



Inclusion Solutions

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A Note from the Editor

As of October 1, 2001 at 5PM, public comment will no longer be taken on the Proposed Rules Changes for Special Education in Michigan. When most of you receive this newsletter, there will be only a few weeks left to respond. I encourage everyone to voice your opinions. You can respond via email at:

www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped

Or: write to David Brock, Supervisor,
Policy, Planning and Compliance
Program

Office of Special Education and Early
Intervention Services

Michigan Department of Education,
P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909

If you are interested in our organization's response to the rules, contact me at 616-954-9828. In looking at the proposed rules, our organization has asked "How can the rules be updated to help more kids with disabilities be included?" Each step of our review has been taken with that thought in mind. The proposed rules are long and difficult to comprehend. I would be happy to spend some time on the phone talking with anyone

who would like to respond in a way that supports inclusion.

As we all enter a new school year, I have many wishes. One wish is that all educators would spend a few moments at several websites. These would be www.normemma.com and www.disabilityisnatural.com. Perhaps something read on one of those sites or in our newsletter will help you see inclusion from a different perspective. And perhaps, this will help one more child get the chance to learn and interact alongside non-disabled peers. It troubles me that segregation is still so prevalent in Michigan for students with disabilities. It troubles me that a parent who simply asks for their child with a disability to be included still may need to take their fight to a federal court.

It was John Kennedy who said, "The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived, and dishonest, but the myth –persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic."

-Lauri Stein



Information about WIN

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of WIN is to further the quality inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms with appropriate supports.

PROMOTING INCLUSION

The board of WIN believes education of parents, educators and education students is key to making inclusive education work. Thus we provide the following programs and services.

- Telephone and in-person inclusion advocacy assistance is provided to parents free of charge.
- Four educational meetings per year are held at the Kent Intermediate School building. The focus of these meetings is on topics involving inclusive education. Meetings are open to parents, educators, administrators and anyone interested in inclusive education .
- Information packets on inclusive education can be mailed upon request.
- A yearly inclusive education conference is held each fall, featuring a nationally known keynote speaker and break out sessions.
- “Planning For Inclusion from Inception thru the IEP” is a free educational program for schools, parents groups and other organizations that can be held at any location.
- A lending library is available. Call for a list of current titles.
- WIN representatives are available to do presentations about inclusive education to support groups, colleges, universities, and schools in West Michigan.
- A quarterly newsletter is sent to anyone on the WIN mailing list.
- In-school inclusion assistance is available for educators and administrators.

Contact WIN at:
West Michigan Inclusion Network
P.O. Box 889
Ada, MI 49301

E-mail us at wmichinclusion@aol.com or
 call our offices at: **616-954-9424**

Board Members

- ◆ Barb Spidell
- ◆ Clark Goodrich
- ◆ Kathy Vogel
- ◆ Dr. Barbara Doumanian
- ◆ Rita Berlin
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- ◆ Lauri Stein
- ◆ Jeff Pellerito
- ◆ Michelle Woods

Advocacy Consultants

- ◆ Deanna Cowden
- ◆ Mary VandeWater



If you have any ideas for this newsletter; we can post websites, events, meetings, and articles that involve inclusion.

United Way Donations

Please remember the West Michigan Inclusion Network with your *United Way* donation this fall.

Through your employer, you can now designate our organization for your donation.

As WIN is not a membership organization, donations are truly appreciated so that we can continue to provide our educational programs and advocacy support.

THANK-YOU!!!!



Response Cards: An Inclusion Solution

Recent brain research applied to learning reinforces what teachers already know, that students need to be actively engaged in learning experiences to learn. It is often difficult to get all students to actively participate during group instruction time. Some students don't raise their hand often or don't get called on when they do raise their hand.

These students may eventually become passive observers. They may start to daydream or do something else out of boredom. They miss out on important information. Sometimes, in order to explain their lack of academic success, they become termed as inattentive, attention deficit disorder, slow learners, or behavior disorders.

