


# Fellowship Program in Inclusive Education

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**2002 - 2003**



**The New Jersey  
Council on  
Developmental  
Disabilities**

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**T**he New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, Education Task Force is pleased to announce it's second group of Fellowship Award Winners for 2003. The goal of this program is to develop an active and highly diverse network of individuals who proactively embrace the principles of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and implement them in every aspect of their practices.

Fellowships of \$1,000 have been awarded to the successful nominees described here who have excelled in encouraging the inclusion of students with disabilities in all areas of school life, including academic and non-academic activities. Awards will be used to promote and expand their efforts.

These educators have fully embraced the concept that children with disabilities have the right to be educated in the least restrictive environment and have shown a commitment to making that concept a reality for their students. They have done this not in response to pressure from federal monitors or advocates for students with disabilities, but because they believe that this philosophy is the best way to educate all their students.

The Council's review committee — Orah Raia, Karen Melzer and Michele Ragunan — was impressed by the level of creativity and inspiration found in the winners. These educators show a deep understanding of what it means to provide a complete, well-rounded educational experience for all students. They speak best for themselves in these profiles and on their job everyday. They give us hope for the future of our children.

The Council is proud to present this second year of its Fellowship Awards by honoring these educators.



**2002 - 2003**

**Kate G. Redzinak —Special Education teacher**  
**Barkalow Middle School, Freehold**

The *Circles of Friends* is an elementary school program that promotes friendships and gives students the opportunity to develop relationships with other children who may have things in common with them and share diversity. The club promotes group dynamic situations where children are presented with opportunities to learn about their feelings towards other children. The group has produced a video that was used to promote friendships throughout all the elementary schools in the township and has assembled a “Friendship Guide” about ways of making and keeping friends. All students are welcome to participate.

The *Peer Buddy Program* has the goals of increasing social interactions between students in self-contained special education classes and students in general education classes in middle school. By interacting with one another on a regular basis, students with and without disabilities build friendships as they experience fun, activities together. Students are encouraged to invite each other to their lunch tables to enlarge their circles of friendships. The students also participate with their partners in typical middle school activities such as school sporting events and dances. All students in the middle school are welcome to participate. The Peer Buddies organizes a “disABILITIES Awareness Campaign” annually and take an annual trip at the end of the school year.

# Theory

Most school curricula do not place the achievement of stable positive social networks on par with reading, math, and social science, yet we know that young adults who are lacking in social skills and who have minimal social supports are far more at risk for job loss than those lacking in basic academic and production skills. In fact, many professionals view childhood social status as being a reliable predictor of mental health in adolescence and adulthood. (Snell and Janney, 2000)

**Denise Bevans, Patricia Colaneri, Lamont Fletcher,  
Stephan Hennessy, Diane Kassai, Cordelia Mann,  
Vivianne Rodriquez-Silverstein, Maxine Shore**

**Johnson Park School, Princeton, NJ**

Johnson Park School is recognized for its outstanding effort in supporting a young girl who is medically fragile. Megan has Pompe's disease, a genetic condition which resulted in her need for a full time respirator, a wheelchair and an alternative communication system, as she is unable to speak due to a tracheotomy. News that Megan was going to attend Johnson Park School did not alarm the staff, they simply developed a plan for her transition. This may be because Megan is not the first child with significant disabilities to attend their school and they were prepared to do what they needed to in order to make Megan a fully participating member of her classroom.

Mr. Fletcher was assigned to be Megan's teacher, and Vivianne Rodriquez-Silverstein, as the case manager. Together they planned for the transition and the degree to which they undertook the planning was truly remarkable. Activities were begun in the spring with Ms. Silverstein and Mr. Fletcher visiting Megan's home and Megan made a number of visits to the school, including the one-week orientation for incoming students; this allowed them to determine what accommodations she would need. Mr. Fletcher attended Megan's weekly speech and language sessions so that he could begin to learn American Sign Language to enhance his ability to communicate with Megan. In addition, physical alterations were made in the school during the summer.

Megan began as a full fledged member of Mr. Fletcher's class in September, attending only half days due to her tendency to tire out. Other staff members became involved, including the physical education teacher, the music and art teachers, and an ASL interpreter, which allowed Megan to interact socially with her peers. Their goal is to include ASL training on an on-going basis for all teachers so that everyone can communicate with Megan. The school is also exploring ongoing training in multi-sensory teaching in an effort to support students with a range of learning styles and learning differences.

## Theory

Teaching students to be socially responsible must be "anchored in the development of deeply personal commitments to such core social values as justice, tolerance and concern for others." (*Shaps and Solomon*)

When asked what led him to go to these efforts for Megan, Mr. Fletcher commented, "Exterior packages—we're all different, but our insides are the same, we all want to be liked." Clearly, Mr. Fletcher, Ms. Rodriquez-Silverstein and the other staff members believe that every child has contributions to make and will go beyond what is expected to make each child welcomed and valued.

