

CSIU paraeducators attend conference

ALMEDIA — Nearly 300 paraeducators from 13 area school districts gathered recently at the Central Columbia High School for a conference organized by the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU).

Paraeducators, or paraprofessionals, work alongside teachers to support and assist in providing instruction and other services to children and their families. Tasks may include assisting with class behavior management, assistance with day-to-day classroom activities, assisting with special needs students and more.

The two-day conference brought together paraeducators for professional development activities and networking with colleagues.

“This conference offers professional development to paraeducators related to their specific position within a school district and an opportunity to network with peers from other districts in the region” said Emily Smith, CSIU educational consultant.

The conference featured speakers on a variety of educational topics including behavior strategies, opioid abuse and stigma, trauma-informed care, bullying, autism, poverty, and more.

Sue Ohl, a paraeducator at Central Columbia School District, has attended the conference for the past three years and touted the breakout session “To Know One is to Know One” as her favorite session of this year’s conference.

“To Know One is to Know One” was presented by Barb Morgan, a CSIU special education teacher. The session allowed paraeducators to experience what it feels like to be on the autism spectrum and discover creative ways to guide students and continue to strive for inclusive practices in the classroom.

PA State Trooper Anthony Petroski presented “Bullying,” one of the most popular breakout sessions of the conference. During this interactive session,



Photo provided
State Trooper **Anthony Petroski** presented a breakout session on bullying at the CSIU’s 2019 Paraeducator conference.

emotional bullying videos and photos were shown, and conference participants were able to

ask questions on the hot topic, as well as share stories about bullying situations they may

have encountered within their own school district or families.

“What we have to remember is, the things kids say to each other or how someone thinks about them, is a big deal,” Petroski said.

The paraeducator conference is held every year at different locations throughout the region. The 2020 conference will be held in August at a location yet to be determined. For more information on paraeducators or special education, contact the CSIU at 570-523-1155.

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