

ICDL Provides Skills for Students at Pennsylvania's Intermediate Units

Pennsylvania's 29 intermediate units (IUs) were established in 1971 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly to operate as regional educational service agencies to provide cost-effective, management-efficient programs to Pennsylvania school districts. The intermediate units are entrepreneurial, highly skilled, technology-rich, and agile providers of cost-effective, instructional, and operational services to school districts, charter schools, and over 2,400 non-public and private schools. Additionally, intermediate units are direct providers of quality instruction to over 50,000 Pennsylvania students.

Over the years, intermediate units have responded to a wide array of needs as they developed in schools and communities throughout the state. Today, intermediate units continue to fulfill their mission of service by addressing traditional and emerging needs, serving as essential links for learning in Pennsylvania, and as a liaison between local schools and the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

In 2003 the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU), located in the city of Pittsburgh, introduced ICDL to teachers in western Pennsylvania by getting it approved for continuing education credits needed for maintaining teaching certifications. They also introduced it to their staff, encouraging staff to complete the ICDL certification program and rewarding those who did so with a 1% raise based on the knowledge that they could expect productivity to increase by at least 3%. In 2006, the AIU implemented ICDL in Pennsylvania State Corrections Institutions; helping soon to be released inmates obtain valuable computer skills.

Intermediate units that have recently implemented the ICDL certification program are the Tuscarora Intermediate Unit, Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, and the Capitol Area Intermediate Unit. These IUs offer education programs in juvenile correctional institutions and have begun offering ICDL in those facilities based on the recommendation of the PACTT Alliance.

ICDL is one of three basic certifications recommended by the PACTT Alliance. The mission of the Pennsylvania Academic and Career/Technical Training Alliance (PACTT) is to ensure that youths in correctional institutions receive rigorous, relevant and high-quality education that prepares them for graduation, post-secondary education and family-sustaining careers. They are further committed to ensuring that their education and employment opportunities continue seamlessly when they leave juvenile justice programs.

Jill Bargiel, a teacher at the Tuscarora intermediate unit, says that she particularly likes the flexibility that the ICDL certification program offers because students may be with the institution for just 60 days or they could be there much longer. Students can get a certificate after 4 modules or 7 modules are completed – and they can even complete the ICDL advanced modules if they have time. Jill has been giving ICDL presentations at state and regional conferences to help other IUs understand the value of the program. Additional intermediate units expect to implement the ICDL during the coming year.