## Frank X. McAneny, Ed.D.

### Taunton Forge School

Taunton Forge School has incorporated a number of strategies to provide support to both students and teachers. These include *team teaching*, *integrated related services*, *block scheduling* and *co-planning*.

Co-teaching is implemented at every grade level. Common planning time for both general and special education teachers, so important to effective team teaching, is built into the schedule. Paraprofessionals, another source of support for students and staff, attend IEP meetings and receive copies of the IEP's. The school is piloting larger blocks of time to teach one or more areas of curriculum in a subject on fewer days. This offers more time for the special education teacher to be in the class to co-teach. It also provides longer periods of time for related service personnel to provide integrated therapy, instruction in the classroom, where it is more effective than pull-out. Kindergarten students who have disabilities receive small group instruction for half a day and move into the general education setting for the second half, again, receiving integrated therapies. A developmental reading program called Project Read, which was historically used only with special education students, has been introduced to the regular kindergarten reading curriculum; once again illustrating that good teaching practices benefit all kids. Taunton Forge has also integrated students with autism from a private school facility into their school with a support staff that meets no less than two times a month to problem solve, monitor progress and train on new techniques. The commitment to keep ongoing communication is strong throughout the school and their PAC committee also meets once a week. These meetings have become an avenue for problem solving for all children, ranging from gifted and talented to those with disabilities.

Taunton Forge clearly does not stay stagnant, but continuously moves ahead to explore new ideas and strategies that will enhance the learning of everyone in the school community.

## Theory

The goal at Taunton Forge school is "to provide the appropriate venue for learning for all children as equals through unconditional acceptance, friendliness, empathy and creativity." This is in line with the philosophy of the Whole Schooling Consortium.

The Six Principles of Whole Schooling provide a powerful, yet simple, framework to work towards education that links equity and excellence: 1) Empowering citizens in a democracy; 2) Including all; 3) Providing authentic, multi-level instruction; 4) Building community; 5) Supporting learning; and 6) Partnering with families and the community.

The Consortium involves a network of schools, teachers, parents, students, university faculty, and community members. Further information can be found at: <http://www.coe.wayne.edu/CommunityBuilding/WSC.html>

## Ralph Miller & Bob Blistan

### Washington Township High School, Sewell

This is a wonderful and extraordinary class called “Materials Processing and Production Systems” that has been in existence for the past six years and takes place in a wood shop setting. The class includes students with and without disabilities. Although some aspects of the class are traditional, such as learning machine safety and testing on each machine before being permitted to use them, the most critical facet of the class is the “Production Systems” phase. This is where a “design loop” is introduced. The students must research what it takes to manufacture a product, then participate in all aspects of the process of mass production. This includes brainstorming as a team, designing, marketing and manufacturing the product. So that **all** students can participate, accommodations are made in every aspect of the class work. Efforts are made to find tasks for every student to achieve some measure of success based on his/her abilities. The students have manufactured Adirondack chairs and tables, bat houses and mailboxes for local community groups.

## Theory

This practice exemplifies the recognition of the value of work-based learning and integration of academic and technical skills within a high school setting. In addition to the traditional academic curricula, this practice provides an opportunity for students with and

without disabilities to participate in work related activities and provides appropriate supports, training, and reasonable accommodations for all students to experience success; which will follow them beyond high school.

(*P. Sitlington, G. Clark, O. Kolstoe, 2000*) and The George Washington Heath Resource Center (<http://www.heath.gwu.edu/>).

The Materials Processing and Production Systems, highlighted above, is a school sponsored program in which students produce goods or services for sale, participate in multiple aspects of the enterprise, and correlate service and production activities to classroom learning. This program provides students real practice in entrepreneurship, accounting, budgeting, marketing, inventory control, and business-related skills. It also allows the student to develop generic work skills in problem solving, communication, interpersonal relations, and learning how to learn in the context of work.

## Dr. Frank Guenther

### Warren Hills Regional High School Inclusion Committee, Washington

Through the efforts of an inclusion committee Warren Hills Regional School District has been able to include almost ninety percent of their students with disabilities in general education environments for a majority of their day. Educational practices that support inclusion are: Inclusive Language Arts Program where students with severe disabilities are integrated into college preparatory English classes; cross curricular In Class Support classes where a team teaching model is implemented, Library Showcase Program where the works of all students are displayed, Best Buddies Program where general and special education students engage in collaborative recreation, and School Bases Youth Services where after school outreach and recreational services are provided.

Through the Inclusion Committee the district is continually working to foster and expand their inclusive practices. Administrators, teachers, parents and students work collaboratively to better meet the needs of ALL that enter their doors.

The long-range goal is to have general education teachers become proficient in instructing students with inclusive needs in the absence of special education support.

