

2004

FELLOWSHIP
PROGRAM

IN
INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION



Preface

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, Education Task Force is pleased to announce its third group of Fellowship Award Winners for 2003-2004. 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 third year of its Fellowship Awards by honoring these educators.

2004 Fellowship Awards

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Timothy Frederiks—Director of Curriculum/Technology Hopatcong Borough Schools

As Director of Curriculum and Technology, Timothy Frederiks is responsible for overseeing curriculum content and delivery. Collaboration between his office and the office of Special Services is critical to the success of all students with disabilities in the district. In addition they reach out to parents and guardians as partners and resources of information.

The technology department places emphasis on inclusive practices geared for both academic and non-academic areas. As director, Mr. Frederiks is continually investigating program options geared to meet the individual needs of the students. This has been particularly true in the case of a young student who is in a wheelchair and unable to communicate orally. Through a cooperative effort between Hopatcong Borough Schools and Boston College, the student's computer was equipped with a new technology called Eagle Eyes Camera Mouse. This technology enables a camera, located on the student's computer to replace the computer mouse. The student manipulates the computer via head movements. With this assistive technology, the student is able to complete general education assignments and has made significant progress, particularly in the area of math and is also benefiting from socialization with her peers.

Training on the equipment for school personnel is also an important component when implementing any assistive technology. This student's teachers were trained in the use of Eagle Eyes and in preparation for the transition to a new school, the Technology Department has provided training for new personnel.

Through the continued efforts of Mr. Frederiks and his staff, students in Hopatcong will be sure to receive support in the areas of assistive technology to assure they are educated in general education classrooms to the maximum extent possible.

Practice:

Useful Assistive Technology Sites:

New Jersey Educational Technology Training Centers: County-based resource centers that offer educators professional development opportunities.

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/techno/ettc/>

Assistive Technology Industry Association ("ATIA"): is a not-for-profit membership organization of manufacturers, sellers or providers of technology-based assistive devices and/or services.

<http://www.atia.org/index.html>

The Assistive Technology Training Online Project (ATTO): Provides information on Assistive Technology applications that help students with disabilities learn in elementary classrooms.

Tutorials on specific software programs are available at this site.

<http://atto.buffalo.edu/>

Rob Sandusky—Director of Special Education Maple Shade Schools

As the recipient of a New Jersey Department of Education Capacity Building Grant, Maple Shade has undergone some significant changes in their delivery of services to students with disabilities. Rob Sandusky, a 26-year veteran in the field of Special Education, has committed himself and the school district in providing their students with the least restrictive environment. As Superintendent Cheryl Smith commented, “Inclusion rarely existed before Rob.” In the last four years he began to institute a fundamental change in the perception of special education students in the district, trying to eliminate the stigma of “your” kids versus “our” kids. Tolerance and acceptances of differences are increasing and staff is more comfortable with their own abilities in working with all students.

Here are some of their initiatives and accomplishments to date:

- An after school program for students in grades 5-12 has been established, providing time for students to meet with a special education teacher and educational assistants twice per week for support in their inclusive classes.
- Staff development on best practices for inclusion and team teaching has been offered to all teaches.
- A project to bring 42 students from out-of-district settings back to their home schools, to more inclusive settings, has begun.
- A newly created parent group, Maple Shade Special Education Advisory Council, meets with Mr. Sandusky and other school administrators to discuss and brainstorm problems and ideas for increasing effective educational practices in the district.
- Over 75 students have moved to less restrictive settings, with the goal of reducing the out-of-district placements for their students in the future.
- Use of assistive technology to enhance student learning has been increased. One 6th grade team teaching class, at Steinhauer School has been using AlphaSmarts. They have found these learning tools are motivational for all the students to use, both special and non-special education students. With additional funding the school hopes to have enough AlphaSmart for each student in this class. Support in using the AlphaSmarts would include training for staff and training for students by the district’s Occupational Therapy staff working in conjunction with the general and special education teachers.