Teachers realize the importance of needing to keep students interested in what they are teaching, but calling on one student at a time often does not accomplish this.

There are several other strategies that help all students stay involved. In addition to choral responding (each student in the group or class responding orally in unison), response cards are also a great alternative.

Response cards are cards, signs or items that are held up by the students in response to a question by the teacher. Not only does answering in this way enable every student to respond to every item or

Continued on page 4...

Upcoming WIN Events

"Todd's Story - My journey toward Inclusive Education as a General Ed Teacher" by: Dr. Barbara Doumanian, Professor of Special Education, Grand Valley State University.
Wednesday, September 26, 7PM to 9PM at Northview Crossroads Middle School, 4400 Ambrose, Grand Rapids, MI 49525.

"The truth about consequences: A presentation about Positive Behavior Support" by: Tricia Luker, Michigan Dept. of Education, PBS coach, and CAUSE legal advocate,
Thursday, October 25, 7 pm to 9 pm at East Academy for Children, 1585 36th St. in Wyoming, MI

Celebrate the possibilities! WIN Inclusive Education Conference
Friday, December 7 at Grand Valley State University Eberhard Center, Grand Rapids

Further information on these events will be arriving if you are on the WIN mailing list. For more information about these programs, please contact WIN at 616-954-9424 or email at wmichinclusion@aol.com.

Response Cards: an inclusion solution

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question, but the teacher can also see how each individual student is responding.

Pre-printed response cards generally work the best. Examples of these cards include Yes/True and No/False card, science terms, planets, punctuation marks, etc. These types of response cards are effective when there are a limited amount of answers.

For those questions requiring a wide array of answers, write-on response cards work better. With this type of card, students mark or write their answers on blank cards or boards that can be erased. A set of 40 durable write-on response cards can be cut from a 4 by 8 foot sheet of white laminated “bathroom board” carried at most builder’s supplies stores. A dry erase marker can be used by each child.

Pre-printed response cards have a higher rate of active student response because there is less time needed for writing and erasing.

Studies on response cards have been done in general and special education classrooms. Gardner, Heward, and Grossi (1994) compared write-on cards with hand raising during science lessons in an inner-city, fifth grade classroom.

They found that students responded to teacher-posed questions an average of 21.8 times per 30 minute lesson when response cards were used, but made only 1.5 responses per lesson when the teacher called on individual students to answer. All 22 students in the class scored higher on next-day quizzes and on 2-week review tests following using response cards

than they did for lessons where students raised their hands.

Most of the students preferred response cards, saying they were “fun” to use and that they helped them learn more. Higher student response rates, improved test scores, and student preference for use of response cards, has been replicated in several other studies in elementary, middle, and secondary classrooms. (see Heward 1994)

Response cards are likely to be more effective when used to give students many active responses within a short time period, like 5 to 10 minutes, than if used for single responses sporadically during the class period. Combining response card usage with other techniques to increase student response, can be very effective in keeping the students involved and interested.

Here are some suggestions for using response cards:

- Model several question and answer trials. Give students a chance to practice using the cards.
- Keep up a lively pace during the response card portion of the lesson.
- Cue students clearly by saying “Cards up” or “Cards down”
- Provide feedback based on the majority response. When most students are correct, give a positive “Great”. If there are a few incorrect responses, state

the correct answer.

- When a quarter of more of the students are incorrect, display or state the correct answer and repeat the question. Several trials later, repeat the original question again.
- Students can learn by looking at others. It is not cheating if they look at others response cards.

Response cards can be used very effectively in including students with disabilities into general education classrooms. Using response cards makes the inclusion of students with disabilities easier without doing much else, but when concepts are more difficult to grasp or writing is required, having students work with a partner can help the students with disabilities stay engaged and learn along with their peers.

