



# Inclusion Solutions

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## A Letter from the Editor

As I thought about what to write this month, it struck me that I needed to read a poem I had not read in years. Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken". Why? Because this poem speaks of two roads that diverged in a yellow wood... the choice being made to take one road versus another and about finding, in the end, that taking the road less traveled made all the difference. So I found the poem and you too can enjoy it in this issue.

Inclusion is a different road than the special education model of segregation that many of us witnessed as we grew up. Some people still believe that that old road more traveled has merit. For those of us who come to the fork in the road and choose the road less traveled, there is little comparison.

As I watched my son's fifth grade classmates during the last few months of this school year, I observed wonderful and caring children who gathered around Gene to get him to smile, help him learn or try to help him speak. Many of them exuberantly told me about something he had said or done which had excited them.

There was AJ who sat with and helped Gene at lunch and pushed him on the swings almost every day. There were Elizabeth and Katherine who both gave him cards and presents for his birthday... things they knew he liked, like a bathtub whale and a Dr. Seuss book. There was Thomas or Ethan who would bring the gerbil up to Gene to see if he

wanted to pet it. I haven't seen many classrooms as great as this one. The sense of community and caring was wonderful... not just for Gene, but for each other as well.

Awards came the last day of school and despite the fact Gene cannot keep up with his class, his teacher found some reasons to

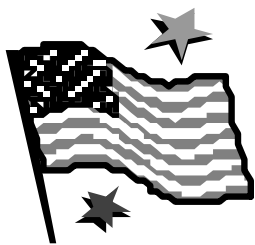


give him awards just as all the other children received some awards. He walked to the front of the room with nudging from his friends to receive awards for citizenship, improved computer performance and improvement in work and study habits.

He stood up front, facing the teacher, reading what was written on each award certificate for the class to hear. The children clapped loudly as he finished and returned to his desk. There were tears in my eyes for this was my son with autism and Down Syndrome looking so proud.

In 2001, inclusion remains the road less traveled and unfortunately often the road not taken by students with disabilities. But it is the journey on this road that always squeezes my heart and makes me pause to count my blessings. Thank you to all the children and to the adults who understand that by journeying with Gene, they are experiencing the beauty and reaping the rewards of taking the road less traveled.

-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](mailto:wmichinclusion@aol.com) or  
 call our offices at: **616-954-9424**

## Board Members

- ◆ Barb Spidell
- ◆ Clark Goodrich
- ◆ Kathy Vogel
- ◆ Dr. Barbara Doumanian
- ◆ Rita Berlin
- ◆ Annetta Davis
- ◆ Shaun Walters
- ◆ Lauri Stein

## Advocacy Consultants

- ◆ Deanna Cowden
- ◆ Mary VandeWater



## Walk for WIN works

On June 2, 2001, we had our second annual *Walk for WIN*. Thank you to so many people for making this event a big success. We raised over \$4,000 this year!!! A special thanks to those who volunteered their time and energy: Wendy VerBurg, Rita Berlin, Barb Doumanian and Deanna Cowden.

Additionally we would like to recognize our corporate donors:

- Lacks Industries
- TruHeat Corporation
- Benteler
- Diesel Technology
- ABDICK
- The Rapistan Association
- Marro's Italian Restaurant
- Ameritech
- Family Fare
- Earthbound Screen Printing
- Cascade McDonald's

Additional thanks to those who provided prize drawings:

- o GVSU bookstore
- o Bill Knapps
- o Motma's Greenhouse
- o GVSU Council for Exceptional Children
- o VanAndel Museum Center
- o Grand Rapids Art Museum
- o Urban Mill Bread Co.
- o Design One
- o My Coffee Garden
- o Old Kent Bank

Again, thank you to all who walked, gathered donations and donated. We truly appreciate your help.



**Are you or anyone you know interested in becoming involved with WIN? We are always looking for extra hands and volunteers to plan and assist with our events.**

**If you are interested in becoming a WIN board member; please contact the WIN office for consideration.**

**If you have any ideas for this newsletter; we can post websites, events, meetings, and articles that are inclusive in nature.**

## 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.

### **Annual WIN Inclusive Education Conference**

Friday, December 7, 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](mailto:wmichinclusion@aol.com).

