

The Journal of the Coalition of Essential Schools

# horace

Innovation in Education

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### Essential Schools as Inclusive Education Leaders

In Essential schools, inclusion is a crucial strategy for equity, celebration of diversity, and a path to learning success for all students.

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### Book Reviews

→ *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* by Richard Rothstein

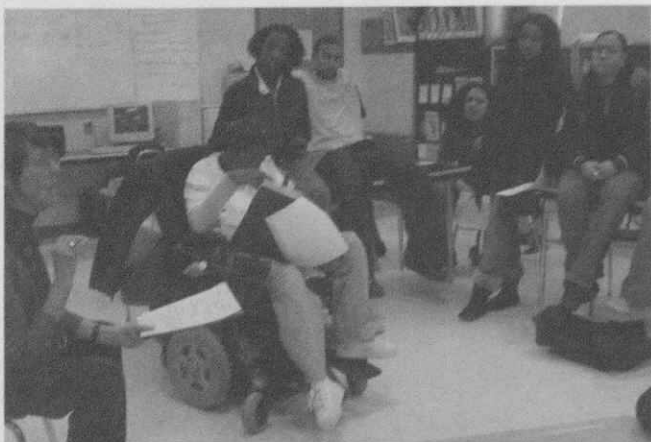
→ *Teacher: The One Who Made the Difference* by Mark Edmundson

→ *Putting the Movement Back Into Civil Rights Teaching* edited by Deborah Menkart, Alana D. Murray and Jenice L. View

## Inclusion and Learning Differences in Essential Schools

**Our New Experience: Teaching Students with Language Learning Based Disabilities in an Inclusive Community** Fenway High School English teacher Rawchayl Sahadeo describes how Fenway is expanding its capability to create the best teaching and learning for all students.

**Inclusion Research at Work at Boston Arts Academy** Anne Clark, teacher and administrator at Boston Arts Academy, looks through the lens of research at the benefits and challenges of creating a learning environment that support students with disabilities and enhances authentic achievement for all.



BAA theater students review a scene with Theater Chair Rosalind Thomas-Clark

### 3: Inclusion must address the specific needs of the specific student as specifically as possible.

**What the Research Says:** Garnett is most helpful here when she writes that special education is "the marshaling of appropriately focused responses to individual students' educational needs" and then goes on to dissect the concept of "appropriate," writing, "Appropriate for what? For supporting social integration? For securing an adequate foundation of skills and knowledge? For engaging in work that is challenging but not out of reach? For revealing needs and working on weaknesses? For learning increasingly adaptive strategies of attending, organizing, and remembering? For developing social relations and social skills? For increasing self reliance?" We must, she argues, answer these questions one student at a time and one classroom at a time.

**Research in Practice at BAA:** We have learned that we need to have differentiated approaches to inclusion at BAA that respond to the specific goals for specific students in specific content areas. We have learned to talk through our students' individual schedules in detail, connecting their learning goals to the curricular goals of each course. Our arts-focused mission has been invaluable here, for it simultaneously requires that we look at each student complexly in terms of strengths (often artistic) and weaknesses (often academic) and that we understand deeply the skills and content goals across a diverse curriculum. For example, we have a senior, a visual artist, who has both a sophisticated visual sense and a substantial language-based learning disorder. Imagine a conversation where the visual arts teacher and the special educator talk with the math teacher about how to approach this student. That conversation was our goal.

### 4: Inclusion means being highly sensitive to learning environments and the challenges they present to students.

**What the Research Says:** Inclusion works in classrooms in which all teachers and learners have properly prepared themselves and their environment. Garnett intricately describes the experience of students with learning disabilities in regular education classrooms that aren't ready for inclusion. She sees these classrooms as designed to be detrimental to rather than supportive of these students' learning in terms of "who initi-

ates, what sorts of responding occurs, when knowledge is displayed, whether mistakes are valued, [and] how face-saving tactics play out." Shireen Pavri, in "The Social Face of Inclusive Education: Are Students with Learning Disabilities Really Included in the Classroom," discusses how the school social environment specifically affects the learning of students with learning disorders. She provides a series of examples: students who lack skills in initiating and sustaining positive social relationships, students who have difficulty interpreting social cues, students who are more aggressive and negative in their verbal and nonverbal behaviors, students who are either disruptive or withdrawn. All these developmental delays result, she argues, in peer rejection which in turn may have a negative affect on achievement. Particularly in high school, where socialization is difficult for all students, we have to be sensitive to the particular social challenges for students with learning disabilities.

**Research in Practice at BAA:** At BAA, to prepare for inclusion, we have learned that we need to have these conversations both with adults and with students. In an urban school with students (and staff) from a wide variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, we have always had explicit discussions about what diversity means. We have learned that we need to include learning differences in that conversation. We have learned that we need to talk as adults explicitly and often about our backgrounds and how those backgrounds affect what we see and don't see in our students. We have learned to talk explicitly and often with students about the diverse learning experiences and needs of their peers. What does it mean when a student with cerebral palsy joins a theater ensemble? This is a question we grapple with as adults, and we must invite students into this generative and important struggle.

### 5: Inclusion does not mean watered down instruction.

**What the Research Says:** Both Edwin Ellis, in "Watering Up the Curriculum for Adolescents with Learning Disabilities, Part I: Goals of the Knowledge Dimension," and Rosalie P. Fink, in "Successful Dyslexics: A Constructivist Study of Passionate Interest Reading" make this important point which represents a common fear among regular educators, who worry that they are being asked to "lower standards." Ellis takes great pains to explain why classrooms that facilitate the "development of deep knowledge structures" are good for all students, including students with learning difficulties. He presents six basic principles for "making knowledge construction more meaningful and robust," arguing that instruction should focus on "teaching big ideas, promoting elaboration, relating to real-world contexts, and integrating thinking skills and strategies into the curriculum." He concludes by stating that "students' success as adults will depend largely on the degree to which they employ, on a day-to-day basis, higher order thinking and information processing skills." Key to his discussion is curriculum work integral to many Coalition schools, specifically the organization of teaching and learning around habits of the mind. Ellis is careful to speak about cognitive limitations for some students, but his concern is well placed. Too often, "educators' efforts to make content less complex and easier to understand can often have the reverse effect" and "modifications [are] counter-productive because ideas

tend to be presented in short, choppy, list-like bits of information [and] the elements that indicate important relationships between ideas tend to be eliminated."

**Research in Practice at BAA:** Much of Ellis' discussion will be familiar to anyone in a Coalition school working to help students use their minds well. At BAA, we have organized our courses around exhibitions and performances that demonstrate key content and key skills. We have organized our school around our interdisciplinary "Habits of the Graduate": Refine, Invent, Connect, and Own. Annually, our students present cumulative portfolios representative of the year's work to panels of teachers and parents, and students defend their personal progress towards these habits. But at that same time, we have learned that teaching engaging content in an inclusive classroom necessitates giving teachers the time and support to map their curricula around such thinking skills and to construct appropriate and thoughtful modifications and accommodations. As an administrative team we know that it is too easily the case – because the teaming structures are not there, the time is not there for co-planning, and the staffing is not adequate for all teachers to have access to special educators – that regular educators get an overly simplified message about how to support students with learning disabilities: drop content.

**6: Inclusion means helping teachers be thoughtful about assessment, specifically about what should be "standard" and what should be "differentiated."**

**What the Research Says:** Garnett approaches this issue through what she perceives as teachers' misplaced value of equality. She questions a prevailing teacher assumption that the goal for students with learning disabilities should be "fitting in": "[t]his translates into not wanting to treat them differently...[but to] even begin approaching these students' learning needs requires treating them considerably differently"; this difference, she continues, necessarily must show up in assessment. In "Preventing Inappropriate Referrals of Language Minority Students to Special Education," Shernaz B. Garcia and Alba A. Ortiz argue that too often educators are not able to distinguish among students who are language minority students who cannot access the language of the classroom, students with social/emotional issues that affect their achievement, and students with learning disabilities. The appropriate approach to each of these issues is different, Garcia and Ortiz continue, yet too often educators fail to differentiate. Making a related point, a BAA colleague has said, "We must distinguish among the can't do, the won't do, and the complex combination can't dos and won't dos" and assess appropriately.

**Research in Practice at BAA:** At BAA, we have worked very hard to talk in teams about accommodations and modifications, when and how they make sense and when and how they don't. We have found that the more we encourage our teachers to treat students individually, the better off all of our students are. This emphasis on individualization does not mean that we don't have standardized graduation standards and benchmarks – we do. But we have helped teachers think through the multiple paths students take to reach those standards. It is my experience and belief that well-intentioned



BAA music major Anthony Nembhard

regular educators are most uncomfortable with inclusion when asked to move beyond assessment (understanding where the student is achieving and where the student is struggling) to grading (quantifying that assessment with a number or a letter). Compounding the problem, special educators are not always valuable resources in this regard because they do not often grade in a traditional sense. Succinctly put: grading is fundamental to perceptions and philosophies of teaching for a regular educator, but special educators, in my experience, can talk about modification and accommodation but struggle when they talk about grading. At BAA, we have worked to meet in the middle. Our goal is to have regular educators and special educators work together to map a student's path through each course, including in that conversation both instruction and assessment.

**7: Inclusion is stronger when technology is integrated into the vision.**

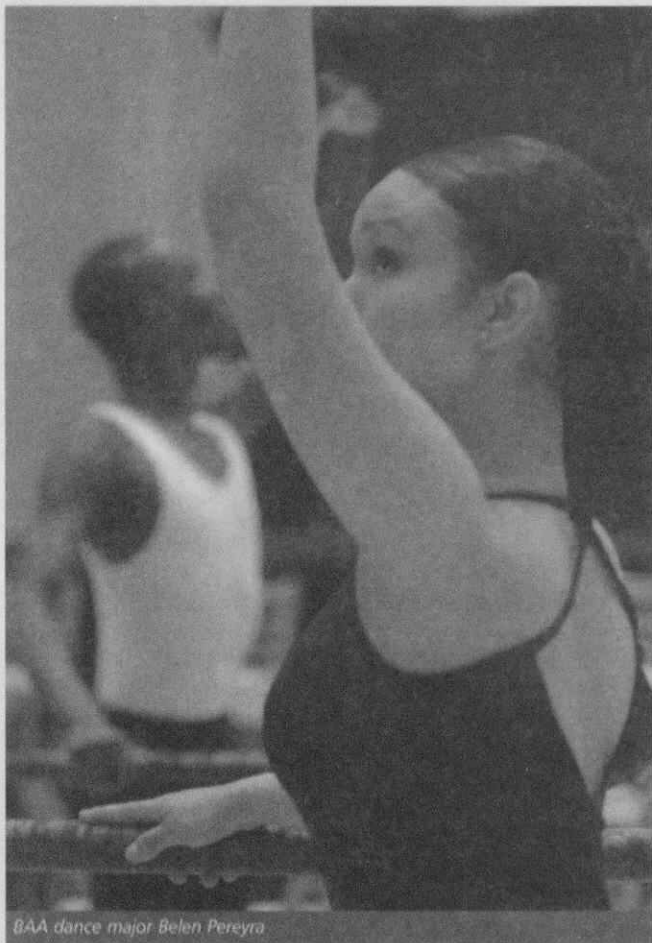
**What the Research Says:** Jane Quenneville, in "Tech Tools for Students with Learning Disabilities: Infusion into Inclusive Classrooms," and Joy Smiley Zabala, in "Get SETT for Successful Inclusion and Transition," make the point that technology, when done right, can make all the difference for students with learning disabilities. But technology, as Zabala points out, is another factor dependent on effective teaming. The appropriate tools are necessary, but so is the professional development and coordination time for staff.