Adapted from Teaching Exceptional Children / Winter 1996



Beware the Retarding Environment

By Kathie Snow

In 1984, a report entitled, "Surviving in the System: Mental Retardation and the Retarding Environment," detailed how placing individuals with cognitive disabilities in institutions or congregate settings puts them in "retarding environments." Who were the architects of this impressive and profound revelation? A group of people who had been assigned the stigma-laden "mental retardation" label (the People First chapter of California). Today, "retarding environments" can be found at home, in school, and in other settings. But how can typical environments be "retarding?" Because many individuals with disabilities do not have the tools and accommodations they need, which causes their social, emotional, and intellectual growth to be slowed down, or retarded.

Sara, a three-year-old with an orthopedic disability, is not crawling or walking. She's positioned properly in a manual wheelchair, but she must always be pushed by someone. As a result, Sara isn't able to experience the vast amount of learning that occurs when three-year-olds explore their world: going where and when she wants in her own home, learning she can "run away" from mom and return, achieving a new level of independence, and more. Her intellectual and social development are significantly impacted, and Sara is learning dependence in retarding environments at home, in preschool, and in other settings.

Her parents and therapists are focused on getting Sara to walk. That, they believe, is the "problem" that needs to be remedied. While focusing on one ability (walking), other-and more important-aspects of Sara's development are in jeopardy.

But what if Sara had independent mobility (a power wheelchair) so she could explore and learn, acquire typical social skills, and develop independence? Which

is more important: walking or mastering her world in whatever way works best for her?

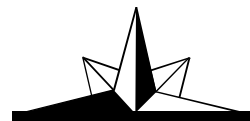
Brian, a nine-year-old with a cognitive disability, is said to "function at the level of a six-year-old." Because he can't yet read, educators (and his parents) don't feel he could be successful in a regular class, so Brian has spent three years in the special ed room, where teachers have focused on teaching him to read.

This placement has produced extremely negative outcomes for Brian. Being in the "retard room" makes him feel bad about himself. His struggles against these feelings is leading adults to presume he has "behavior problems." Also, because he's in the special ed room, he is not exposed to the typical classroom curriculum, which causes him to fall further and further behind. Sadly, he'll probably spend the remainder of his school career in special classes, and he'll leave the public school system uneducated and unprepared for work or post-secondary education, after spending twelve years in retarding environments.

While educators and Brian's parents focused on one skill (reading), Brian lost countless opportunities to learn from the typical activities in regular ed classes. There are many ways of learning: through hands-on activities, using computer programs and videos, listening, and more. The inability to read need not be a barrier to learning and academic success! Overall, which is more important: reading or learning in any way you can?

Mary Ann has spent years in a sheltered workshop being "prepared" for a real job. She hates making widgets all day, but staff thinks she's incapable of anything more. Like Brian, Mary Ann re-

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"Inclusion is changing the rules of the game so that everyone can play and everyone can win."

-Richard Villa

Gaylord Testimony: A response to the proposed changes for special education rules

My name is Lynne Tamor. I was appointed by the governor to the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council two years ago and co-chair the council's Education Workgroup. I also serve on the board of ARC-Oakland and represent that organization at the Oakland ISD's Parent Advisory Committee. I work as project coordinator for the federally funded Whole Schooling Project that is documenting the work of schools that are committed to inclusive education. Today, though, I am speaking to you primarily as a parent, although my views are entirely consistent with those of the Developmental Disabilities Council and the Whole Schooling Consortium.

I am the mother of two children, one a general education student and the other receiving special education services. My son is 10 years old and has an SXI label, a label that indeed describes a young man with severe cognitive impairments, vision impairments, significant physical disabilities, many sensory difficulties,

and a mostly-controlled seizure disorder. In spite of this laundry list of issues, however, my son is an extremely sociable young man who has made it clear since he was of preschool age that he wants to be in the middle of lots of activities amongst other active children his age. He learns far better in such an environment, and such an environment also allows him to build his social skills, which are by far his strongest asset.