# Including Students with Learning Disabilities: What We Have Learned

Throughout the country increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities are being educated successfully with their typical peers in general education classrooms. The research on the benefits of inclusive education for students with learning disabilities has indicated (1) academic achievement at or above levels in the segregated classrooms, (2) improvement in social skills and work habits (students are more independent), and (3) the students themselves report a positive attitude, that is, they prefer staying in the classroom with their peers.

In addition, the high school dropout rate for these students has decreased dramatically. *We have learned* that to realize these outcomes, a school district must implement and maintain some major systemic and philosophical changes. Below are four of the most important of these changes.

## Collaborative Teaching

Collaborative teaching or co-teaching involves the reallocation of special education resources; that is, special education and Title I teachers, paraprofessionals, and speech therapists are assigned to classrooms for large blocks of time on a daily basis to assist students. They work with the general educator in a coactive and coordinated fashion to jointly teach academically and behaviorally heterogeneous groups of students.

The additional support in the classrooms means that there is more opportunity for small group or individual instruction and that accommodations or extra help are available in a timely manner. The benefits of co-teaching impact all students and in fact, there is a substantial amount of research to demonstrate higher achievement for typical students in inclusive classrooms.

*We have learned* that of all of the factors associated with the success of inclusion for students with learning dis-

abilities, the availability of classroom based support is probably the most important. In schools where the support has been pulled out under the faulty notion that “now the general education teachers could do it on their own” the program has eventually failed.

## Differentiated Instruction for All Children

Differentiated instruction (DI) seems to be one of the most misunderstood practices in our schools at the present time. In brief, DI is not just individualizing work for students, it is not ability grouping, and it is not a matter of merely designing assignments for different levels of difficulty (although that could be part of it). Differentiating instruction is a process of creating multiple ways for students to take in information, make sense of ideas and demonstrate what they have learned.

Specifically, DI is based on our most recent knowledge of how the brain best learns new information, particularly how it assigns meaning to new information and makes connections with information previously learned. So, in a DI classroom, students are encouraged to make connections among ideas within a content area and across content areas by focusing on the “global concept” or big idea, which helps students remember information in a meaningful way.

Designing learning activities in the DI classroom takes into account the multiple intelligences and learning styles of students, helping students become engaged in the learning process. Instructional strategies like the use of concept maps, graphic organizers, cubing, and scaffolding helps the students visualize and organize the information as it is presented. And finally, in DI classrooms, teachers frequently use alternatives to pencil/paper assessments which means that students with learning disabilities are assessed using an area of strength instead of weakness.

*We have learned* that classrooms that are implementing differentiated instruction are easy classrooms to include students with learning disabilities because strategies once thought of as “special accommodations” are just part of instructional design for all students, e.g. hands on materials, experiential learning.

## The Elimination of an Inability to Read or Write Well as a Barrier to Learning With Your Peers:

Perhaps one of the most important paradigm shifts in our thinking about teaching students who have learning disabilities is in the areas of reading and writing. Increasingly teachers are figuring out that these inability need not be barriers to participation in grade level appropriate activities. For example, the fact that a student can not read at grade level, does not mean he or she should not listen to the literature of that grade level as it is read by the teacher to the class and then participate in the skill building activities associated with that literature piece, e.g. making a prediction or contrasting two characters in a story. Similarly, a student does not have to read the social studies text to learn about social studies.

There are many ways that we can eliminate the inability to read well from being a barrier to learning the subject matter in the general education classroom. Videotapes, hands on activities and discussion in the classroom can augment texts. Also, technology certainly has made the learning new information easier for students with disabilities.

Our ability to scan information into word processors that read the material to the student, web reading (Web Reader) software that allows students to do research on the internet independently, software that helps students with disabilities visualize and organize their

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## WOULD YOU BELIEVE??

Albert Einstein was 4 years old before he could speak and 7 before he could read. He hated school and dropped out of high school at 15 years of age.

When Thomas Edison was a boy, his teachers told him he was too stupid to learn anything.

Beethoven's music teacher once said of him, "As a composer, he's hopeless."

F.W. Woolworth got a job in a dry goods store when he was 21, but his employers would not let him wait on a customer because he didn't have enough sense.

A newspaper editor fired Walt Disney because he had no good ideas.

Werner Von Braun flunked ninth-grade algebra.

Louis Pasteur was rated as "mediocre" in chemistry when he attended the Royal College.

Abraham Lincoln entered the Black Hawk War as a Captain and came out a Private.



"It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."

