

SPOTLIGHT ON

Muskingum Valley & Ohio Valley Educational Service Centers



In this interview, **Justin Denius**, director of Workforce Development, describes how the Muskingum Valley and Ohio Valley Educational Service Centers (ESCs) are using federal COVID-19 relief funds to help prepare students for the workforce.

Q: Why create a driving school?

COVID hit hard. Students aren't getting their driver's licenses. There is no public transportation in our area. Students either have no driving school to go to or have to travel a significant distance to get there. We have kids going as far as Columbus to go to a driving school. Not being able to drive can be the first barrier to workforce development.

Job shadowing, internships, a lot of that can't happen in our area without a driver's license.

Q: How has partnering with neighboring communities helped?

It's a regional approach. We know there is strength in numbers, our region is very spread out. **If we combine our resources, we can help the most students.** That's why our two ESCs are working together. We've partnered with the Departments of Jobs and Family Services in eight different counties so we can provide driver's education at no cost to low-income students.

Q: Have there been additional benefits since launching the driving school?

It's absolutely helped in other ways. It's helped with our attendance. Kids are showing up to school more often. With schools going back to in-person after COVID, getting everyone back in attendance was a challenge. **This is a great step forward to overcome that challenge.**