Because of this, my husband and I have been struggling since our son was six years old to include him in general education with all needed special education supports and services. He has been included in general education in our neighborhood school with an array of supports including a full-time paraprofessional, assistance from a teacher-consultant, an occupational therapist who works with him in the context of the regular classroom and the art room, a physical therapist who pushes her therapy sessions into physical education classes and recess, and a speech

therapist who not only provides direct service four days a week, but also works to incorporate assistive technology and augmentative communication into all classroom activities. In other words, my son is lucky enough to have an inclusive education as inclusion is meant to be. I suspect he is one of the very few students with an SXI label in the entire state who has access to such an excellent situation, and my husband and I are two of the very few parents who know that such a situation is even possible. Our son has made progress beyond our wildest dreams, and we have every expectation that he will continue to do so.

I would like to point out that every gain he makes while a special education will save substantial expenditures on decades of care and support when he becomes an adult. Already he would not need "awake" staff present during the night since he has learned to call for assistance, via assistive technology or vocalization, when he needs it. I hope and expect

Beware

Continued from page 5...

bels against the insults to her dignity, using the only power she has left: resistance. According to staff, her behavior "proves" Mary Ann is not ready for a real job. Retarding environments are not limited to segregated or congregate settings. They can exist anywhere individuals with disabilities are prevented from living ordinary, natural lives and having power over their environments. How can we prevent retarding environments? First, by understanding that people with disabilities need the same experiences for growth and development as people without disabilities. To meet that goal, children and adults with disabilities must be in age-appropriate, typical, ordinary, inclusive settings.

Next, people with disabilities must have the tools, accommodations, and supports they need to be success-

ful in ordinary, inclusive environments. Few people without disabilities would be successful if they didn't have appropriate tools and accommodations (computers, cell phones, support from peers, and so forth), so why is it OK for people with disabilities to go without the tools and support they need?

And, finally, we must look at people with disabilities and presume competence. The language and labels we use, along with programs which attempt to fix a person's "problems," reflect the paradigm that people with disabilities are incompetent and unable. But they're not! When we operate from the "presume competence" paradigm, we'll ensure the Saras, Brians, and Mary Anns of this world are in natural, ordinary, and inclusive, environments, with the tools, accommodations, and support they need for success.

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that by the time he is 26 his supervision needs will be far less than they are today – and they are already far less than they would have been without excellent special education intervention. Indeed, I believe that he will become a “productive” member of society, whether he can succeed at competitive employment, needs employment supports, or serves his community as an active volunteer.

Ever since we began struggling to gain a high-quality inclusive education for our son, we have felt that the Michigan special education rules were an unnecessary obstacle. Obviously, they did not prevent getting the kind of education preferred under the IDEA 97 and shown to be the most successful by almost all recent research. However, the rules have favored a label-and-place approach that has meant that we constantly have to fight a perceived State preference for placing our son in a segregated classroom for students with SXI labels, which in our area is housed in a completely separate building.

We had hoped that rule revisions would reflect the federally mandated preference for education of students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers in general education classrooms – with all necessary services and supports. Unfortunately, the proposed rule package does this only in a most cynical way. Indeed, it removes the label-and-place approach from the rules themselves, but it simply allows the ISDs to re-impose that same old approach at the local level. However, when they do so, as I am sure most will, it will be without the protections in the current rules that help insure relatively high quality in categorical special education classrooms, at least insofar as they insure sensible staffing ratios.

The new rules remove these protections, but do not replace them with anything at all that would help insure that students in any settings would receive the needed supports and services that are vital for achieving a free and appropriate education. They certainly do nothing to suggest the kind of program our district is now providing for our son. There is not a word about providing all needed supports and services, regardless of placement, not a word about assistive technology, not a word about the enormous need for education of both parents and professionals that would allow genuinely creating the best – or even an “appropriate” -- IEP for every student eligible for special education here in Michigan. These new rules are indeed a perfect illustration of “throwing the baby out with the bath water.” The old protections disappear, but no new protections are offered to take their place.