**Research in Practice at BAA:** Like all inclusive schools, we have found that technology (even the simplest technologies such as recorded books and AlphaSmarts) have been invaluable. As an arts high school, we have had extraordinary opportunities—in our music recording studio, in our technical theater program, in our visual arts computer design lab—to understand how technology is a powerful part of education. That understanding has taught us to include assistive technologies as part of an overall vision of the relationship between technology and teaching and learning, and it has shown students the ways in which technology can transform their learning.

**8: Inclusion is not just a conversation among educators; it's a conversation that must include students and parents.**

**What the Research Says:** Garnett makes this point in passing; I would emphasize it for a high school population, especially in the area of post-high school transitions. Students need to be included in the conversations about their learning disabilities. They need to understand how their disability affects their learning, and they need to learn to self-advocate. As well, Tomlinson rightly emphasizes the need for clear messages about inclusion to parents – parents of regular education students and special education students – about the goals and practices of inclusion.



BAA dance major Belen Pereyra

**Research in Practice at BAA:** BAA's mission is to prepare a diverse community of aspiring artist-scholars to be successful in their college or professional careers and to be engaged members of a democratic society. Inclusion is part of that educational mission, and we emphasize our commitment to inclusion in every family meeting. When students present their annual cumulative portfolios, we talk with students and families explicitly about their strengths and challenges, and we encourage students to map their progress towards our common goal while recognizing the divergent paths they make take to get there. We believe that high school is not a race. Each year we have a portion of students, students with documented learning issues and students without, who elect to do a fifth year with us. These are students who, together with their teachers and their families, have made the important decision that because of their challenges, they need more time. We see these fifth year students, not as individual failures, but of evidence of our collective success.

**9: Inclusion becomes a different conversation when high-stakes testing is introduced.**

**What the Research Says:** I leave this point for last because we, as a school community, find it potentially most defeating. As Beth R. Handler outlines in "Special Education Practices: An Evaluation of Educational Environmental Placement Trends since the Regular Education Initiative," changes in inclusion practices reflect, in large part, changes in national education policy. Handler connects changes in state's placement rates for inclusive classrooms with changes in funding education law, and she states that her study "demonstrates temporal associations between changes in placement trends and the implementation of several important federal level educational reforms." In short, federal legislation has always (and will always, Handler concludes) affect the vision and implementation of inclusion.

**Research in Practice at BAA:** No Child Left Behind's standards and testing approach to education, in my opinion, limit what could be a very generative conversation about seeing students as individual learners with individual strengths and needs to a conversation of getting students to pass a single assessment. At BAA, at least, we fight to keep the former conversation going while the dominance of the latter conversation increases. Should we, we ask ourselves, put special education time, staffing, and resources into helping regular education teachers modify instruction or should we put it into documenting the need for accommodations for standardized testing? At BAA, we continually choose the former, but we worry that as the accountability drums grow louder, we will be forced more and more to do the latter. ■

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BAA theater majors perform a scene from "On Strivers Row"

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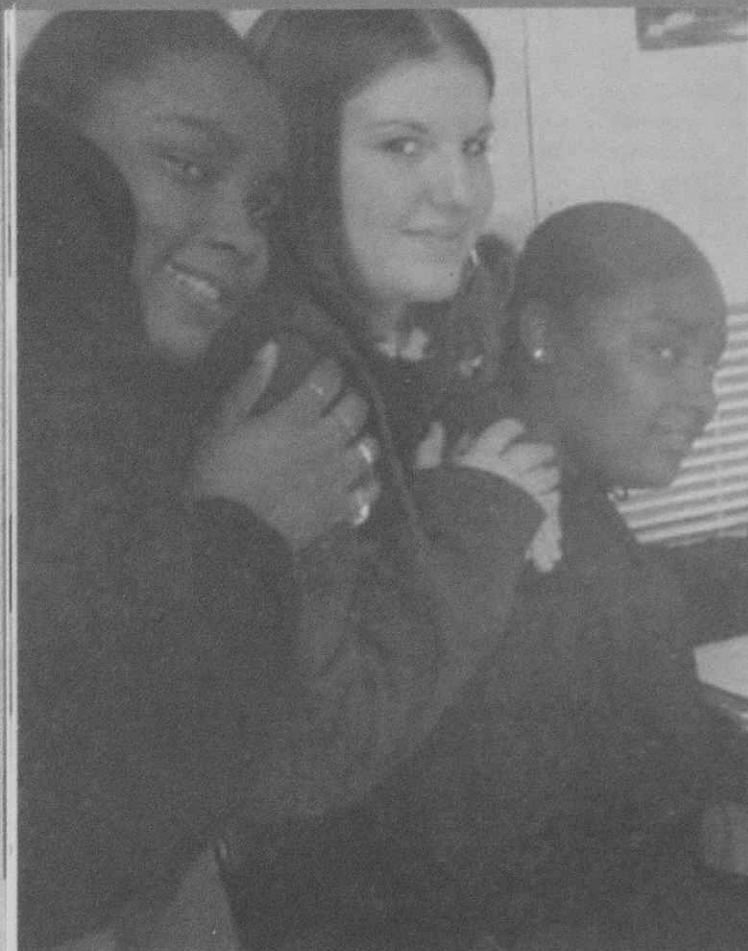
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## Our New Experience: Teaching Students with Language Learning Based Disabilities in an Inclusive Community

by Rawchayl Sahadeo

*Fenway High School freshman from new LLD classroom*

In 2004, a group of ninth graders with significant learning challenges entered Fenway High School unconventionally, as Fenway English teacher Rawchayl Sahadeo explains. This gave Fenway—a CES Mentor School community committed to equitable, inclusive education—with an opportunity for renewal and growth along with controversial and sometimes frustrating essential questions. Is separation for some students the most equitable and educationally sound route to full participation? How do you move from separation to inclusion? And how do you use the opportunity to work with students with significant learning challenges to expand your capacity to create the best teaching and learning for all students?



Simultaneously studying U.S. history, biology, and Hamlet is typical of what high school demands of most students, and for many, it's difficult. Students with moderate to severe language-based learning disabilities can feel like they are drowning in words and concepts. To an already challenging curriculum, add reading and language processing difficulties, and you will begin to understand that these students' struggle to find meaning is complex and sometimes impossible without support.

In 2004, Fenway High School was mandated by the Boston Public Schools to enroll ten ninth-grade students with language-based learning disabilities into a substantially separate classroom. This is a new experience for Fenway; for over twenty years, we have mainstreamed students, whether or not they have been diagnosed with a learning disability. Fenway does not have a tracking system, and before this year's mandate, all students were taught in the same classrooms. As well, in contrast to all other ninth graders at Fenway, these students did not apply and go through the usual admissions process to the school. Learning to create and exist with this new structure has been both difficult and controversial for the entire staff.

At the same time, Peggy Kemp, Fenway High School's Director, believes that the new class of ninth graders gives the school a chance to draw on its established strengths and build new areas of competence. "This is an opportunity to make Fenway a better school," said Kemp. "It will create opportunities for teachers to examine their teaching strategies more closely and it reminds many of us that we have much more to learn as educators. In the process, I believe we'll learn new skills and institute new practices that make our curriculum and instruction more easily accessed by all of our students."

In 2004, the Boston Public Schools instituted a policy to increase the high schools' total population of students who receive substantially separate educational services. This mandate applies to all high schools with the exception of exam and audition schools. The goal for the district is to alleviate the high concentration of these students in larger high schools, in which students with severe disabilities comprised more than one fourth of all students. This required separate learning accommodations and put a strain of these schools. Therefore, by the end of the third year of implementation, which is school year 2006-2007, Fenway, along with other district high schools, will have 10-12 % of its total student population requiring substantially separate services. In addition, the mandate will apply to middle schools next school year.

### First Steps: Co-Teaching and Professional Development

These specific students have moderate to severe language learning disabilities (abbreviated here as LLD). To help these students achieve academic success, we have had many grueling hours of meetings and hired additional Special Education teachers and paraprofessionals to co-teach alongside teachers from each discipline. This practice ensures that these students will not have a different curriculum from the other ninth-grade counterparts. The students with LLD are fully included in Fenway's advisories and physical education classes because we believe that their transition into the mainstream population will be easier when they have developed relationships with their peers. The students' schedules are aligned with the other freshmen so there will not be any scheduling barriers when a full transition into the mainstream population becomes possible. As well, community building is integral to Fenway's culture; the goal is for the students to feel connected to their fellow students. We already see evidence of success: when the students with language-based learning differences leave their classroom, they mingle well in the community and have strong peer relationships outside of their group of ten.

Our initial step in this process was to assign a designated classroom for the new students, conveniently located near our Learning Center. The Learning Center serves students who have Individualized Education Plans and are included in general education during the school day. The Learning Center is open also to all students after school three days a week. This creates a close network of support for our students with LLD and their teachers because many of the teachers already assist in the Learning Center.

As a next step, Fenway administrators decided, with input from each department team, which teachers would co-teach alongside special education teachers and paraprofessionals. The prospect of co-teaching eased concerns for many teachers about the goal of an equivalent curriculum in all subjects. Many teachers did not feel they were ready and qualified to teach these students. More education on language disabilities was the major concern prior to the start of the school year.

The professional development created for Fenway's educators centers on equity for all students with a special focus on teaching students with LLD. Some staff meetings and staff retreat time facilitated by outside experts and Fenway staff have emphasized the importance and ongoing use of improvements, adaptations and modifications including:

- Student planners
- Graphic organizers
- Multi-sensory instruction
- Descriptive directions
- Properly formatted handouts (legible and/or with large fonts)
- Uncluttered paperwork
- Question format variations
- Consistency with word definitions

The Teaching and Learning and Special Education teams spearhead the professional development. These teams share ideas and provide staff with time to discuss concerns particular to learners with language-based learning challenges. The special education teachers and the subject co-teachers share their ongoing experience with the entire school's staff in discussions during advisory, house, and content department meetings, offering valuable insight and strategies about these students.

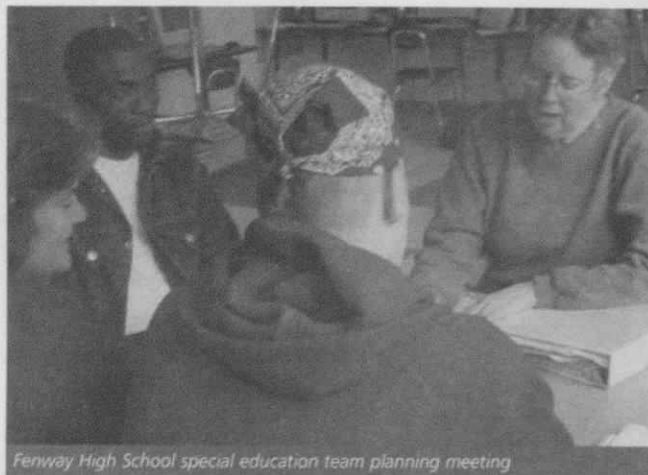
The ten students and all their teachers, including a speech therapy specialist, initially met weekly on Fridays for the first three months. Teachers recapped the week's events, checked in with each student, reviewed concerns, set community expectations, and shared information about grades. As well, parents received weekly assessments of their child's progress in each class. This meeting was distinct from and in addition to Advisory. Other community activities have also been created to build personal relationships, such as holiday parties, taking walks around the school neighborhood, and having lunch as a class.

