the June Harless Center and the STEAM Technical Assistance Center provided the expertise and synergy to create a hands-on atmosphere that enabled WV educators to learn in the same manner they want their students to experience,” she said.

Collaborators are planning for the next iteration of the STEAMPOSIUM conference for the summer of 2024.



Clay2Go collaboration nurtures a passion for STEM subjects



of the public. The success of the program underscores the importance of building partnerships dedicated to enhancing STEM education through unique and engaging opportunities.

The collaboration between the Clay Center, Cabell County Schools, and the June Harless Center reflects a shared commitment to inspiring a new generation of curious minds and ultimately shaping a brighter future for students in West Virginia.

The joint efforts of the Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences of West Virginia, Cabell County Schools, and the June Harless Center allowed students to immerse themselves in the world of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through interactive exhibits and activities.

Cabell County Schools hosted the inaugural stop of the Clay Center's mobile STEM exhibit at

the Huntington Mall throughout November. Staff members from the June Harless Center provided additional, complementary hands-on activities. Together, these explorations allowed students to engage and experiment in a dynamic environment that brought STEM concepts to life in an accessible and enjoyable way.

This exhibition hosted over 1,900 students and 300 members



Second annual STEAM challenges double in size

The second annual June Harless Center Cardboard Boat Regatta saw the cardboard navy double in size. This year's event expanded to include middle and high school categories. Participants designed and constructed their vessels with only cardboard and duct tape. The boats were then raced in at Marshall University's Frederick A. Fitch Natatorium. Over 30 local students participated in the event.

This year's pumpkin drop, held as part of Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center's WV Makes Festival, was a towering success. The event tested the engineering design skills of local elementary and middle school students. Firefighters from the Huntington Fire Department's University Fire Station once again brought their tower ladder to campus to serve as the ten-story test platform. A rainy day could not stop over 60

pumpkin protection devices from being tested as teams from Martha Elementary School and Ironton Elementary School emerged victorious.



Elementary math credentialing multiplies

The elementary mathematics credentialing process continues to gain traction in districts in West Virginia. This year, the June Harless Center has partnered with Fayette and Mingo counties to focus on mathematics professional learning that is standards-focus and action-oriented. Initial plans are being made to expand this work to additional cohorts in the fall of 2024.

Based on data from the initial cohort and the sustained improvement seen in classroom lessons and videos, the program continues to make an impact on teacher efficacy and student success. In Fayette County, participants of the cohort continue to see student scores above the county average as measured by their benchmarking assessment. On the West Virginia General Summative Assessment, students of teachers in the credentialing process had an average proficiency rate that was seven percentage points higher than the county average.

In their first year of the process, Mingo County teachers are also noticing the difference that the elementary mathematics credentialing process is making in their classrooms. Jeremy Davis, a teacher at Burch Prek-8, shared that as a teacher who spent many years learning how to teach kindergarten math well, he felt like he was prepared for the task.

“When I was transferred into a position requiring me to start new with fourth-grade curriculum, I wasn’t sure how to translate my love for manipulatives, math games, and centers to the fourth-grade curriculum effectively,” he said. “Working through the elementary math credentialing program through the June Harless Center has helped me gain not only the skills to do so, but the confidence to translate the things I did in lower elementary to upper elementary without second guessing myself.”



Teachers in this process are gaining confidence through knowledge of the mathematics content and standards. They work through the material, engage in the math they will teach, and are provided ideas and materials to make lessons come alive for students – moving from the concrete to the abstract. Another Mingo County teacher shared, “The math credentialing has been a great way to help me step out of my comfort level

and do math centers with my third-graders. I’m really enjoying all this has to offer and feel like it has brought a lot into my classroom.”

Elementary mathematics credentialing was designed to increase the capabilities of teachers and students. Enhancing students’ mathematical learning at the earliest levels leads to stronger math students at the upper levels. Teachers enrolled in this program will participate in over 70 hours of in-person, practice-based professional learning focused on the elementary portion of the West Virginia College- and Career- Readiness for Mathematics standards and the Mathematical Habits of Mind.

These standards are divided into five clusters requiring 12 days of interactive and collaborative workshops. These sessions provide the teachers the opportunity to actively collaborate with colleagues in content-focused activities that model effective practices. Ultimately, it is the reflection of their practice that allows them to grow as increasingly successful educators. The teachers receive continued support from experts in mathematics education through the June Harless Center.