## Theory

Effective school wide change requires these elements:

Vision + Skills + Incentives + Resources +  
Action Plan = Change  
Without Vision = Confusion

Without Skills = Anxiety

Without Incentives = Resistance

Without Resources = Frustration

Without an Action Plan = Treadmill

*[Adapted from Knoster, T. (1991). Presentation at TASH Conference, Washington, D.C.]*

**Leona Aronovitch, Patrick Rumaker, Sara Cohen & Elayne Clany**

**Thomas Jefferson School, Turnersville**

**Multiage Classroom**

The multiage inclusion classes have been in existence since 1996. The aim of the class is to address students' varying learning styles through different modalities of instruction. Children may be found working in large groups, in small groups, in pairs or individually. They are given the opportunity to explore curricular materials working in expert groups. They present what they have learned to the class using a broad range of strategies. They may do a traditional lecture presentation, or use skits, maps, pictures, music, games and any other method they find that enables them to present the materials for which they are responsible.

The Multiage Classroom's objectives allow children to appreciate each other's uniqueness. They teach and recognize each person's talents. Children are afforded opportunities for self-assessment.

Family volunteers are an integral part of the program. Family volunteers are given the opportunity to work directly with the students. Parents, grandparents and older siblings come into the classroom.

# Theory

This practice exemplifies students working together in cooperative learning arrangements rather than in isolation. Cooperative learning promotes positive independence, individual accountability and face to face interaction.

In cooperative learning arrangements, students can work in small groups with their peers to achieve a shared academic goal rather than competing against or working separately from their classmates. The learning environment is structured so that each class member contributes to the group's goal. When learning is structured cooperatively, students are accountable not only for their own achievement, but also for those of other group members. Cooperative learning is especially worthwhile for heterogeneous student populations. It promotes friendships and encourages mutual respect and learning among students of various academic abilities. (Marr, 1997)

## Cranford Inclusive Education Task Force

Cranford Public Schools, in collaboration with the Seton Hall University School of Education and Human Services, has developed a Task Force to help the schools implement their mission, which is, “to promote and support the ability of all Cranford educators, regardless of previous training in general or special education, to help ALL students learn most effectively.”

Cranford schools recognized the need to enhance the ability of their teachers, both general and special, to work more effectively in collaborative partnerships that increase students’ learning.

Typically, teachers who co-teach are provided with little or no training in team teaching, and often have limited time for planning. One of the outcomes of the Task Force was the training of 25 instructional teams by the supervisor of special education. The training focused on important co-teaching skills: co-teaching models, defining roles, managing shared responsibilities and collaboration skills. These skills benefit not only the students who are classified, but all students in the classroom. A pilot program has also been put into effect to provide regularly scheduled mutual planning time for the instructional teams. In addition, efforts are being made to identify instructional teams before the end of the school year in order to allow time for joint planning and professional development.

In addition to providing the school district with access to faculty at Seton Hall University, the Task Force also included the University’s pre-service teachers in the training sessions. Videotapes of Cranford classrooms are used by University faculty, who then use computer software to demonstrate graphically different alternate configurations of the classrooms and how they can impact student learning. Clearly, this partnership benefits everyone; the educators, the students and the University.

## Theory

Collaboration: Co=with; Labor=work

The characteristics of collaboration are:

- 1) Mutual goals
- 2) Shared accountability of outcomes
- 3) Parity in relationships
- 4) Voluntary participation
- 5) Shared responsibility for participation and decision- making
- 6) Shared resources

(*Friend, M. & Cook, F.*)

## **Michele Riles, Inclusion Facilitator**

### **Metuchen School District**

Michele Riles has been the inclusion facilitator in the Metuchen School District for the past four years. In this capacity, she coordinates forty-four diverse in-class support classes and teaching teams in all of the district's schools, pre-K through 12. She provides consultation, support, workshops, and programming option suggestions for students and teachers within the district. At the present time there are no self-contained classes in the district. Ideas that have worked to make this happen are: the establishment of extra planning time and compensation for the collaborative teams on a weekly basis and for extended time in the summer to review IEP's and plan for students for the following school year. Each collaborative team is met with on a monthly basis as well as individual as needed problem solving sessions. A school-to-work program has also been developed teaming a business educator with a special educator. And providing many opportunities for all students with and without IEP's.

Other unique programs that have been developed by the inclusion facilitator are: Student Outreach - a social group of students with and without disabilities who share email addresses and phone numbers to make weekly contact with each other as well as attend sporting events and other school activities together; Community-Language Awareness-Social Skills, to provide an opportunity for elementary students to enhance their sense of community and school life, improve critical thinking skills, self awareness, persona; responsibility and self advocacy; and the Parents Advisory Council that meets regularly to discuss current issues and problems confronting the district.

## **Theory**

Redefining professional roles is viewed as a necessary step to shift from categorical educational services to a unified educational system in which support would be available to any student or teacher as needed. (*Thousand and Villa*). With the increasing demands on the general education and special education teacher, it is important to examine the roles they each can play. The implementation of an inclusion facilitator is one way to maximize the skills presently available in the schools.