### Transition to Inclusion

A strong bond with the students, parents, and teachers is important for fully including the students successfully. All parents regularly receive contact from teachers, via phone or email. Certainly, the goal of each student is to be completely included in all subjects. Thus far, three have been mainstreamed in different subjects such as math and humanities, depending on their strengths, but none are fully included. Other issues of concern are these students' maturity levels and their overall academic readiness.

Natalie Jaeger, Fenway's lead special education teacher, said that initially, many students do not want to leave their separate classroom automatically. "All of the students have come from small classroom settings in middle school that are designated for students with learning disabilities," Jaeger said. While this creates initial barriers to immediate full inclusion, these students want teachers to maintain high expectations and a high level of support. The students have told their teachers that they have questioned their peers in other classes and confirmed that they are learning the same content. Jaeger observed, "While philosophically Fenway believes in full inclusion, we are working in partnerships with parents and students to determine the appropriate level of inclusion for each student."

Fenway students who do not have LLD challenges also benefit from this new addition to the school. Students appreciate the diversity of different learners, establish friendships, and understand more deeply the goal of the school to teach all learners. Many of the students do not notice differences in the classes and ostracism is not an issue.



*Fenway High School special education team planning meeting*

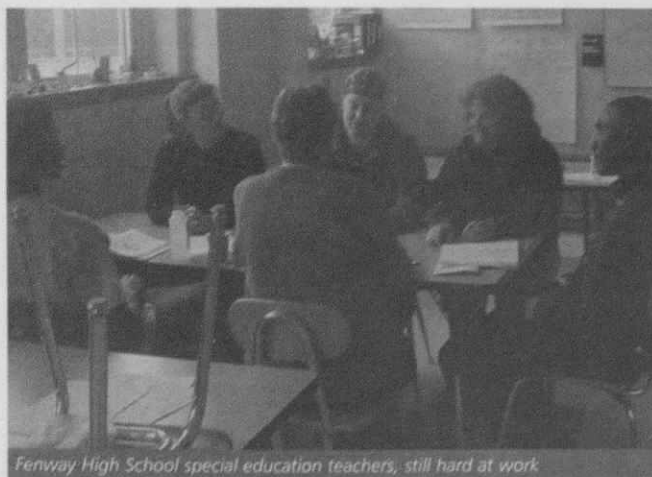
### New Learning for Veteran Teachers

Eileen Shakespear, a veteran teacher of thirty years, teaches the LLD Humanities class along with a special education teacher. Ms. Shakespear's previous experiences have not focused on students with language-based learning disabilities, but she is aware of their challenges. Among those challenges, she said, is the diversity of disabilities even within a substantially separate classroom. Every student has different degrees of need, ranging from severe dyslexia to cognitive issues to eye coordination troubles. Working with special education teachers, Shakespear has made accommodations in reading material; for example, some can read a novel, and others need to supplement the reading with a picture book on the same content. Frequently, visuals are used in assessment, such as creating a sculpture as the meaning of the book or rearranging photographs to show the order of historical events.

"I feel strongly I have a group of kids who are very capable though they have disabilities. I'm confident I have the capability to get them to learn," said Shakespear. Her goals are to keep up the intellectual rigor of the class with the other ninth graders, always to remember their voice in the department meetings and to make the curriculum work for them.

Shakespear said her personal challenges are that she is a language-rich thinker and teacher. She struggles when she teaches out of her learning style. She also has to minimize her speech, trying not speak at length without a change of activities.





*Fenway High School special education teachers, still hard at work*

She mentioned it is important for teachers to incorporate activities that teach through the disability and not around it. Due to the nature of the class, Shakespear believes a teacher must face the student's disabilities and empower them to learn by facing their disabilities with them. For instance, students learning about the U.S. Constitution have to read the articles and the amendments. However, instead of just reading them straight through, which would be burdensome, students discover the ideas and the principles of the U.S. Constitution by posing situations in which the constitution is violated. Students have to read specific articles to discover the reason how it is violated. Thus, students are struggling with reading complex text with real purpose and more interest. To sharpen their listening skills, which also involve language processing, Shakespear has invited a law student to consult with the students weekly about aspects of the law they are studying.

#### **Future Challenges and Directions**

Fenway Director Kemp said that resources needed to assist the students include software programs that enable teachers to enlarge reading text, more paraprofessionals, additional funds for professional development, and funds to support regular education teachers as they pursue special education certification. Presently the school has not had any regular education teachers receive special education certification. However, Kemp said next year's goal is for the interested teachers to begin the certification process. Efforts are in the works with a local university to combine interest in several district schools to form a teacher cohort to obtain special education certification. Therefore, the financial demands that these resources require are supplemented by the school district and outside funds. Kemp stated there has been difficulty and stress on her staff that are working to raise funds for professional development and offset salaries for additional paraprofessionals. She remains hopeful the school can raise the money, even in our current difficult economic times.

Despite the need for additional resources, Fenway is able to provide an adequate and successful learning environment for the group of students with language-based learning disabilities. Natalie Jaeger believes the main goal for them is to maintain high academic expectations in all subjects before they are mainstreamed. "Meanwhile, we are ensuring that students participate in a challenging, grade-appropriate and parallel curriculum."

Upcoming issues Fenway has yet to solve include locating another room for the new students who enroll next year that have language-based learning disabilities. With the new arrival of students, faculty assignment and new hires will be affected. According to Natalie Jaeger, Fenway will also change the way the year starts for the students; the team will include the new students in freshmen orientation along with their parents. She felt this will make a difference in how comfortable and oriented to the school the students feel contrasted with the other ninth graders.

Creating the best school for all students is crucial but daunting for most educators. Standardized testing, federal special education laws, and state frameworks have placed a heavy weight on our shoulders. Although many educators feel that any new state or district mandate may be a burden, Fenway has chosen to adjust its views on special education and to make changes in their inclusive school model because they have seen that this new class of students has only added to the strength of our community. ■

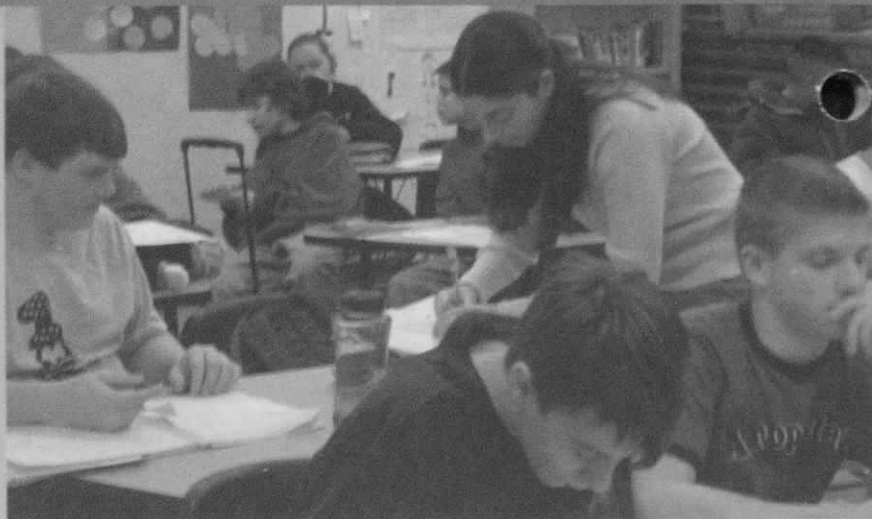
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Rawchayl Sahadeo is a Humanities teacher at Fenway. She joined the staff initially as a yearlong student teacher from Tufts University. She was hired the following year in a full time position. She has been a member of the Fenway community since 2001. In 2002, Sahadeo received her Masters in Teaching, English Education at Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts. She went on to receive her Masters in Educational Leadership at Simmons College in 2004. Before moving to Massachusetts, she was a resident of Florida, where many of her family and friends still reside.

# Collaborative Teaching for Inclusion at North Central Charter Essential School

by Jill Davidson

*Teacher Michelle Carafiello and NCCES students work on their heritage project exhibitions.*



On the final day of a month-long unit on heritage in a Division Two (ninth and tenth grade) English class at North Central Charter Essential School in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, I overheard total, wrenching discouragement. "I hate art. I'm so terrible at this! Why can't we just read and write in English class?" groaned a student struggling to complete a map for her portfolio. Another student, frantically proofreading and editing an essay, glanced up, looked at the artwork, and said, "You're using a crazy mess of colors there, and it's hard to follow. What if you stuck to a color family, like all blues and greens?" Before long, the two students collaborated, their respective strengths pulling each other to the finish line.

Founded in 2000 with a seventh grade class and adding a grade per year, North Central Charter School (NCCES) will graduate its first senior class in 2006. The school has grown to 350 students and will reach its capacity at 400 next year. Located in a small urban center surrounded by suburbs and rural areas, NCCES draws its students from 23 surrounding towns. Students of color comprise 20% of its population; most of them are Hispanic/Latino. 13% of NCCES' students receive special education services.

NCCES started up as an Essential school with an explicit commitment to inclusive education. Patricia May, NCCES' multitasking director of student services, director of special education and Division Two counselor was among the founding staff members. "When we began, we had an idealistic vision to erase lines between regular and special education, and we haven't taken our eyes off that prize," May describes. While NCCES constantly monitors itself, using inquiry and data-based analysis to improve its structures, policies, and approach to instruction, it has remain steadfast in its commitment to teaching partnerships between learning specialists with special education backgrounds and teachers who are content-area experts. Such partnerships thrive in particular, adaptable ways across the curriculum and through NCCES' three divisions.

Michelle Carafiello and Michelle Desrochers co-teach the Division Two English class that I attended and are in their second year of working as a team. Both Carafiello and Desrochers describe their teaching partnership as an expression of NCCES'

commitment to inclusion. "From the beginning," says Desrochers, "we just really clicked. For me, the key to collaborating is to work with teachers who are open to having someone else with a voice in the classroom. Michelle [Carafiello] is the expert in the content. I am more a contributor in the methods we use for kids, because all kids have specific ways of learning." Carafiello recalls, "Last year was my first year teaching. It was really a great experience to have support to help me out, to have someone there to tell me what to look for."

Their partnership also allows opportunities for differentiation, a crucial practice in inclusive classrooms. Patricia May says, "We work hard on being inclusive and diverse. We've learned a lot about realities and practicalities. Sometimes kids need a specialized instruction period like reading instruction or speech that won't take place in a room with fourteen other kids." Desrochers agrees, observing that if teachers are absolutist about how to do inclusion, thinking that it must mean that all students must always be together at all times, they risk missing key opportunities to differentiate instruction. "What we've done with kids is an evolution in itself. We've approached it in a lot of different ways, grouping kids heterogeneously or homogeneously. Right now, they're working on the homogeneous side, focusing on building skills."

Desrochers and Carafiello have committed to studying a Shakespeare play yearly with their students through differentiated instruction. Last year's group took on *Julius Caesar*, with adaptations and multiple points of access so all students could engage with the text. Students and teachers were able to benefit from cross-curricular connections as they were simultaneously studying ancient Rome in their social studies classes. They approached *Julius Caesar* through the lens of leadership, with the essential question, "Who are leaders in a community and why are they leaders?" Using graphic organizers to study plot, characters, and setting, students engaged with the play through such activities as creating character trading cards and conducting an Oprah-like talk show employing theme and character. To access the text, students read summaries, used the Barron's Simply Shakespeare text which simultaneously presents the original play with a line-by-line modern English translation and saw the film version. Different

groups of students used different material and activities, and all emerged with a grasp of the play's language, themes, and impact.