For this reason, although I would welcome a good faith effort to move the state rules toward the spirit of the IDEA, I must oppose the current rule package. I feel it will be as damaging to students like my son as it will be to students now served in segregated, categorical placements. Yes, the IDEA does support the kind of educational opportunity being afforded to my son – if it didn’t, he wouldn’t have it. Certainly, nothing in the existing state rules supports it. But I would prefer to have no state rules at all than to have the confusing and cynical package now being proposed. In my view, the state needs to lay out the particular means by which the IDEA will be followed in the state of Michigan – the rules need to lay out positive actions and procedures, not just delete protections and pass responsibility on to the ISDs.

Part of my concern about the proposed rule package has to do with

abandonment of any specifications for making decisions about providing human supports to students, whether those supports are provided by teachers, paraprofessionals, therapists, social workers, psychologist, or any other ancillary service providers. The use of “instructional ratios” to determine staffing ratios at the ISD level is absurd. If staffing needs are to be determined by individual student needs as listed in IEPs, as indeed the federal law requires, the ratio idea makes no sense at all. My understanding is that the ratios are attempt to make sure that special education students are not left completely without staffing – that the ratio is supposed to set some sort of minimum. This minimum is so arbitrary, however, that it provides to assurance at all that any individual student’s needs will be met. It would make far more sense to have a rule package that lays out a menu of support services that must be considered by every IEP team and a description of what FAPE is understood to be in the state of Michigan.

The absence of this kind of rule content, together with the deletion reference to “maximum potential” as the goal for special education, suggests that there is no commitment whatsoever from the Department of Education to make sure that high quality special education services are available to Michigan students. This is true wherever on the so-called “continuum” one may look. Instead, the state is abrogating its responsibility and passing the buck to local ISDs, many of whom have poor records for IDEA compliance already. Even well-intentioned and committed ISD personnel still lack the expertise and time to create ISD plans that are consistent with the IDEA.

In particular, I am very concerned about what will happen to special

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education in Wayne County. Wayne County includes the full range of demographic and socio-economic communities that exists in Michigan as a whole, ranging from the large, poor, urban district of Detroit, through a full range of town and suburbs, and even includes near-rural districts. By shifting responsibility for planning from State to ISD, the State has burdened Wayne County, already drowning in problems, with coming up with a plan that must cover all the eventualities and circumstances found in Michigan as a whole. This would be merely ridiculous were it not also unconscionable.

Other problems exist in other ISDs – some lack expertise or sheer person power to carry out the task, others have no history of providing quality special education supports to students and schools. Many serve highly diverse groups of districts, and many of those districts themselves represent a huge diversity of needs, cultures, and beliefs about special education. As a result, pushing responsibility for operationalizing the IDEA down to ISDs will create enormous inequities both within and across Intermediate School Districts.

Section 300.600 of the federal law (IDEA) describes the responsibilities of the State Department of Education. I believe that the proposed rules are a violation of the IDEA itself, so in the long run the courts will have to intervene if the problem is not addressed now. Likewise, many of the other gaps in the state rules will also lead to court cases. Unfortunately, a generation of students may suffer until these matters are resolved and millions of education dollars will be paid to lawyers instead of being used to provide special education to students.

There is no reason on earth to be doing this. Why not follow the model set by the federal government and engage in a process by which rule-makers and legislators meet with educators, parents, and advocates and hammer out a law and a system of rules that is genuinely in the best interest of both students with disabilities and the state of which they are citizens. It is time to redefine the proposed rule package as

a rough draft and begin the process of creating a system of state rules that is consistent with federal law, that insures a high quality education to every student, and that will eliminate the costly and debilitating adversarial relationships between stakeholders.