Practice:

More than 1 million AlphaSmarts are used in classrooms around the United States. AlphaSmart recently introduced its newest addition, the Neo. Key Features includes a 50% larger screen, new font technology and twice the memory than its predecessor, the AlphaSmart 3000. This product allows applications to display from two to six lines of text, with larger fonts for young students and more text per screen to enhance the writing and editing process. AlphaWord™ Plus, an enhanced word processing solution is included, featuring spellcheck, thesaurus, writer’s tools, Spanish-English word lookup, and the ability to name and save files, with up to eight files open concurrently. The operating system stores hundreds of pages of text while still having room for additional SmartApplets, extending Neo’s functionality to include classroom quizzing, outlining, keyboarding instruction, file beaming and more.

You can find more information on the use of AlphaSmarts in the classroom at:
AlphaSmarts: <http://www.alphasmart.com/>

David Kessel—Nutrition Science Teacher**Dana La Grasso—Special Educator****Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School**

In-class support, team teaching, collaboration class... the practice of having two teachers, a general education teacher and special education teacher in a classroom has become common practice in New Jersey. Mr. Kessel and Ms. La Grasso are providing a team teaching experience, as it is intended, with both teachers taking responsibility for all students. However, what sets them apart is their commitment to team teaching and the class they teach together... a Nutrition Science course in a high school setting. This course was developed to facilitate student learning and application of important scientific themes outlined in both state and federal education standards. It is open to all students but was initially created for students who may not be successful in traditional discipline-oriented science courses and allows them to meet the required three years of science in a less traditional and more practical format.

This Nutrition Science course is an integrated science, relevant to daily life and lends itself to being hands-on and student-centered. It covers most biological and chemical concepts outlined in the NJ Curriculum Standards, therefore providing a venue for students to take additional science courses.

These two teachers provide differentiated learning, instructional adaptations and multi-modal activities that address the diverse learning needs of their students. The students carry out laboratory exercises, case studies, use up-to-date technology, and laboratory experiments to study specific nutrition-related issues that can directly impact their lives. All students are taught to be responsible for their own learning and interactions with classmates, practicing skills such as researching on the Internet, using PowerPoint for presentations, developing multi-media presentations and collaborating with classmates. Student assessments are available in a wide variety of formats, from the traditional test to writing a poem or a song, or creating a video or poster. As they say, by doing this they are “making adaptations more of a ‘norm’ rather than an exception.” The students can receive support both before and after school and through a website developed and maintained by the teachers. The teachers meet daily and weekly to plan, and it is evident they are committed to teaching this course as a team, dissolving their roles between general and special education.

Enrollment in this class, of both classified and non-classified students has risen from less than 40 students to just over 100 students in just two years, clearly illustrating the need and popularity of the class among the students in the high school. As reported by Patricia Camp, the Science supervisor at the high school, “there is such high enthusiasm for the course that many times students are in class working before the bell rings.”

Practice:

In a team-teaching model the general education and special education teachers each bring their unique skills, training, and perspectives to the team. Combined, these resources will strengthen teaching and learning opportunities for the students. However, this takes careful discussion and planning. Consider these areas of collaboration between two teachers. Think about your style and how you like to work. How might you see developing collaborative approaches to dealing with these issues? Discuss these issues together with your co-teacher.

Team-Teaching Discussion Guide:

Areas in Which Differences May Arise

- Parent communication and partnership: Formality of relationship with parents. Understanding and acceptance of diverse family backgrounds, styles, and problems.
- Collaborative relationship: Goals and expectations in the working relationship.
- Student progress: Expectations related to assessment tools and strategies to be used? Degree of focus on the standardized test?
- Planning: Time for planning? Degree and detail of planning? Planning ahead? Designing for diversity? Planning meetings, forms, and record keeping?
- Academic instruction: Instructional strategies? Assessment strategies? Assignment of grades? Adaptation and modification of lessons? Sharing teaching roles? Trying new approaches?
- Community building and behavioral challenges: Classroom rules and routines? Behavioral management and discipline? Trying new approaches.
- Classroom design, space, materials: Planning and organizing classroom space? Designing the classroom for the different abilities and learning styles of students? Making accommodations and adaptations? Trying new approaches?