From her perspective as a learning specialist, Desrochers reflects, "You have to occupy kids, and structure the classroom so that they're engaged and neither bored nor overwhelmed. One of the beauties of a heterogeneous classroom is that kids can work on a project by themselves so you can work with others. It's very much like what elementary school looks like, with centers, adapted for high school. Literature circles are great—they let you move from group to group. You talk with and read with kids who need discussion time."

For Michelle Carafiello, this multi-path approach to the text was new and transformative. "A lot of teachers are married to curriculum and don't want to change it," she says. "But we have to think about students' needs. That was the big mistake I made at beginning of the year. You have to be really open and flexible; you have to be in tune with what kids need. Michelle [Desrochers] helped me slow down and see different ways to get to the goal."

For Carafiello and Desrochers, part of the value of teaming has been the opportunity to work out and learn from conflict. "When you're collaborating together it's not personal," observes Desrochers. "It's about the kids. We had a rough start at beginning of this year. We were struggling with behavioral issues and kids were not doing homework. I said at a team planning meeting, 'Maybe you're giving homework that's too hard.' And Michelle [Carafiello] had an open mind and adapted. The thing that's been the hardest to learn and the most valuable is to not assume that other teachers know things. You have to come to table honestly with ideas. You can't be critical of what people don't know."

Reflecting on NCCES' commitment to inclusion, Patricia May says, "I have a much better understanding of what it means to be a community and a safe school. Safe means that wherever you are, you feel safe enough to take risks in your learning. And being with all different kinds of learners raises awareness and sensitivity of all kids." Inclusion allows everyone to see everyone else's wholeness and complexity.

For Sarah Bidleman, a Division Two student with learning disabilities, inclusion vastly improved her school experience. "At my other schools, every time my mom met with my teachers it was about how badly I was failing. Here, it's about how good I am doing," said Sarah. "In the special education program here, they don't put you down. They treat you the same. I was in regular classes when I first came to NCC, and I've never been in regular classes in my life. Every school I've been to looked at my IEP and put me in a special education class. Here, they wanted to see what kind of learner I was. Learning support comes from everyone. They believe you can do it. If they know if I am struggling a little, they help and push me to be a better student."

Desrochers credits much of the success of inclusion at NCCES to the school's tone of unanxious expectation. "You're allowed to make mistakes. [NCCES principal] Peter [Garbus] has said that while we teach here because we're perfection-

ists, sometimes good is good enough. We have an environment where teachers care about kids and treat them like human beings, so as teachers we treat each other that way. Having a small team last year helped create a nice support system where we know each other as colleagues. We now share common values and are able to move forward from that." Patricia May also believes that NCCES has created the kind of culture that both supports inclusion and is at the same time strengthened by inclusion's commitment to equity, diversity, individual progress and common goals. "And as someone who's been on board from the get-go," says May. "I feel that that knowing that we are good and at the same time constant improving has taken a weight off my shoulders. Because we are in reaction mode to the politics around us, we are a little sensitive to defending ourselves. Sometimes we feel we have to be better than everyone else in order to have credibility, but what we really need is to be good enough to get what we need." In these high stakes times, being good enough—not settling for mediocrity but being clear about what each student and the school community is truly capable of and aiming for that—is radical and powerful. And if schools have some autonomy over their paths toward their goals, it is attainable. **h**

Co-teachers Michelle Carafiello and Michelle Desrochers describe five techniques that they rely on to teach collaboratively and inclusively:

- Use graphic organizers, often the same graphic organizers again and again. Familiarity really helps.
- Use consistent, structured ways of doing things. Give kids a formula with writing, a place to start. Let them master that and then push further.
- Break things down into sequences, and use those sequences as much as possible. For kids who struggle with executive functioning and language, this is like a lifeline for them
- Present things in as many multisensory ways as you can. When we say something, we write it on the board, always linking sight and hearing.
- Work interdisciplinarily. When students use what they learned one class and in another class, it's really helpful. It lets them build on that information in different ways.



*Horace*, the quarterly journal of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), is published by CES National. *Horace* combines educational research with "hands-on" resources and examples of innovative practices from CES schools around the country.

Visit the CES National website at [www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org) to read *Horace* issues from 1988 through the present. The staff of CES National invites your comments and contributions to *Horace* via the CES Interactive area of our website or at the contact information below.

## **Coalition of Essential Schools**

The Coalition of Essential Schools, founded in 1984 by TheodoreSizer, is dedicated to creating and sustaining equitable, intellectually vibrant, personalized schools and to making such schools the norm of American public education. The CES national office is in Oakland, CA, with nineteen CES regional centers across the country.

CES schools share a common set of beliefs about the purpose and practice of schooling, known as the CES Common Principles. Based on decades of research and practice, the principles call for all schools to offer:

- Personalized instruction to address individual needs and interests
- Small schools and classrooms, where teachers and students know each other well and work in an atmosphere of trust and high expectations
- Multiple assessments based on performance of authentic tasks
- Equitable outcomes for students
- Democratic governance practices
- Close partnerships with the school's community

We aim to create a system that refuses to rank and sort students, and that, instead, treats each child as a precious being with great gifts to be nurtured and supported.

Our work supports the creation and sustenance of large numbers of individual schools that fully enact CES principles—schools that emphasize equity, personalization, and intellectual vibrancy. These schools can serve as models to other schools and demonstrations to the public that it is possible to re-imagine education.

In addition to individual schools, we also need to create the conditions under which whole systems of schools will become equitable, personalized, and intellectually vibrant. To affect these whole systems, CES National supports regional centers as they develop the capacity to aid schools and to influence school districts and states. We seek to influence wider public opinion and policy-makers to develop policy conditions conducive to the creation and sustenance of schools that enact CES principles.

Please visit our web site at [www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org) for more information on CES National, our affiliated regional centers, and affiliated schools. Interested schools, organizations, and individuals are invited to the website for more information about affiliating with CES National.

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## The Common Principles

Learning to use  
one's mind well

Less is more, depth  
over coverage

Goals apply to  
all students

Personalization

Student-as-worker,  
teacher-as-coach

Demonstration  
of mastery

A tone of decency  
and trust

Commitment to  
the entire school

Resources dedicated  
to teaching and  
learning

Democracy and  
equity

# Universal Design: A Key Concept for Inclusive School Success

Many people with physical disabilities know that ramps and curb cuts are vital to breaking down barriers in order to move freely. At the same time, these adaptations allow many others – stroller pushers, rolling suitcase pullers, bicyclists, and skateboarders – to navigate with greater ease and access. Curb cuts are classic examples of universal design: design that makes places and objects work for people with disabilities and benefit everyone.

A powerful force in architecture and product development, universal design has been applied to education as a key strategy in successful inclusion efforts. Principles and examples of universal design for education can help Essential school educators plan curriculum, learning environments, and assessments that produce meaningful and fully inclusive teaching and learning. Personal learning plans, for example, allow all students access to the curriculum and to have power over their own education in ways that support them in equitable yet unique ways.

First, a look at universal design principles. The Center for Applied Special Technology, or CAST, is devoted to researching, disseminating, and teaching about universal design for education. CAST's Universal Design for Learning (UDL) states that Universal Design for Learning calls for:

- Multiple means of representation to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
  - Multiple means of expression to provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
  - Multiple means of engagement to tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation
- (From "What is Universal Design for Learning," [www.cast.org/research/udl/index.html](http://www.cast.org/research/udl/index.html))

So how does this work in practice? CAST provides an example of a fourth-grade, standards-aligned, social studies geography unit that meets the needs of a class that contains students with learning disabilities, English language learners, and wide range of reading ability. A comparison of curriculum presentations demonstrates how commitment to universal design creates the potential for more meaningful learning:

## Traditional Approach

1. The teacher provides a brief lecture on the home state. She reminds students of previous studies of land and resources, and the impact of natural resources on population growth, political and land use issues.
2. The teacher divides the students into working groups to complete their research, map-making, note-taking, and presentation.

## Universal Design for Learning Approach

1. Avoid limiting presentation style. There may be students who do not respond, comprehend, or attend well to a lecture style. Consider the use of media with the presentation, concept maps, or graphics to enhance and illustrate concepts and topics that are introduced and reviewed.
2. When opening the lesson, consider frequent questions, statements of clarification, and solicit student participation.
3. Consider assigning students to working groups by mixed abilities (heterogeneous grouping) for complementary skills.
4. Provide demonstrations of performance expectations.

(From "Case Study: Reading Challenges in Social Studies," [www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/casestories/cs1](http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/casestories/cs1))

While both the traditional lesson and the lesson that incorporates universal design reflect a commitment to student as worker, the UDL lesson is designed at the outset to differentiate among different learners' needs and styles, allowing check-ins for comprehension and understanding, multiple paths of access to the curriculum, and clear expectations.

Another, more general, example: many books are available in multiple formats. Traditional bound texts can often be accessed digitally, via spoken word, or via Braille. Digital access allows book to be read aloud electronically. Type size can be increased or text can be displayed through a refreshable Braille device. This basic step of ensuring that students can access the curriculum from multiple avenues creates the foundation from which universally designed, inclusive, and equitable education can happen.

Because this approach applies throughout the teaching and learning experience, assessments and demonstrations of mastery must include a range of options that take into account students' particular needs, abilities, and strengths. The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) suggests guidelines for universally designed assessments.

- Flexibility in Use: The design supports a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.
- Simple and Intuitive Use: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.
- Perceptible Information: The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

(From [education.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/UnivDesign/UnivDesign\\_FAQ.htm](http://education.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/UnivDesign/UnivDesign_FAQ.htm). These principles were adapted from the principles of universal design from the Center for Universal Design at the North Carolina State University.)

A useful lens through which to evaluate universally accessible assessments, the NCEO guidelines also demonstrate the shortfalls of many standardized assessments from the point of view of universal design.