Testimony given in Gaylord, Michigan
April 11, 2001

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Member, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council and

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ARC representative to the Oakland Schools Parent Advisory Committee
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"Unfortunately, a generation of students may suffer until these matters are resolved and millions of education dollars will be paid to lawyers instead of being used to provide special education to students."

-Lynne Tamor



Additional Conferences and workshops

Gentle Teaching Conferences

October 23-25, 2001
Somerset Inn, Troy MI

For more information:
<http://www.gentlelearning.com>

New Students New Questions

A one-day workshop on Inclusive Education Strategies for teachers of Art, Drama, Physical Education and Music featuring Norman Kunc, Dr. Jill England, and Jim Chapple.

November 5, 2001
Eagle Crest Conference Center
Ypsilanti, MI
(734)487-2000

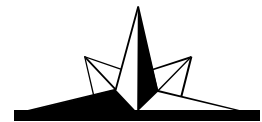
For more information:
<http://www.thewestwindgroup.com>

Or contact WIN for a conference brochure.

2001 TASH Conference "Imaging the Future"

November 14-17, 2001
Marriott Anaheim/Anaheim Convention Center
(714)750-8000

For more information:
<http://www.tash.org>



"A journey of a
thousand
miles begins
with a single
step."

-Old Chinese Proverb



Molly's Story—A true story from West Michigan

Molly is a twelve year old girl who lives in West Michigan. When she was seven, her parents, in attempting to obtain a good education for her, placed her in a special education classroom for children considered "trainable mentally impaired". The class was in an elementary school located in a neighboring district. The classroom itself was located at the end of a hall in which no other classrooms were located. In Molly's class, there were twelve children of which one half had Down Syndrome. The children ranged in age from five to ten.

During the day, in this special education class, the children were generally isolated from the remainder of the school population. In the lunchroom, they were not allowed to eat with the "normal" children and at recess, they had their own special fenced area in which to play within sight of the general education students.

Molly did not like this class. After several months, she began crying in the morning before school, asking her mother if she could stay home. The special education teacher assured her mother that Molly was fine when she got to school. But Molly's mother was unhappy as well. She did not like the isolation of her daughter from the general school population. She arranged with the teacher that Molly help out a half hour a day in the school library. After many months, this was only occurring once a week.

Molly's mother was also unhappy with what her daughter was not learning. When she asked the teacher if Molly would be learning to read that year, she was told "no", they would be working on numbers instead. Molly's mother knew her daughter could learn to read and she believed the teacher was underestimating not

only Molly, but all the children in the class. She heard the children being asked to sit on their hands. She inquired as to why the TMI class could not sing with the rest of the school in the music program. She was told they would disturb the other children because they did not sing right.

Fortunately, Molly's story has a happy ending. She no longer cries when she goes to school. Her mother took the initiative to remove her from an unnatural situation. Molly's mother approached her own school district about an inclusive placement for Molly. She knew Molly would be happier interacting with general education students just as she was happy playing with kids in her own neighborhood. Luckily, her school district cooperated with her request.

Molly is now starting fifth grade at her neighborhood school. She has attended there since first grade. The children have accepted her with open arms and have become her friends. She is well liked and gets invited to parties and friend's houses. Academically, she has done well. She loves reading and enjoys this as a past time. Her mother is convinced that the move to inclusion was right for Molly. In second grade, as the result of a science unit, Molly corrected her mother by saying, "No, Mom, those are

cirrus clouds, not cumulus" while observing the sky. For a unit on famous Americans, Molly gave a presentation on George W. Bush. Using cue cards and wearing a cowboy hat, she delivered an articulate and moving speech. Last year, she became enthused about the story of the Titanic, drawing pictures of it and learning why and how it sank. Molly loves to learn and yes, she has social studies and science now too.



Molly performing in a school talent show with Heather, a friend from her class.