Peterson, M. & Hittie, M. (2002). Inclusive teaching: Creating effective schools for all learners. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Learning Tools available online at: <http://www.wholeschooling.net/InclTchingWeb/FC/FacultyCntr.html>

Dolores Rosko—Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant Pascack High School, Montvale, NJ

Ms. Rosko is being recognized for her outstanding effort in including a student with a visual impairment in all aspects of school life at the high school he attends. Collaborating with the general and special education teachers, the parents, the aide, technology personnel, a state agency (NJ Commission for the Blind), and most importantly, the student himself ensured the success of his program. Starting almost a full year prior to his entering the high school working with all that would be involved helped prepare everyone for a smooth transition from middle to high school. Making sure that training for teachers was in place, technology to support him addressed, and ongoing communication to problem solve issues that arose ensured the collaborative atmosphere in which the student could evolve and succeed.

The building of a professional team, starting off with the premise that the student belonged in the general educational environment, allowed for the strengths of the student to be built upon. High expectations and finding techniques to include the student in every aspect of the environment with accommodations and supports better prepared the student to be more comfortable taking on challenges and risks. This also led to the development of more independent skills as he felt comfortable and experienced success.

Practice:

Effective Teambuilding

Ensuring that a common vision is established with every relevant stakeholder involved are highlights of building an effective team. Making sure that all members have a voice and engage in the problem solving process is critical. Actively involving the student and/or parents in the decision making is also key. When team members feel that they are active, productive contributors everyone benefits. The shared expertise, workload, and communication encourage flexibility; appreciation of each other's skills, and the development of new ideas. All combined the qualities above lead to an environment where all students thrive.

Deborah Mannon—Speech Language Specialist/Special Education Teacher Franklin Township Elementary School, Washington

Integrated therapy includes direct, indirect, and consultation-style. Deborah's goal is to increase indirect therapy and consultation with and decrease direct therapy sessions occurring in isolation, or "down the hall in the therapy room." The teacher, therapist, and paraprofessional work and learn together, sharing their knowledge and expertise.

To effectively implement the integrated therapy approach, Deborah works with the IEP process jointly developing and writing goals and objectives and monitoring across all settings. The IEP team works collaboratively to write all objectives, which address motor, language, mobility, sensory, or physical needs integrated throughout various subjects and settings. By planning together, teachers and therapists design open-ended activities, alternative communication, language opportunities, and support strategies which the educators then add to their repertoire for future use with many kinds of students. Teachers, therapists, and paraprofessionals all work in various combinations to provide support in integrated therapy. Roles are expanded to incorporate co-teaching and a variety of collaborative styles. Additionally they have ongoing meetings to these meetings, it bridge disciplines, eliminating the frequently ineffective questions on the fly in the workroom, hall, or even during class instruction time.

Deborah has been present during history class to determine whether or not the student is benefiting from the technology being used and not impeding his/her participation and understanding. Additionally she has facilitated questions asked by other students about the equipment, modeling awareness and understanding of disabilities for their peers. During social activity she can assess the frequency and effectiveness of the student's social skills in initiating conversations with peers and requesting assistance or more information. Also, between visits, she works with the teachers to discuss concerns and answer questions. The educators share ideas and record attempted interventions and results.

Practice:

Integrated Therapy

A key feature of integrated therapy model is that therapy services are provided and then strategies associated with the disciplines are used within the activities and environments the team deems a priority for a given student. Therapist providing indirect services within, such as providing general training, observing program implementation, monitoring performance data and developing equipment and materials. The Transdisciplinary component occurs as the therapist release part of their role to other team members so student can receive frequent and ongoing instruction on sensory motor, communication and to their skills in priority educational context in the absence of the therapist. All components of integrated therapy are ongoing processes that clearly require collaborative teamwork. (*Beverly Rainforth, 1997*).

**Project B.E.A.C.O.N.—Eve Cabell, Annette Creedon, Kathy Kowana,
Robyn Lawrence and Kara Ryan
Jersey City Public Schools**

Project B.E.A.C.O.N. (Bridging Education Achievement for Children’s Ongoing Needs) is an initiative of the Special Education Department of the Jersey City Public Schools, a recipient of the New Jersey Department of Education Capacity Building Grants.

Project B.E.A.C.O.N. is a highly structured teacher support program whose mission is to support and facilitate the district wide inclusion initiative in the district. The Project B.E.A.C.O.N. team is comprised of lead teachers with a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds, which include general and special education, bilingual education and behavioral intervention; with their experiences ranging from elementary to high school. The team is presently responsible for providing all teachers in six fully inclusive elementary schools with cross training and support in a format that is personalized and based on the needs the teachers and the schools have identified. They support all students with the necessary tools and strategies so they can experience successful inclusive classrooms. They involve all school personnel in planning, staff development, teacher training and implementation of inclusive practices. In addition they conduct workshops on inclusion for all personnel and train teachers on differentiated instruction, accommodations and modifications.