## For More on Universal Design for Education

CAST's resources on Universal Design for Learning offers a useful overview: [www.cast.org/udl](http://www.cast.org/udl)

CAST's Teaching Every Student area offers the entire text of *Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning* (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2002) as well as case studies and extensive resources for universal design in education: [www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent](http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent)

Websites that offer full-text online books include:

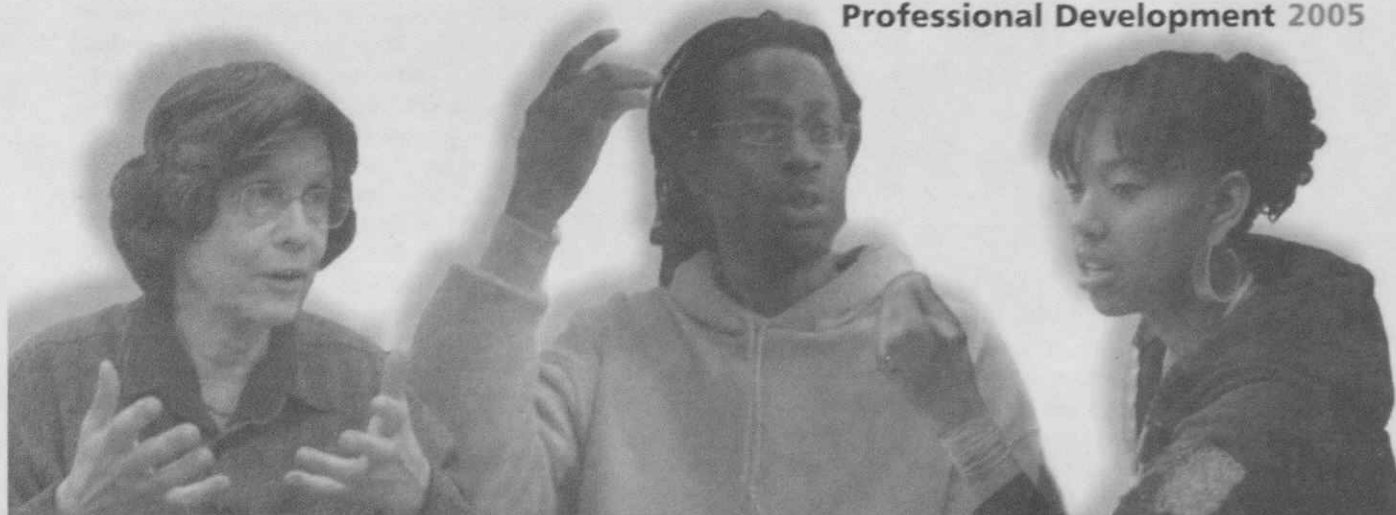
- Project Gutenberg: [www.promo.net/pg](http://www.promo.net/pg)
- The Online Books Page: [www.digital.library.upenn.edu/books](http://www.digital.library.upenn.edu/books)

Organizations that offer audio and Braille texts include:

- The Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped: [www.loc.gov/nls](http://www.loc.gov/nls)
- Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic: [www.rfbd.org](http://www.rfbd.org)

The National Center on Educational Outcomes offers resources on universally designed assessment (for more on NCEO, see "Where to Go for More: Resources for Essential Schools to Make the Most of Inclusion," page 22): [education.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/UnivDesign/UnivDesign\\_topic.htm](http://education.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/UnivDesign/UnivDesign_topic.htm)

## CES Small Schools Project Professional Development 2005



# Learn how . . .

## Professional Development Opportunities Provided by CES Mentor Schools

The CES Small Schools Project Network brings together some of the best thinkers and doers in education today. In these workshops and institutes, CES Mentor Schools will share the nuts and bolts of what makes them successful. You will have an opportunity to learn how collaborative inquiry, critical reflection, and democratically defined learning goals increase educational participation and success for all students.

- **Quest High School**      **Contact:** Lawrence Kohn, [lawrence.kohn@humble.k12.tx.us](mailto:lawrence.kohn@humble.k12.tx.us)  
1. Graduation Exhibitions and Social Action, May 5   2. Family: Super Advisory!, Oct. 14  
3. Authentic Intellectual Work, Dec. 2  
Registration: Open late spring      Fees: \$250, (20% off for CES Affiliates and groups of 3+)
- **Boston Arts Academy**      **Contact:** Corey Evans, [cevans@boston.k12.ma.us](mailto:cevans@boston.k12.ma.us)  
The Boston Arts Academy Institute for Education and the Arts, July 5 - 8  
Registration & Fees: On or before 4/30 - \$850 After 4/30 - \$900 (CES Affiliates receive 15% off)
- **Federal Hocking High School**      **Contact:** Cheryl Hedges, [chedges@forumforeducation.org](mailto:chedges@forumforeducation.org)  
Student Engagement: Advisory, Democracy, and Relevance, Oct. 4 - 6  
Registration: Open now until 9/15      Fees: \$300 (CES Affiliates receive 15% off)

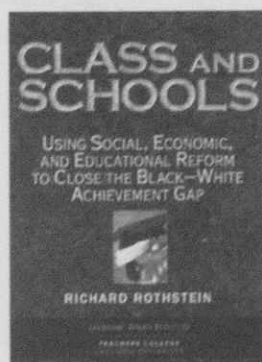
## CES Small Schools Project Summer Institute

Co-hosted by CES Northwest and CES National, the Institute will be held July 11-15, 2005, in Tacoma, Washington. Registration will be open to educators from across the country interested in small school reform. It will feature workshops, discussions, planning time, and consultancies with members of the CES Small Schools Project.

**Register Online Starting  
April 11th**

Visit [www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org) for the most up-to-date information





**Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap**

by Richard Rothstein  
(Economic Policy Institute,  
210 pages, \$17.95)

Reviewed by Jill Davidson

environments that support all children to learn, grow, and thrive. At the same time, we know that schools nationwide have not been able to close the "achievement gap," the persistent difference in performance between students of color and white students. *Class and Schools* argues with force and facts that creating the equitable conditions that would support all students of all backgrounds to achieve at high levels should not solely be the burden of schools. Instead, a constellation of social and economic factors – health and social services, racial discrimination, parenting habits, access to high quality early childhood education, availability of enriching summer and afterschool programs, reliable income and accumulated wealth, housing conditions, family mobility, environmental risks and more – are the alchemy of social class. Examining the achievement gap between black and white students, Rothstein posits that class and race are intimately connected, and that factors associated with class create disparities in school and beyond, declaring, "Raising the achievement of lower-class children requires amelioration of the social and economic conditions of their lives, not just school reform." Our current policy of increased pressure on schools as the only strategy to close the achievement gap won't work.

Rothstein characterizes his detailed portrayal of the effect of class on achievement as "unpleasant," and most readers will likely agree as they make their way through the first chapter, which reviews the causes and effects of the many factors that conspire to create and preserve socioeconomic status. While careful to maintain that the well-documented conditions of lower-income America that he presents do not depict particular families' lives or the likelihood of success for any particular child, the aggregate impact of the complexities of disadvantage is deeply disturbing – and very revealing. For example, Rothstein's discussion of the vision, hearing, dental, respiratory illness, nutrition, lead exposure, and lasting effects of prenatal conditions with which minority and lower-income children come to school illustrates how very unlevel, how damagingly tilted, the playing field is for so many children. We are reminded that the success stories of individual students who we know, measures of our own achievement as educators, exist in a broader, starker context.

Rothstein moves on to putative successes with poor urban student populations of the Jaime Escalante-*Lean on Me* variety to demonstrate what many longtime educators know well: that many such odds-beaters, while worth celebrating on their own merits, can't reliably indicate that school as an institution can completely reverse students' aggregated socioeconomic legacies. Policymakers and thought leaders have misused these schools' results to suggest that all schools everywhere can transform all students' lives, Rothstein argues. Such classrooms and schools depend on unrepresentative student populations, off-the-chart financial largesse, badly reported or analyzed data, admirable but unreproducible teacher commitment, and so on. We love success stories; it's chilling that many of the data points that have been used to try to leverage change for poor urban schools are not the harbingers of hope that they seem. Yet Rothstein's cold water is also bracing, reminding us that what works for one community is precious, valuable, and also quite possibly impossible to reproduce in other settings.

*Class and Schools'* richest argument for CES educators unfolds in the fourth chapter, which contains an overview of the social gap in "non-cognitive" skills: socialization, leadership, persistence, self confidence, and civic participation. Detailing employers' emphasis on these skills, Rothstein demonstrates the systemic social injustice that as a group, lower-class and black students are at a grave deficit and suggests that improving students' intra- and interpersonal skills would be both a worthy and attainable goal for schools, an affirming argument for many Essential schools structured to support the intellectual and personal habits of mind that contribute to the likelihood of success.

The final chapter takes *Class and Schools'* powerful analysis through to the conclusion that the changes we need to close the achievement gap and make education a meaningful foundation for life demand big money: \$156 billion annually, Rothstein calculates, a figure he describes as politically unlikely but, at two-thirds the cost of average annual tax cuts since 2001, not impossible. Even though sweeping changes such as economic equality measures, school-community health clinics, pre-, after- and summer school programs, and stable housing initiatives are unlikely to happen together as a result of political leadership, Rothstein's suggestions outline the depth, length, and breadth of the commitment we as a society have to make and that individual schools and educators make to their student and communities every day. Though it is not long on solution – Rothstein's strength here is in his analysis of the problem – *Class and Schools* sketches what a collective effort for change could begin to look like.

**Teacher: The One Who Made the Difference** by Mark Edmundson (Vintage, 288 pages, \$13.00), reviewed by Eva A. Frank

Perhaps I have seen *Stand and Deliver* and *Dead Poets Society* too many times. Until Mark Edmundson's *Teacher*, I think I believed a teacher's story only worthy if the outcome is monumental student transformation. Disenfranchised students receiving 5s on the Advanced Placement Statistics test, high school students being groomed for ivory towers ripping pages from English literature anthologies. Edmundson proved me wrong with his tale of Frank Lears at Medford High School.

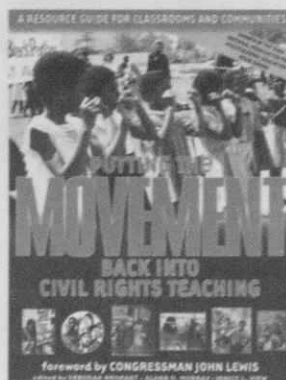
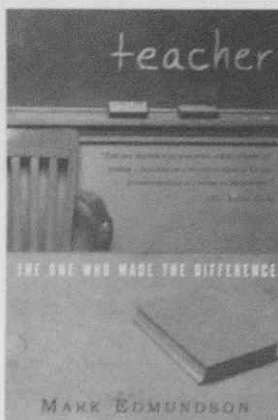
In this simple tale of high school normalcy circa 1969-1970, Edmundson reminisces of his time as a student indifferent to everything but football, pool and alcohol. Like his buddies in his working-class enclave outside Boston, he regards teachers as the enemy and cannot recall finishing a book. By his senior year, he detests his courses and is resigned to succumbing to a life of factory work.

Much later, at an impasse in his own teaching (as it turns out, Edmundson does not head to the factory, but becomes an English professor at University of Virginia), Edmundson begins to reminisce about Lears, who, he learns, abandoned the teaching profession after only one year.

A small and nervous recent Harvard graduate, Frank Lears arrived at Medford High to teach philosophy. Marked by his students as an easy target, Lears did not win them over through love, compassion, or sheer will. He rearranged the desks into a circle, played music, staged a snow-ball fight and exchanged textbooks for Ken Kesey novels. He employed contempt for conformity as his pedagogical tool, hoping to goad his students into thinking for themselves.

In talking about Lears and other adult influences on his own adolescent self, Edmundson posits two exemplary teachers as frameworks for where the adults in his life fit in: Plato, who leads his disciples to face life's truths and Socrates, who offers questions (but no answers) as a method to look at life. While Edmundson does not reveal transformed life paths of his classmates or himself due to Lears' brilliant instruction, he does reveal that he has found his Socrates, the one who leads him to question football, pool and all that he knows and accepts as his future. And for those of us immersed in the work of supporting students learning to use their minds well, don't we hope a little Frank Lears lives in all of us?

Eva Frank directs the CES Video Principles Project. Prior to joining CES National, Eva taught social studies in the Communications Academy, a small learning community focused on video arts, drama, history and English at Drake High School in San Anselmo, CA.



**Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching: A Resource Guide for K-12 Classrooms** edited by Deborah Menkart, Alana D. Murray and Jenice L. View (Teaching for Change and Poverty & Race Research Action Council, 576 pages, \$29.99)  
Reviewed by Jill Davidson

A teacher friend recently groused about the soulless way civil rights movement was being taught at her school. "How people can manage to make the most fundamental social battle of the twentieth century boring is beyond me. The kids are not connecting. I just can't understand it." I sympathized with her, and once I immersed myself in *Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching*, I emailed her, suggesting that she make it her mission to get this resource into the hands of her colleagues.