-Lauri Stein

Accommodations and Adaptations

By Mary VandeWater—Molly's Mom

Many teachers and parents are apprehensive about including a child with a disability in general education classroom. It just sounds so overwhelming... the work, the lesson plans, the accommodations, the adaptation, etc. Most things are simple and just need creativity and common sense.

What are accommodations and adaptations? Accommodations are changes in how a student gets information and shows learning. These do not change the content, instruction level, or performance. Adaptations, on the other hand, changes what the student is expected to learn and demonstrate during their class. Each child is so unique that accommodations and adaptations should be tailor made to fit their own special needs and goals.

Advocates often hear the argument that a child should be given "just one more year" in a segregated classroom to get them "ready" for inclusion. Hmm...

How can one more year, secluded, without proper role models, do anything to prepare a child for real life? The number one prerequisite for inclusion should be... breathing! Let's not put the burden on our children, they are not the ones who need to be prepared. It is the administrators, teachers, and parents. So here come "accommodations and adaptations 101".

The first thing to look at is the classroom setting. A child with a disability might be more easily distracted and need some extra help. For these reasons sitting at a table in close proximity to the teacher, with a clear view of the board, and surrounded by peers with a variety of abilities is best. This also enables the children to be paired or grouped for different assignments and activities. In my daughter's classroom it is not uncommon to see a friend reach over to help her find

the correct page, spell a word, or give her words of encouragement. This is Molly's fifth year at her school so with most of her classmates it is all very natural.

The most common accommodations are the use of a calculator, tape recorder, and numerous choices of software. Oral testing, larger print, allowing more time for completion of assignments, and using visual aids and picture cues are other things teachers might use to promote learning. Drawing a picture and then explaining their answer instead of trying to write an essay is an option for modifying the curriculum. Another way to accommodate would be to assign a smaller quantity of work.

Students are usually required to copy sentences from the board by the third or fourth grade. For some children this is frustrating because it is hard to keep track of which sentence or word they are on. Providing a copy of what is written on the board may take away the problem and save a lot of time.

We all want independence for our children. A para-pro is often necessary to help a student become successful, but they should also be there to assist the teacher whenever possible. This way they don't have to "hover" over just one student and all can benefit.

Math has always been a challenge for Molly. She still works on the basics, but learning to use a calculator has been most helpful and is something she will need throughout her life. She also does lots of hands-on work, especially with money. Some children can benefit from just using a larger print on their work papers with more white space in-between. This makes it easier to focus and less distracting.

Finding books at Molly's reading

level that contain topics her class is covering is one of the biggest challenges. Books have been made for her when necessary. Tests have been rewritten in language that is easier to understand, simplified multiple choice tests, or substituted with matching.