Once a school has received initial training, they begin a collaborative consultative model approach. The team provides this support by visiting classrooms to observe teachers’ current practices and help them plan the most appropriate instructional procedures to meet the diversified needs of all of the students. They also model lessons and teach cooperative learning strategies.

In addition to teacher training, the Project B.E.A.C.O.N. team provides year round training to administrators, child study team members and support staff. As they commented, “We are committed to realizing the dream that all children can be part of their general education community—it just takes a little light from the B.E.A.C.O.N. to show them the way!”

Practice:

Team Member Characteristics

- A common goal
- Two or more members
- Members with various roles
- Members that engage in problem solving
- Collaborative activities
- Shared commitment
- Active parent involvement

Effective team members

- accept and appreciate differences in others
- treat others as individuals
- are flexible
- are willing learners
- communicate in constructive ways
- are active, participating, and productive
- are willing to share work, responsibilities, success, and failure
- bring problem-solving, collaborative values, and skills to the group

Adapted from: R.Villa, J.S. Thousand, W. Stainback (Eds.) (2002). *Restructuring for caring effective education: An administrative guide creating heterogeneous schools*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Joseph Marsella—Principal The Cornelia Bradford School, Jersey City Public Schools

Faced with a district wide initiative to bring students back to their neighborhood schools in the least restrictive environment, Mr. Joseph Marsella, Principal of the Cornelia Bradford School embraced what he believed was moving in the right direction and ran with it. Sharing the vision that all students belonged, Mr. Marsella took several steps to insure that the initiative was implemented school wide change proactively and systematically. Mr. Marsella recognized the importance of everyone assuming ownership for all of the students in the school, looking at the student not the disability. Steps to change attitudes towards special education were taken. Identification of the issues and concerns of all stakeholders was key. Obtaining a strong level of commitment from parents and staff across the board helped make for a smooth transition. The constant reinforcement of expectations being clearly stated with opportunity for input regarding decision-making, planning and implementation help alleviate concerns. Training, both initial and ongoing to staff prior to the arrival of newly included enhanced the skills of the staff through out the year. The building became a solid school building in which all students included participated in all activities as members of a school community. Parents expressed their comfort with the program and how happiness that their child was easily made a part of the school community. By definition, everyone has to go through it together. The process respected the issues and interests of all stakeholder groups. Mandated follow-up ensures that plans are implemented and not left on the shelf. High involvement brings unity and enthusiasm to the change experience.

The administrative leadership has paid off. Classified students are fully included at every grade level. There are no segregated or resource room programs in the building. Suspensions have been reduced dramatically and test scores have risen. The Cornelia Bradford School has become a model for inclusion in the Jersey City School District.

Practice:

Administrative Leadership-Building Level

The principal sets the tone for the school building. When there is a vision and commitment to bring about system change led by the building administrator, chances are greater that it will occur with fewer stumbling blocks.

“Whole school improvement is an on-going process that requires the concerted energies of the entire school community. Every school will always have strengths as well as areas for improvement. It is important that schools prioritize their growth areas. These growth areas should align with district priorities and the ultimate goal should be to maximize student performance. Inclusion is an option that is supposed to be the first consideration for students with disabilities. When effectively designed and implemented, inclusion should provide positive learning experiences not only for students with disabilities but also for those without disabilities.”

—William Henderson, Principal, O’Hearn Elementary School,
Boston Public Schools 2001.

Priscilla Petrosky—Associate Superintendent-Special Education Jersey City Public Schools

When Priscilla went about developing a school wide plan that would include all students and provide the support for both students and staff, she knew it would be a difficult task. Jersey City is a large urban district with over forty elementary schools and four comprehensive high schools. She knew it was important to keep a vision in mind of what a successful classroom and school community would look like for the students and for the staff. With funding from a State Department of Education Capacity Building Grant, she went about her planning with input from teachers, para-professionals, related services personnel, parents and other administrators across the entire school community. It began with a Capacity Building Team to facilitate and support inclusion in the school buildings. Starting with four buildings, they have expanded to more than ten, with the remainder of the schools in the district being phased in. A district wide teacher support system, Project Beacon, was created to provide cross training for general and special education staff. There is also a parent training component. Additional support programs include Project Raise, a reading program, Adapted Physical Education, Applied Behavioral Analysis, a behavioral support services program and art and music therapy. There is also a very strong transition program called Keys to success to help direct students achieve employment and positive life outcomes.