This anthology is a gift to educators and students. Using vivid design and thoughtful organization, the editors intersperse hundreds of essays, book excerpts, historical analyses, poems, examples of student work, illustrations, graphic organizers, artifacts and photographs with elementary, middle, and high school curriculum and lessons. An accompanying website, [www.civilrightsteaching.org](http://www.civilrightsteaching.org), contains a resource guide, lesson handouts, information about the content's alignment with national history/social studies standards, and more. The result is a powerful resource that conveys the energy, life force, faces, beliefs, complexities, personalities, aims, achievements and struggles of the civil rights movement. Icons such as Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King are treated with respect and treated to new analysis, and scores more civil rights activists come alive. There's so much material that to list one or several examples feels like the proverbial drop in the bucket.

In six sections – reflections on teaching about the movement, citizenship and self-determination, education, economic justice, culture, and "Looking Forward," a final category on the struggle for universal human rights now and in the future – *Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching* immediately engages, breaking down perceptions that the civil rights movement was ancient history, someone else's fight, or otherwise irrelevant. While much of the material concentrates on the richness of the twentieth century civil rights work by and on behalf of African Americans, the book weaves stories from El Salvador, South Africa, Mexico and elsewhere, and examples from women's struggles for equality, the fight for rights for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning community, the American Indian Movement and other native American moments of challenge and change, the Asian Movement, and the Farm Worker and other labor and union efforts.

I can't image a school that wouldn't benefit from this book. *Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching* is riveting, with its multiple entry points, multimedia presentation, student-centered focus, and formidable respect for and grasp of the civil rights movement as it evolved and moves forward.

# Where to Go for More: Resources for Essential Schools to Make the Most of Inclusion

## LD Online

LD Online is a big tent, providing deep and broad resources for people with disabilities and their parents, educators, and friends. Its comprehensive offerings, mostly focused on the United States and Canada, include descriptions of a wide range of learning disabilities, expert commentary, an online store, pointers to school, summer, and other programs, an active online community, research collections – very useful, with active links to full articles from a variety of sources – and more. If you're craving support, understanding and perspective, browse the first-person essays from people with learning disabilities, their teachers, and their family members. LD Online includes powerful messages about ability, too, particularly in featured children's artwork and writing. The site itself is fairly accessible, with some information in Spanish and links to browsealoud ([www.browsealoud.com](http://www.browsealoud.com)), software that transforms website text into audio.

[www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org)

## Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative

The Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative, an Education Development Center (EDC) project founded in 1994, gathers 150+ urban districts nationwide to share resources and knowledge on special education issues. Districts join as fee-paying members for access to meetings, publications, technical assistance and professional development, including a program on building inclusive urban schools for grades 6-12. The Urban Collaborative website provides a good overview of its offerings, with additional resources available for member districts.

[www.urbancollaborative.org](http://www.urbancollaborative.org)

## Research Institute on Secondary Education Reform for Youth with Disabilities (RISER)

A research project based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and completed in 2003, RISER's goal was to "expand the current knowledge base related to practices and policies in secondary schools that enhance learning, achievement and postschool outcomes for students with disabilities," paying particular attention to reform and restructuring efforts that include students with disabilities. Among other efforts, RISER identified "schools of authentic and inclusive teaching and learning," or SAILS. The project's description of and research from the SAILS (which included longtime CES affiliate Souhegan High School in Amherst, New Hampshire) correlate strongly with CES principles and practice, and do so with par-

ticular attention paid to the needs of students with disabilities. This philosophical and practical overlap provides valuable knowledge for schools committed to inclusion and the CES principles. Don't look to the RISER site for practical content such as teaching or assessment plans, but do visit for powerful analysis, evaluation and evidence that schools that propel all students toward success are schools designed to support all of those students, including students with disabilities.

[www.wcer.wisc.edu/riser](http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/riser)

## All Kinds of Minds

Conversations with many CES educators reveal that Mel Levine's work on learning differences has been a powerful source of knowledge, direction and inspiration. All Kinds of Minds, Levine's website, is forthrightly promotional, selling the books, seminars, professional development and other products that detail his research and insight into minds that don't all think alike. The power of Levine's approach is his embrace of diversity and focus on identifying learners' strengths while acknowledging that everyone, too, has areas of weakness. His work moves conversation about learning away from the deficit model of disability and identifies ways for home, school, work, and social life to support everyone, including people who think and interact in different, sometimes challenging, ways. CES educators report that Levine's books and professional development offerings add value and vividly complement CES practice. For the uninitiated, the website's Library section gives an overview of All Kinds of Minds' approach and resources.

[www.allkindsofminds.org](http://www.allkindsofminds.org)

## Ability Hub

The stories in this *Horace* issue have mentioned the benefits of assistive technology. Ability Hub is a stellar array of assistive technology, in particular, tools that allow people with a wide range of disabilities to operate a computer and access the internet. If you're new to the field, the range of technology possibilities is eye-opening, and if you're looking for a specific solution, you'll likely find it. Along with an inventory of technology such as screen readers, voice recognition software, mouse and keyboard alternatives, Ability Hub offers consulting on assistive technology, links to disability resources, and categorization of technology according to a wide range of physical and cognitive needs.

[www.abilityhub.com](http://www.abilityhub.com)



### **National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities**

Formerly the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, and still referred to as NICHCY, the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities is an information clearinghouse operated by the Academy for Education Development (AED) for the U.S. Department of Education. NICHCY offers both comprehensive information and remarkably well-written content that is really a pleasure to read. NICHCY's offerings focus primarily on those challenges that can affect learning; there's less information on non-cognitive physical disabilities. Engaging introductions preface comprehensive and well-organized website lists, with some information provided in Spanish. The Research section is particularly useful to practitioners interesting in using the vast body of research on learning disabilities and differences. NICHCY also offers links to information about IDEA and NCLB as it pertains to students with disabilities.

[www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org)

### **The Access Center**

The Access Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs and hosted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), provides technical assistances to elementary and middle schools, offering teaching, assessment and curriculum strategies with particular focus on including students with disabilities. The site offers a well-edited collection of programs from various states and districts, "webinars" (online and phone seminars) on particular aspect of accessible curriculum, a broad collection of resources, including a comprehensive chart, "Strategies to Improve Access to the General Education Curriculum," that details a wide range of instructional strategies for inclusive teaching and learning. This chart alone – linked from the Access Center's home page at the time of this writing – is worth the visit.

[www.k8accesscenter.org](http://www.k8accesscenter.org)

### **Harvard Civil Rights Project Action Kit – Racial Discrimination in Special Education**

This section of the Harvard Civil Rights Project website accompanies *Racial Inequities in Special Education*, a 2003 Civil Rights Project book edited by Dan Losen and Gary Orfield. The well-organized action kit is primarily geared toward students and their families facing special education misdiagnosis, lack of access to appropriate services and barriers to full appropriate public education. One section, "State Statistics: Overrepresentation," offers six data sets that vividly portray nationwide racial disparities in special education identification, placement in restrictive settings, school discipline incidents, and rates of incarceration of students with disabilities.

[www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/resources/action\\_kits/special\\_ed10.php](http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/resources/action_kits/special_ed10.php)

### **National Center on Educational Outcomes**

The National Center on Educational Outcomes' website offers a wide and deep range of resources on assessing students with disabilities and limited English proficiency in order to ensure that such students are included in and benefit from national and state assessments, standards-setting efforts, and graduation requirements. The site's features include an online accommodations bibliography that offers research on various assessment accommodations practices, a comprehensive review of state policies for assessing students with disabilities, an array of papers and reports, and information on a variety of topics including accommodations, accountability, alternate assessments, graduation requirements, limited English proficiency students, out-of-level testing, standards, and universal design.

[education.umn.edu/NCEO](http://education.umn.edu/NCEO)

### **Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)**

Featured elsewhere in this issue, CAST features research, professional development, policy and practice recommendations, publications and other resources to support inclusive education. Founded by David Rose and Anne Meyer, CAST has grown from its initial focus on technological solutions for inclusion to include extensive material on universal design for education. The website's Teaching Every Student section offers powerful resources for understanding and applying CAST's Universal Design for Learning approach. CAST also offers institutes, consultation services and other professional development opportunities that make it possible for educators to reshape their curriculum, instruction and evaluation practices to support all students.

[www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)

### **Coalition of Essential Schools Website Resources and ChangeLab**

CES practice creates fertile conditions for learning diversity, and Essential schools have been refining their capacities for twenty years. While there's no special section for students with disabilities (as it should be, in a truly inclusive world), the CES website and ChangeLab, which demonstrates the best practices of the CES Small Schools Project, offer useful practice and philosophy for educators working to create and sustain meaningful learning for all.

[www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces\\_docs/resources/resources.html](http://www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces_docs/resources/resources.html)

[www.ceschangelab.org](http://www.ceschangelab.org)

# GO TO THE SOURCE:

## More about the Schools and Other Organizations Featured in this Issue

### Schools

#### Boston Arts Academy

Public school serving grades 9-12  
174 Ipswich Street  
Boston, MA 02215  
617/635-6470  
[www.boston-arts-academy.org](http://www.boston-arts-academy.org)

#### The Crefeld School

Independent school serving grades 7-12  
8836 Crefeld Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19118  
215/242-5545  
[www.crefeld.org](http://www.crefeld.org)

#### Fenway High School

Public school serving grades 9-12  
174 Ipswich Street  
Boston, MA 02215  
617/635-9911  
[fenway.boston.k12.ma.us](http://fenway.boston.k12.ma.us)

#### North Center Charter Essential School

One Oak Hill Road  
Fitchburg, Massachusetts 01420  
978/345-2701  
[www.ncces.org](http://www.ncces.org)

#### School of the Future

127 E 22nd Street  
New York, NY 10010  
212/475-8086  
[www.sof.edu](http://www.sof.edu)

### Other Organizations

#### Hilliard City Schools

5323 Cemetery Road  
Hilliard, OH 43026  
614/771-4273  
[www.hilliard.k12.oh.us](http://www.hilliard.k12.oh.us)

#### Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST)

40 Harvard Mills Square, Suite 3  
Wakefield, MA 01880-3233  
781/245-2212  
[www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)

#### Enabling Education Network c/o Educational Support and Inclusion School of Education University of Manchester

Oxford Road  
Manchester M13 9PL  
UK  
+44 (0)161 275 3711  
[www.eenet.org.uk](http://www.eenet.org.uk)

### Affiliate with CES National

If CES stands for what you believe in – personalized, equitable, intellectually vibrant schools – we invite you to affiliate with CES National for the 2005-2006 affiliation year, which begins August 1st. Affiliating with the CES network as a school, organization, or individual gives you a number of benefits, including subscriptions to Horace and our newsletter In Common, discounted fees and waivers to our annual Fall Forum, and eligibility to apply for research and professional development grants, and more. Schools and organizations that affiliate prior to June 1st can save \$50 off the regular affiliation fee. For more information about CES National Affiliation, visit

[www.essentialschools.org](http://www.essentialschools.org).

ES National

# School Design

How do we design schools so that all students can learn to use their minds well? Topics include: structures for space and time, teacher collaboration, and data collection and analysis.

# Classroom Practice

How do we bring Coalition ideas like less is more, teacher as coach, and demonstration of mastery to life in the classroom? Topics include: curriculum and instruction, assessment, and classroom culture.

# Leadership

What kinds of leadership are necessary to transform schools into more humane and intellectually rigorous environments? How can the change process be sustained? Topics include: governance, distributed leadership, and managing the change process.