-Albert Einstein

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thoughts (Inspiration), and word prediction programs (Co-Writer) that prompt students so that they can create written documents are now commonly available in our schools to support students with learning disabilities. ***We have learned*** that you don't have to be able to read it to learn it!

#### **Administrative Support for Restructuring**

A responsive school leadership provides the direction and management support needed to enable teachers and families to organize their efforts to provide successful inclusive education opportunities for students with learning disabilities. On-going staff development and technical assistance, regularly scheduled planning time, and support for the flexible use of resources are key components for success. ***We have learned*** that administrators must look at the implementation of inclusive education as a systems change initiative. Otherwise, it may be implemented in a fragmented fashion, perhaps without enough support to sustain the initiative and it may become personality dependent; that is, only exist if the same teachers or principal remain in place.

**Dr. Jill England** is now a private inclusive education consultant. She has worked for the past 15 years with school districts throughout the country to create inclusive school communities.

She can be reached via email at: [englandjil@aol.com](mailto:englandjil@aol.com)

# A Learning Activity

General education teachers often may need to reframe their thinking about what children with disabilities are expected to learn in general education classrooms. It is a common myth that kids with disabilities cannot be included unless they can “keep up” with the other students in the class academically. This simply isn’t true. For kids that work behind grade level, teachers need to understand that: **“It is not the exact curriculum that is critical, rather the activities that the teacher creates to help kids learn.”** Here is an example of how this can be accomplished for a child like our son, Gene, who academically works at about a kindergarten level, but is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Writing is an integral part of the fifth grade curriculum. Students practice writing skills. For example, students in a classroom might be asked to compare and contrast two characters in a story they have all read or they may create stories with key vocabulary words. How could a teacher adapt this so that Gene, too, could learn something?



A sample picture about whispering.

First, one needs to understand a little bit about Gene. He can read at about a 1<sup>st</sup> grade level but his reading comprehension is difficult to assess. He speaks in one to three word sentences and primarily about things he wants to do or have. He can type words and sentences on a computer if he has the written word or sentences to follow. He can use a scissors and cut if someone helps hold the paper. He can print large words on paper, using a tilt board, if the words or sentences are prewritten as broken lines. All these things considered, we found a writing activity he liked. He began making his own books. He was able to work on this activity while the other children worked on their writing assignments and he was able to share the finished books when the class shared their work as a group.

To start with, digital pictures were taken of Gene in the classroom with his friends for the book. For example, there were pictures of his friend Ethan showing Gene the classroom gerbil. Another picture was of friend John whispering in Gene’s ear. There was another picture of Julie showing Gene a book. The students were happy to be part of this picture taking activity. Because Gene is very motivated to be with his friends, this topic proved very motivating for him. After printing the pictures out, they were looked at with Gene. A brief sentence was hand printed by an adult about each picture from Gene’s perspective. For example: “John whispers in my ear”, “Julie reads with me” and “Ethan shows me the gerbil”. We then put the printed sentence in front of Gene and had him find the same letters on the keyboard and type the sentence. These sentences were also printed out.

The next step was having Gene cut and paste the pictures and the sentences onto sheets of paper to put into a notebook. He was able to choose the color of the paper. As he did this, we had him look at the picture and read the sentences aloud. After things were glued down, he then enjoyed pushing the three-hole punch. The finished page was put into a folder. Sometimes, typing wasn’t possible, so we wrote the sentences in broken lines and Gene was asked to pick the color marker and print the letters. This was more difficult for him. When he had about seven to eight pages, we put a title on the book called “My School Friends”. Other ideas could readily be used like a vacation trip with family pictures, a week at camp or a birthday party.

Gene was given his book to have with him when kids were called upon to read in a group. He proudly went to the front of the room and read his book and his teacher helped him show his pictures. In addition, making the actual books turned out to really interest his friends around him. “John whispers to me” actually occurred again several days later when Gene looked at the picture and started to emulate the picture with John again. John then whispered to Clay and Clay to Gene and we witnessed some great social interaction occurring for Gene with his friends.

This process could be adapted in numerous ways to the level that a child may require. The important thing is that the subject matter is motivating for the child

-Lauri Stein.

## Interview with a Middle-School Principal

Andy Scogg, Principal of Northview Crossroads Middle School, believes that every child is gifted in some area. He loves to talk with kids and really listens to discover a student's gifts. With this knowledge and clear communication from the parents about what they want for their child, Scogg and his staff help students grow in meaningful ways. "There are students who need to be successful in school with something besides paper and pencil skills," he says. While he has a heart for working with all kids, Andy especially enjoys finding a way for "at risk" students to achieve success. He says, "Kids will rise to expectations."

