

TRANSITIONING TO NEW LEARNING MODEL

Educators get head start on new science standards



Robert Inglis/The Daily Item

Teachers Shane Corrigan, left, Mount Carmel, and Elizabeth VanDerpool, right, Wyalusing, talk with Ron Antinori, the regional manager for Activate Learning, at the CSIU on Monday, about new science teaching materials.

State updated standards in legislation passed in May

By Robert Inglis
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MONTANDON — For the first time in two decades, science standards taught in Pennsylvania schools are about to change, and dozens of Valley educators went looking for a head start on Monday.

The Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit on Monday hosted more than 60 educators and a dozen vendor partners for its first STEELS Curriculum Day. CSIU touted the event as a “unique opportunity for educators, administrators, and curriculum enthusiasts to gather in one location and explore a diverse range of high-quality STEELS (Science, Technology and Engineering, Environmental Literacy and Sustainability) curriculum offerings.”

The genesis of Monday’s event was Pennsylvania’s updated science



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Williamsport Area School District secondary curriculum supervisor Kristin Takach, left, talks with Amplify Science’s Laura Soeder about different science curriculum options at the CSIU on Monday.

standards passed last May. The new standards, set to go in effect on July

1, 2025, will mark a shift into more hands-on learning as opposed to

memorizing lectures or lessons out of a textbook.

The standard will be used from kindergarten to 12th grade.

Monday’s daylong event featured a mix of presentations and booths where those offering new-look curricula showed their next-generation educational tools.

“The teachers get a chance to see what the new looks like,” said Colleen Epler-Ruths, a STEM education consultant at CSIU. “We want kids to be able to discover and dig into content. We want them to understand the science rather than memorize words for a test.”

Jesse Wagner has spent 14 years as a physics teacher at Mount Carmel. He was joined by three other Mount Carmel teachers who attended to see what caught their

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attention as a potential replacement for long-standing education.

Wagner admitted the switch from traditional book lessons to hands-on, "will be tough for a lot of teachers, but is exciting for a lot of students. These hands-on activities, in a classroom, will be great," he said.

Typically, Wagner said, students will read and learn about processes in voluminous textbooks before moving into some sort of in-person practice. The

new standards change that approach.

"Sometimes these textbooks might have more math and some science. Now you're going right into the hands-on science," Wagner said. "The days of unnecessary background knowledge are gone; you get to experience it on day one now."

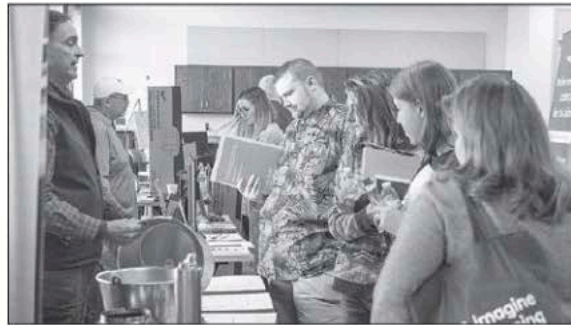
Ron Antinori, a regional manager for Activate Learning, was one of the vendors pitching his products to educators on Monday.

He appreciated the CSIU opening its doors and offering vendors a chance to make their

cases to teachers. He also noted the importance of the shift in how science will be taught moving forward.

"Everything is going to be hands-on," Antinori said. "Kids are supposed to learn science by doing. Imagine going to phys-ed class and never doing anything except watch videos and learn words."

"Most of our teachers do not have curriculum aligned with these new standards," Epler-Ruths said. "This new standard has content designed into them, but it's also about the practice of science."



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Teachers from different school districts look over new science curriculum material at the CSIU on Monday.