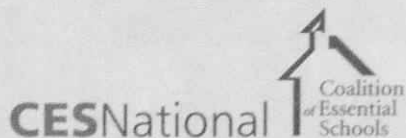
# Next Issue

*Horace* 21.3 will focus on district-level leadership for Essential school change, sustenance and support, featuring case studies of a variety of districts that have created new schools and transformed existing schools to reflect Essential school principles and practice.

# Community Connections

How can schools most powerfully engage the community as advocates and partners in the education of its students? Topics include: parental involvement, service learning and internships, and using community members as resources.





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## **Classroom Practice**

### **Inclusion and Learning Differences in Essential Schools**

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## Inclusion and Learning Differences in Essential Schools

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### Notes on this Issue

Even before joining CES as *Horace's* editor in 2001, I started writing about the similarities between inclusive classrooms and Essential schools. At the time, I was working toward an additional teaching credential in special education and had the good fortune to see some excellent, progressive and inspiring collaborative teaching and thoughtfully designed curriculum and assessment in a fully inclusive South San Francisco middle school classroom. I was thrilled and intrigued by how inclusive education reflected the ten Common Principles, even in a school that had no affiliation with or awareness of the Coalition of Essential Schools.

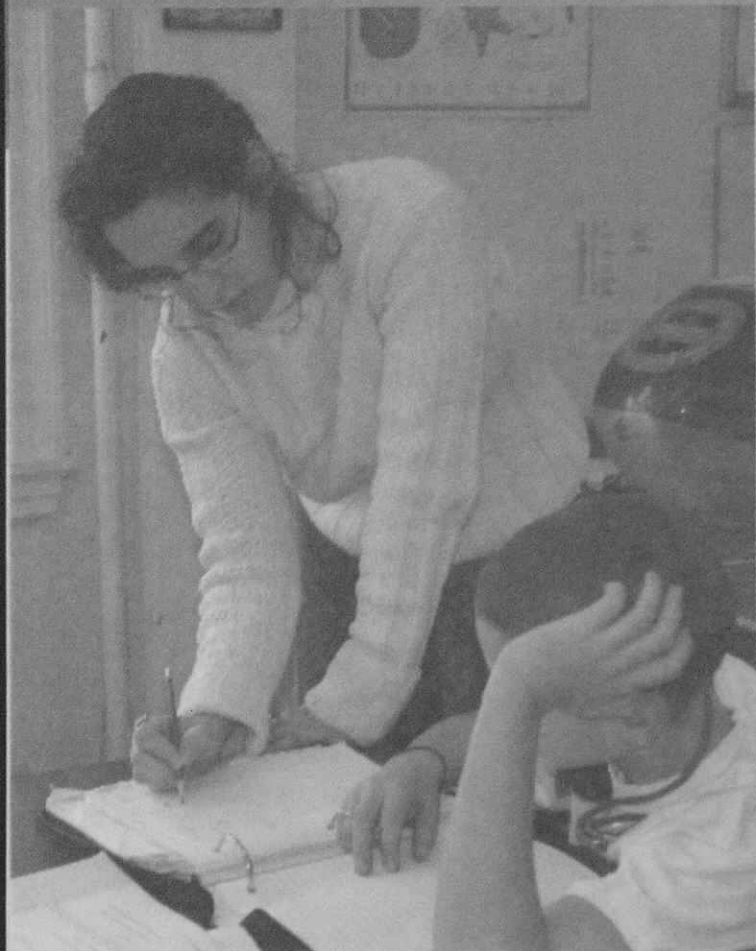
Since then, as *Horace's* editor, I've been able to visit many Essential schools and have seen how CES practices create fertile ground for inclusive teaching and learning. And I have seen how incredibly challenging it can be to push against the historical tide of tracking and homogeneity and create differentiated yet collaborative learning that works for all students. So this is one of those issues of *Horace* that I have lived with for a long time, and I'm having trouble letting go. If we could have added more time and pages, I wish we could have focused more intensively on inclusion as a strategy that can reduce the intertwined phenomena of overrepresentation of students of color in special education, the black-white achievement gap, de facto school segregation, and the faltering graduation rates of both students of color and special education students.

I hope that this issue resonates with many of you. For those that are doing this work in Essential schools, thank you, and if you can, take a moment to drop me an email at [jdavidson@essentialschools.org](mailto:jdavidson@essentialschools.org) and tell me about your work.

I talked to many CES network educators, students, parents, and friends in the course of researching this issue, and many wise words and key insights didn't make it to these pages. Nevertheless, I want to thank everyone who took the time to educate me. In particular, groups of students from the Crefeld School and North Central Charter Essential School allowed me to interview them, and I learned much more than I was able to report here.

As always, thank you to all *Horace* subscribers and CES affiliates. You're making it possible for us to continue to tell the stories of what's happening in Essential schools. If you don't already subscribe but find *Horace* useful, consider joining us. Subscription rates are \$35.00 per four-issue year, with discounts for multi-year subscriptions. Subscribe online, call us toll-free at 1.800.62HORACE, or go to [www.essentialschools.org/horace](http://www.essentialschools.org/horace). Affiliation with CES as a school or network friend also puts *Horace* in your hands, and the connection with CES is well worth it. Read more information about affiliation online at [www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces\\_docs/schools/schools.html](http://www.essentialschools.org/pub/ces_docs/schools/schools.html) or call us at 510 433 1451.

Jill Davidson  
Editor, *Horace*



## Essential Schools as Inclusive Education Leaders


by Jill Davidson

*Crefeld school teacher Alicia Sussman multiplies polynomials with student Marcelo Freire.*

All learning communities contain a multidimensional spectrum of strengths and weaknesses. By embracing this truth in their values and practices, Essential schools are well poised to respond effectively to the challenge of inclusion. Students in inclusive educational settings take many paths toward the achievement of meaningful educational and personal goals. Inclusion reorganizes a school's environment: it opens to all students the benefits of special education resources and it provides unrestricted access to students with special education diagnoses and other cognitive, physical, cultural, and language differences.




Inclusive education is the commitment to and practice of all students participating in educational experiences through appropriate design, support and accommodation. Essential schools are structured to meet the significant challenges of inclusive education, and they are likely to reap its rewards. Drawing on decades of examples of CES practices that promote personalization, equity, and academic challenge—teacher as generalist, common planning time, team teaching, creating the habits of mind of lifelong learners, interdisciplinary curriculum, small school autonomies, applying high expectations and standards to all, flexibility with the structures of architecture and schedules, commitment to continuous improvement through cycles of inquiry, authentic assessment, and more—Essential schools have the potential to be places where the conditions for inclusion “done right” are possible.



In “Enabling Inclusive Education: Challenges and Dilemmas,” British researcher Susie Miles from the Enabling Education Network suggests a pegs-and-holes metaphor to envision inclusive education. In noninclusive schools, students with disabilities are viewed as “square pegs” in a realm of general education “round holes.” Students with differences either have to be forced to fit the hole, or they must be sorted aside. Miles encourages a vision of education that is much richer and more complex – an assortment of pegs and holes, each having its place but no two shaped exactly the same. An inclusive classroom makes it possible for all learners, each with their individual differences, to thrive.

→ “Enabling Inclusive Education: Challenges and Dilemmas” is available at [www.eenet.org.uk/theory\\_practice/bonn\\_2.shtml](http://www.eenet.org.uk/theory_practice/bonn_2.shtml)




### Designing for Inclusion

Yet like other comprehensive reforms, inclusion is difficult to retrofit. With many schools now starting new or emerging fully restructured as a result of conversion, school planners have the opportunity to build inclusion into school design. “What works best, says Anne Clark, Humanities teacher and Curriculum and Special Education Coordinator at Boston Arts Academy, “is to take the best of special education, that personalization and instruction, and apply that to everyone.”


A design for exclusion, manifested by the tendency to divide and conquer, shaped much of twentieth century American education. Harmful judgments about race, class, and who ought to benefit from education prompted schools to sort students by ability. And while many educators (though far from all) now believe that tracking is destructive, many of the same well-intended educators think that inclusion is ideal yet impractical. Some go further, asserting that it may even be harmful and inequitable. As Anne Clark notes, “People too

quickly go to extremes. It’s too easy to say that inclusion isn’t good for everyone.” If inclusion is attempted in large, impersonal settings in which teachers lack appropriate professional development, common planning time, pedagogical and structural autonomy, and other such necessary preconditions for successful inclusion, students and teachers may well be frustrated, especially given the high-stakes assessment atmosphere that pervades most schools.

Even in Essential schools, more likely to have conditions that allow inclusion to flourish, the work of creating environments that support all learners can be daunting. Abby Gordon, Inclusion teacher at New York City’s School of the Future, comments, “The only downfall to inclusion is that can be hard to pinpoint kids’ specific issues as opposed to working with them in the old resource room. But it’s worth it, even though there are days when I think that all special education teachers lose it and think that if they can’t pull kids out, they can’t do it. But being around people who are constantly pushing themselves to serve the students the best that we can makes me realize that this work is possible.” Anne Clark agrees, observing, “The biggest benefit of inclusion is that you get rid of labels. You work on being flexible and intuitive enough to work with each individual. Kids come in complicated packages. If you spend a lot of time labeling and sorting, you might miss some of those issues.”

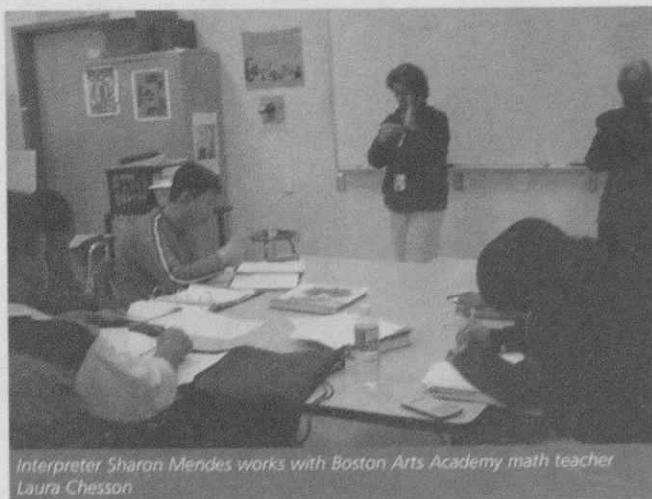


With awareness that inclusion encompasses the endless varieties of cognition, physical qualities and culture, this issue of *Horace* focuses on inclusion that creates full access for students with language-based learning disabilities as a way to focus specifically on issues of teaching and learning. Students with learning disabilities vividly demonstrate that we all learn differently, and that in a setting that honors all students’ uniqueness, disability can become difference and strength, rather than a liability.



### Essential Schools’ Capacity for Inclusion: Examples

Personal learning plans and exhibitions are two vivid examples of Essential school hallmarks that make inclusive education possible. Personal learning plans, or PLPs, adapted in part from the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that are legally required for students with disabilities, demonstrate how “the future is in the margins,” as David Rose and Anne Meyer wrote in “The Future is in the Margins: The Role of Technology and Disability in Educational Reform.” What was once intended as a practice to support students with disabilities turns out to improve the learning experiences of all students. Indeed, according to the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST), research has demonstrated that changes that give a wide range of learners access to a class’ content raise scores for all students. Mike Abraham, longtime elementary special education teacher and now Pupil Services Administrator for the Hilliard City Schools outside Columbus, Ohio concurs,



Interpreter Sharon Mendes works with Boston Arts Academy math teacher Laura Chesson

noting, "When you look at special education students, you need to remember that what works for them may well work well with lots of other students. With inclusion, regular education kids benefit just as much." (See "Universal Design: A Key Concept for Inclusive School Success," on page 10, for more on features of inclusive education designed to allow multiple paths to learning.)