Hall of Fame

Harless Hall of Fame Inductees

Eighteenth Annual - 2023

Mr. David L. Roach
Senator Amy Nichole Grady
West Virginia Public Education
Collaborative
The National Youth Science Academy

Seventeenth Annual - 2022

Mr. Dan Mollette
Ms. Dolly Parton
First Lady Cathy Justice
Drs. Stan and Barbara Maynard

Sixteenth Annual - 2019

Mr. Robert, Jr. and Mrs. Lena Shell
Drs. Joseph and Omayma Touma
Mrs. Katherine Johnson

Fifteenth Annual - 2018

Mr. W. Clayton Burch
NASA Independent Verification
(IV&V) Educator Resource Center
Mr. Brad and Mrs. Alys Smith

Fourteenth Annual - 2016

Dr. Robert Hayes
Robert C. Byrd Institute
Mr. Gary White

Thirteenth Annual - 2015

Mr. Ron Berger
First Lady Joanne Jaeger Tomblin
West Virginia Women's Education Forum

Twelfth Annual - 2014

Dr. Kathy D'Antoni
Mr. Michael J. Farrell, Esquire
Southern Regional Education Board

Eleventh Annual - 2013

Gov. Gaston Caperton
Dr. Illah Nourbakhsh
Mr. A. Michael and Mrs. Henriella Perry

Tenth Annual - 2012

Gen. Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong
Sen. Lloyd G. Jackson II
U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller

Ninth Annual - 2011

Gov. Bob Wise
Cabell County School System
Frontier Communications

Eighth Annual - 2010

Dr. Lowell E. Johnson
Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin
Mr. Ralph Baxter

Seventh Annual - 2009

U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, III
Dr. Jack McClanahan
Dr. Rosalyn Templeton

Sixth Annual - 2008

Representative Mary M. Poling
Mr. C. Fred Shewey
Wayne County School System

Fifth Annual - 2006

Dr. Ruby Payne
Dr. Steven Paine
Pendleton County School System

Fourth Annual - 2005

First Lady Gayle Manchin
Dr. Keith Smith
Claude Worthington Benedum
Foundation

Third Annual - 2004

Mrs. Lydia McCue
Mr. David Ice
Sen. Robert Plymale

Second Annual - 2003

Mrs. Beverly Kingery
Mr. Jimmy D. Hale
Verizon

First Annual - 2002

Dr. Jane McKee
Dr. Bernard Queen
Mr. James "Buck" Harless

Each year outstanding educators and agencies are recognized for their commitment to improving WV education during the annual Hall of Fame dinner and induction ceremony. During the ceremony, educators and agencies are inducted into the Harless Center Hall of Fame as a way to show appreciation and give recognition to educators contributing to the West Virginia education system, particularly in Southern West Virginia. Inductees typically include one educator, one administrator, and one business/educational partner or organization that has provided exemplary leadership to ensure the success of the education of all students in West Virginia.

James “Buck” Harless (1919-2014)



James “Buck” Harless always supported and encouraged the initiatives of the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development. The June Harless Center was named in honor of Buck’s late wife, June Montgomery Harless. June and Buck built Gilbert Hardwoods, located in the heart of the West Virginia coal fields, into a successful international company. This resulted in countless individuals and organizations benefiting from their philanthropic efforts. Buck and June were both instrumental in the development and construction of a unique \$8.8 million center, the Larry Joe

Harless Community Center, named for their late son. The center, located in Gilbert WV, is believed by many to have changed the very face and culture of southern West Virginia.

Buck always believed in the importance of education and was a generous benefactor of educational initiatives including the June Harless Center. The mission of the June Harless Center, which reflects the philosophy of both Buck and the late June Harless, is to provide leadership in education initiatives for West Virginia educators and students. The Harless Center provides educators and families of rural West Virginia with a support system that addresses educational problems, initiates and sustains school improvement, and provides innovative and creative programming for Pre-K through grade 12 students, teachers, and administrators. The Harless Center staff members have developed exemplary programs in professional development in every curricular area and in numerous delivery methods as well as instructional programs for students that provide for exciting, engaging, and productive classrooms. These programs and many others represent a salute to Buck for his unwavering support of the June Harless Center and its outreach to students, teachers, administrators and families across West Virginia.

Buck has always believed in the importance of education and has been a generous benefactor of educational initiatives including the June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development.





June Harless Center for Rural Educational
Research and Development
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Huntington, West Virginia 25755

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