Andy's wish to see every student succeed and his sincere desire to do what is best for kids results in an atmosphere at Crossroads that works very well for special needs students included in general education. He has a wonderful teaching and support staff, and with his leadership they work together to support and nurture their students.

Our son Bradley (a boy who has Down Syndrome) was fully included in seventh and eighth grade at Crossroads. There was no question that he was welcomed and belonged at this school. Every staff member who came into contact with Bradley was aware of how they could be supportive of his growing and learning. Classroom teachers gladly accepted Bradley as their student and put forth extra effort to work with Bradley's aide to adapt curriculum. Lunchroom supervisors knew of Bradley's social and behavioral goals, so they kept an eye out for him. They tried to set him up for success, and craftily turned incidents into teachable moments. Everyone in the building was a teacher, including the custodian who helped Bradley learn a good work ethic and some light custodial skills. One can only imagine the hard work and communication that goes on behind the scenes to create a school environment this rich and nurturing for students.

I asked Andy what advice he would give to another principal who is about to work with a family who wants their child with a disability included in general education. He said that good communication is critical. Parents must be clear in communicating what they want for their child. What is the vision they have for their child? What do they want their child to achieve over the two years they are at Crossroads? Parents must communicate their fears, and teachers must be honest about their fears. When these are on the table, Andy can find ways to educate, train and be supportive. He says that it's important to show teachers that inclusion can work by pointing to schools that are doing good things. Commitment from the principal is critical, and Andy insists that you "never stop trying."

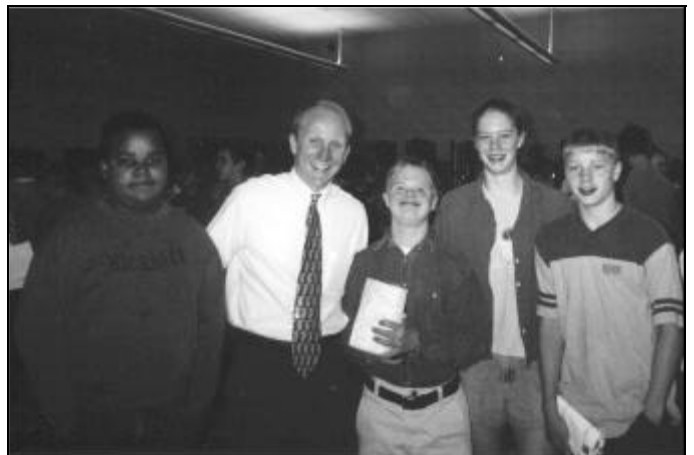
We discussed the benefits and drawbacks of inclusive education. Andy described a better school climate. "It's more of a

family environment where people are watching out for each other," he notes. "All kids are learning that we are different from one another, and that's O.K. They are learning acceptance and that we need to help each other out." Andy indicated that there are more natural teachable moments from which all students learn. Also, he has seen that students who are included are achieving higher than imagined.

The drawbacks of inclusive education revolve mainly around the time required and the challenge of properly preparing and supporting teachers. He said, "Teachers need the tools and knowledge to know how best to reach the student. Teachers need a lot of support and guidance and proper materials." He said that identifying all of this and planning for it takes a lot of time. Andy says that the thing that attracted him the most to Northview Public Schools is a strong commitment to doing what is best for kids. He says, "Often what is best for kids is not what is best for teachers." But he is committed to helping teachers overcome the obstacles and working with them, if necessary, to change their mindset.

Andy Scogg, who is in his third year as Principal at Crossroads, was a teacher in Greenville for eleven years, has been a coach, camp counselor, swimming instructor and previously owned a drywall and painting business. He is married with five children. I asked him what influenced him to work in the field of education with the dedication he has to making a difference in the lives of so many kids. He said he was greatly influenced by his father who was also a principal and an assistant superintendent. Andy's father told him, "Whatever it is you choose to do, do it well and be proud of who you are." Andy not only lives this strong message from his father, he also shares it with the kids he works with as he encourages them to find their gifts and be the best they can be.

-Barb Spidell



*Andy Scogg, Principal of Northview Crossroads Middle School with some of his students*

### THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that, the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost



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