Demonstrations of mastery through authentic assessment help teachers negotiate the tension between holding all students to high standards and the inevitable differences in individual approaches and efforts. Michael Patron, the former head of the Crefeld School, an independent Essential school in Philadelphia with 100 students, stresses that authentic assessment is vital for students in inclusive schools. "Graduation by exhibition, which focuses on the end product and less on the process that any individual uses, allows us to be very flexible in giving students the options, time and support that they might need as individuals to meet those graduation exhibitions," Patron notes. Authentic assessment allows students to leverage their strengths – humor, quick thinking, artistic mastery, athletic ability, leadership, self-awareness, empathy. Being part of a learning community that honors strengths and allows students latitude to demonstrate their competence and learning is vital for persistence in school and post-school success. As Anne Clark says, "There is not an easy division in our school between the 'abled' kids and the 'not abled' kids

because here, we are all artistically abled. Some of the kids who are the most academically needy are the most artistically abled. That kid who can't read is the star of the theater department. So we focus on strength as a route to overall achievement."

Inclusive education is inextricably linked to a school's commitment to equity. Inclusion both honors and preserves diversity, without which we cannot coexist.

#### RELATED RESOURCE

Horace 19.1, "Elements of Smallness Create Conditions for Success" discusses personal learning plans at several CES schools.

[www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces\\_res/275](http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/275)

While many argue that we need to remove labels to reduce judgment, it's also important to for everyone in a school community to be able to see what everyone else knows and can do. If students aren't learning together, they won't know that everyone has both tremendous challenges and gifts. Inclusive education forces us to see each other, to see past visible and invisible qualities, ensuring that teachers and students know themselves and each other as learners and as whole people. "Inclusion gives kids an opportunity to think about themselves as lifelong learners," observes Abby Gordon. "At School of the Future, students who have been in special education classrooms all their lives have some initial fear of being with everyone else. But soon they see that all students see strengths and weaknesses." Brittany Pry, a Crefeld senior, says that inclusive education has given her self-confidence and self-knowledge. "I have skills to advocate for myself now, and I know what I need. Now that I am looking at colleges, I know how I am as a learner. I don't want to go to a really big college, and I am looking for schools with learning services that will benefit me."

Inclusive schools that focus on a group's strengths also have the capacity to reduce incapacitating fear and anxiety. Michael Patron says, "We get a lot of kids who on the surface have behavioral or emotional problems, but the root of that is a long history of schools having failed them. Being in a place where they can be successful and use their strengths, not in a deficit model that focuses on their weaknesses, they feel good about their gifts and are allowed to leverage those in a way that best serves them. Many of the emotional problems clear up. Students are still left to deal with the learning problems, but they can't get to learning until they deal with emotional issues."

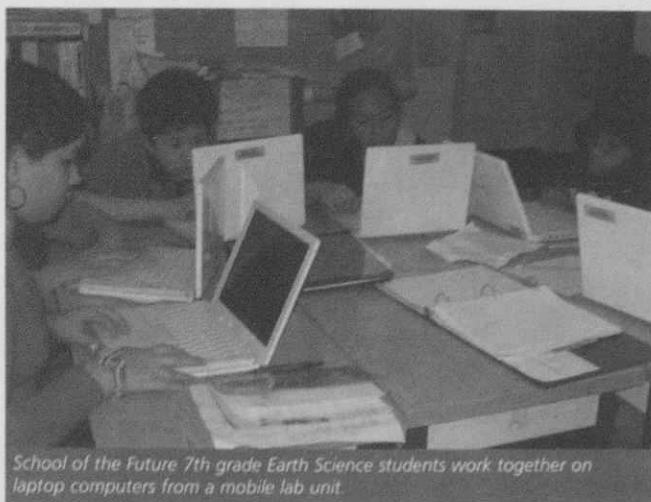
#### What an Inclusion Teacher Does

Abby Gordon says that her work as an inclusion teacher allows her to focus on students and support teachers as they find ways for each student to meet standards and goals. "I meet with teachers to consult with them about their lesson plans to make sure that their lesson will meet all needs," says Gordon. "Sometimes in the classroom, we will co-teach. If students are doing group or independent work, I move around, working with them and at the same time doing assessment. I go to each class with a notebook and assess every aspect. Are they asking questions? Are they sleepy? Are they active? Then I discuss what I found with the teacher. Maybe that lesson went over heads. Even though I am there to assess special education students, it's a fairly good measure of the class."

#### RELATED RESOURCE

Horace 15.5, "Student Development: How Essential School Practices and Designs Can Help" looks at how Essential schools support students who develop intellectually and emotionally at different rates.

[www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces\\_res/170](http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/170)



*School of the Future 7th grade Earth Science students work together on laptop computers from a mobile lab unit.*

Gordon continued, "The students have no idea what my position is. I call myself a learning specialist. I am very self-conscious about students feeling singled out – if they perceive that there's a stigma to working with me, they will stop seeing themselves as learners. Students, special education students and everyone else, come to my office all the time. They think I am there for every single one of them, and in fact I am." ■

#### References:

"The Future is in the Margins: The Role of Technology and Disability in Educational Reform," by David Rose and Anne Meyer, [www.air.org/forum/AbRose\\_Meyer.htm](http://www.air.org/forum/AbRose_Meyer.htm)

## ENVISION SCHOOLS

### Director of Instruction:

Jeannette LaFors

Phone: (415) 841-2227

email: [jobs@envisionschools.org](mailto:jobs@envisionschools.org)



### Envision Schools:

Based on a nationally recognized and award-winning model for secondary education, Envision Schools is a nonprofit that develops and sustains small, innovative, high-performing public high schools serving diverse student bodies. For job descriptions, applications, and more information about Envision Schools, please visit [www.envisionschools.org](http://www.envisionschools.org)

### Principals:

Envision is looking for principals to come on board in the summer of 2005 to guide the planning process, recruit students, and hire teachers for a fall 2006 opening.

### Teachers:

Envision is seeking smart, experienced, passionate teachers who want to work in a student-centered environment of respect & trust with high expectations for all members of the community.

We add one grade per year, so we need teachers for all subject areas:

- Integrated Math (IMP)
- Integrated Science
- English/Language Arts
- Spanish
- Digital Media and Drama
- History

### Other:

Envision Schools is also seeking an HR Director and Office Managers





## Inclusion Research at Work at Boston Arts Academy by Anne Clark

*Anne Clark works with Boston Arts Academy music major Fernando Rojas*

Anne Clark, teacher and administrator at Boston Arts Academy (BAA) offers insight into BAA's fully inclusive pedagogy, an expression of its commitment to CES's Ten Common Principles. Describing parallels between BAA's experience with inclusion and current research findings, Clark suggests important touchstones and discussion points for all CES schools. This synthesis of research and Essential school practice demonstrates how inclusion works with innovative pedagogy and school design to create intellectually challenging, personalized and equitable education for all students.

I serve as the curriculum and special education coordinator at Boston Arts Academy, Boston's public, full-inclusion high school for the visual and performing arts. Since the school opened seven years ago, I have been both an administrator and a teacher. I am part of an administrative team that shapes the school's approach to teaching and learning, and I am also a teacher working with students in the classroom every day. Inclusion, I have come to learn, defines the tension between these two perspectives.


My frame of reference as an educational leader is the school as a whole, and I include a variety of factors in the calculus I use to make decisions: student learning needs to be balanced against staffing, resources, and time. Special education, in contrast, means taking on the responsibility of the special needs of individual students as specifically as possible. My frame of reference as a special educator is necessarily one student at a time.

Our goal at Boston Arts Academy is to make the tension between these two perspectives generative. The purpose of inclusion, we believe, is to increase all students' access to quality education, in our case to increase access to an interdisciplinary, arts and academic education. Students enter our school by arts audition only; students thus join us because of their artistic promise. From an academic perspective, however, we have students who are very skilled, students who have been in substantially separate programs before they joined our school, and every other kind of student in between. The challenge of inclusion is to use the resources we have to provide the supports each student needs within the regular education classroom. Full inclusion is an ambitious but we believe worthy aim, one that we further with cycles of inquiry and consideration of research from the field. This is what we have learned:


### **1: Inclusion depends upon a shared definition of education for all students.**

**What the Research Says:** In "Staff Development That Supports Differentiation," Carol Ann Tomlinson and Susan Demirsky Allan talk about building a vision of inclusion based on a common vocabulary around general education and special education. Staff must share an understanding of the goals, benefits, and challenges of inclusion. Staff must also share a picture of what inclusion could and should look like.

**Research at Work at BAA:** At BAA, we have found that the success of our inclusion efforts depends on the number of ways we have that conversation, and thus our approach has been layered. We began our school by developing together a school-wide reading and writing skills course that every teacher teaches, regardless of his or her primary content area. For the past three years, the focus of our school-wide professional development has been differentiated instruction and reading instruction across the curriculum. Through an in-house certification program we developed, fifteen of our full-time staff members are in the process of getting dual certification in moderate disabilities. Our special educators are included in weekly, content-area planning meetings and work together with content-area teachers to construct and plan curricula, and we have moved to a "push in" rather than "pull out" model, where special educators are co-teaching with



Founded in 1998, Boston Arts Academy's 236 students share a building with Fenway High School. As part of the CES Small Schools Project, BAA was named a CES Mentor school in 2003 in recognition of its leadership in the CES network. For more about BAA and the Small Schools Project, please visit CES ChangeLab at [www.changelab.org](http://www.changelab.org) and Boston Arts Academy at [www.boston-arts-academy.org](http://www.boston-arts-academy.org).



regular educators in the classrooms as much as possible. We have worked very hard to be a school where teachers talk not about "my kids" and "your kids" but about "our kids" and what they need to succeed.

### **2: Inclusion begins with the adults.**

**What the Research Says:** This move from "my kids" and "your kids" to "our kids" speaks to the necessity of rethinking traditional systems of communication, assessment, and teaching among adults. In "Thinking About Inclusion and Learning Disabilities: A Teacher's Guide," Katherine Garnett argues that students with learning disabilities need "persistent, properly-focused effort on the part of many people, sustained over the long haul." Systems must be developed to ensure that that effort is "properly focused." Researchers Alba Orbitz, Jane Quenneville, and Francine C. Ross all point to the benefits of effective teaming – and to the detriments of ineffective teaming – for the achievement of students with learning disabilities. And Carolyn Ford and L. Jeffrey Fitterman, in "Collaborative Consultation: Literature Review and Case Study of a Proposed Alternative Delivery System," advocate specifically for a rethinking of the role of specialists, creating structures where they work with other teachers to address the needs of students. The research urges movement towards a shared responsibility for student learning needs.

**Research in Practice at BAA:** Our experience at BAA has led us to emphasize two things: (1) how shared responsibility is almost an act of faith (in some cases, it seems to be about trust, special educators trusting regular educators with vulnerable students); and (2) how teaming, when done right, requires more professional development and more planning time, presenting a challenge to school administrators. The "how" conversation, we have found, is the real inclusion conversation. At BAA, we have worked together to reshape job descriptions to reflect the "our kids" philosophy. We have asked our regular educators to be "generalists" in their approach to special education and literacy. We have asked our special educators to be "generalists" in their approach to regular education. Although we continue to struggle with creating sufficient common planning time, we have found that we are most successful when we rethink traditional regular education and special education tasks. We are working on ways to make the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process more inclusive, including regular educators not just in the writing of the IEP but in the documenting of student progress towards goals.