Ms. Petrosky provides a great deal of support for the staff, students and families in the school community personally and understands the importance of celebrating success, a key component in advancing any large system change.

Practice:

District-wide Administrative Leadership

Inclusion, first, is an attitude—a value and belief system—not an action or set of actions. Once adopted by a school or school district, it should drive all decisions and actions by those who have adopted it. The word include implies being a part of something, being embraced into the whole. Exclude, the antonym of include, means to keep out, to bar, or to expel. These definitions begin to frame the growing movement of building inclusive schools. The very meaning of the terms inclusion and exclusion helps us to understand inclusive education. (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 1997).

Once a value and belief system is adopted, the administrator can go about the business of managing complex change. Six components must be taken into consideration for actual change to occur: vision, consensus, skills, incentives, resources, and action plan. All components must be addressed or a breakdown in the process will occur. It is the responsibility of the leadership in the district to orchestrate the components in an orderly systematic fashion to achieve positive results.

Capacity Building Design Team—Rosie Jenkins, Isabel Cruz, Paula Jones and Barbara Marrabello

Jersey City Public Schools

The Capacity Building Design Team is comprised of four individuals who bring very different skills, experiences, and perspectives to make up a group whose mission is to facilitate and support inclusion in the Jersey City public schools. The group consists of Rosie, a licensed clinical social worker, who is the coordinator; Paula, a special education teacher, and Isabel, a dual certified teacher, who both serve as Inclusion Specialists; and Barbara, a parent who serves as a liaison to families.

The Capacity Building Team has been instrumental in establishing ten all inclusive schools within the school district. An additional eleven schools have asked for assistance to become all inclusive in the next school year. The focus of their work is to facilitate the inclusion process throughout the entire school, recognizing that the administrator must be committed to developing a school community. The administrators know they will be assisted throughout the process to insure its success.

The team's mission is to systematically introduce, create, foster and support an all-inclusive school. They begin by educating the staff, parents, teachers, students and administrators on the value of such an initiative. All stakeholders are invited to become partners in this process. The team members provide workshops ranging in subjects from issues of awareness, sensitivity and tolerance to classroom management and parental support. Individual teacher support is provided and they are encouraged to incorporate hands-on experiences, peer training, modeling, mentoring support and behavioral interventions in their classrooms. Parents are supported by the parent liaison through parent support groups and empowerment workshops. Students are provided with the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities in their home schools in addition to gaining positive experiences within their classrooms. The team members visit the schools weekly and share their expertise with the teachers and the staff. They also participate in ongoing professional development in order to increase their own knowledge and resources, which will be passed onto the schools. As Mr. Vincent Castro said in nominating this team, "they help to make the vision a reality."

Practice:

Providing inclusive educational programs for students with disabilities requires collaboration, teamwork, and the use of a wide range of educational strategies. There are many online resources available to guide you in developing inclusive schools. Below are a few links:

Systems Change Primer:

This primer is designed as a "starting point" to help you meet the individual needs of children. It was produced by the South Dakota Systems Change Program, Center for Disabilities, Department of Pediatrics, The University of South Dakota School of Medicine. This guide is intended to be used by educators, administrators, and parents as they plan an inclusive educational program for children and youth with disabilities. <http://www.usd.edu/cd/systemschange/primer/>

School as a Caring Community: The Book of Inclusive Education:

<http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/incl/intro.htm>

This site contains a handbook, field notes, and resources. Developed by the J. P. Das Developmental Disabilities Centre of Edmonton, Canada

The Whole Schooling Consortium

The Consortium is an international network of schools and individual teachers, parents, administrators, university faculty and community members. The Consortium links individuals and schools to build schools based on six principles of Whole Schooling. This site provides multiple resources on developing inclusive schools.

<http://www.wholeschooling.net/>



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