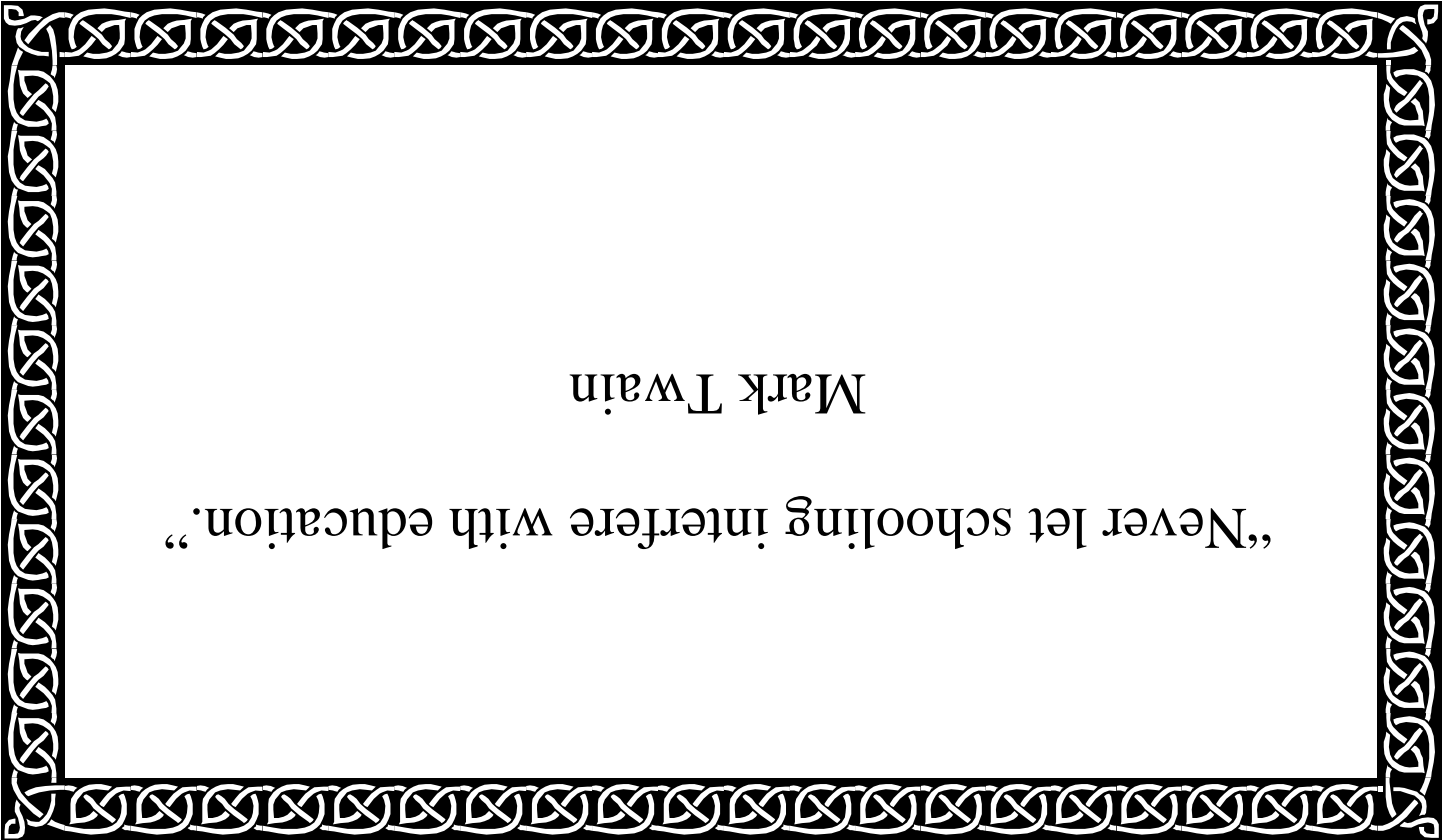
Last year in Social Studies each student was required to do an oral report on a famous American. They were to be video taped giving a speech, dressed as their famous person. Molly chose George W. Bush. After much practice the day came for Molly to be George W. She wore her cowboy hat and proudly started telling her story, but when she noticed the camera she just looked down and couldn't be understood. Her teacher, truly a genius, wrote cue cards for Molly and before long she was back in the "saddle". It was the perfect solution. She was so busy reading the cards that she never noticed the camera and with her head up she could be clearly understood. The added bonus was the boost to her self-confidence.

Physical education and music can be difficult for the teachers because they are with a student with special needs for such a short time that they really don't get to know the student very well. It really helps to give these teachers an understanding of what the disability is and if there are any limitations. In my daughter's gym class the teacher doesn't push her quite as hard because of her heart defect. She still participates though. I noticed them playing hockey one day and stopped to watch. The teacher had Molly and a friend be the goalies together. (Not too much running and help at that crucial spot where she could have been blamed if they lost the game.)

No matter who creates accommodations and adaptations the important thing is that someone does it and does it well. It makes all the difference between success and failure for Molly.



Molly at work in class.



Mark Twain

“Never let schooling interfere with education.”



**West Michigan
Inclusion Network**

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