

Special Education

News & Views

Second Edition - June 2003

Every Child, A Promise

All are welcome at St. Alfred Catholic Elementary School! With a population of 580 students, this school hosts a largely transient population with 65% of its students (JK to Gr 3) in Stage 1 or 2 ESL. A recent visit to this active learning community provided some possible insights into how inclusion can work.

Principal, Mary Thompson shared her view that "Inclusion is more of a philosophy or a culture rather than a series of individual strategies." She described her school's focus on team as a central force in making authentic inclusion happen. "We all take responsibility for all the students."

SERT, Joanne Igercich and Grade 8 Classroom Teacher, Natalie Nevins shared their model of integration:

"Over the 4 years I have been in a SERT role at St Alfred, I see the value in an inclusive vision like Mary's." Joanne Igercich shared enthusiastically, "It's amazing how my perceptions of inclusion have grown to the point where I can stand on a soapbox and say "Inclusion works!"

Team is a central premise in this

school. Team extends beyond the traditional "special education team" to include all key stakeholders: Speech and Language Pathologist, Social Worker, Educational Resource Workers, Child and Youth Workers, Teachers, Parents, Co-op students, University students: all are valued contributors to the St. Alfred team.

The team teaching approach suggests that extensive pre-teaching is a big part of student success. Students with special needs have an opportunity to see the work in advance, to practice, and to become familiar.

Natalie Nevins stated that, "The team teaching model gives me a chance to work with all the kids. In fact, if you ask our kids who their teacher is they will respond Ms. Nevins and Ms. Igercich!"

Principal Thompson pointed out that, "An inclusive education model requires people to assume active roles, collaborating with staff, students and family."

SERT Igercich agreed and added "We modify and accommodate as needed. This job calls for a lot of communication." Complimenting her team mate, Igercich suggested that it is Natalie Nevins' ability to program for all students which helps to ensure that there are lots of opportunities for kids to respond. As a school, the literacy focus is evident in every learning space. From the literacy rooms to the print rich classroom

We are all Shepherds

Each of us is a shepherd in some way. A parent is a shepherd to a child, a teacher to a student, a priest to a parishioner, a friend can be a shepherd to a friend, for they guide each other. All of us are called to shepherdhood in some way for each of us is responsible, one to another.

Jean Vanier

Jean Vanier's words remind us that serving students with special needs is really a call to shepherdhood. It is part of our journey to "become human." Since assuming the role of Superintendent of Program in September 2002, it has been my distinct privilege to work in support of students with special needs in Dufferin-Peel.



Brendan Barnett

I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with all those in the system who support students with special needs including the members of the Board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), board staff, support services, outside agencies and volunteers.

In my time here I have observed your perseverance with the ISA process, support and genuine care for learners and

Continued on page 3

Continued on page 5



2. Awakening Spirits
3. "Dear Special Ed" Advice Column
4. Crossword Puzzle
5. Celebrate Success
6. Volunteers/Conferences
7. PIP Drop-In/Social Work Week
8. Inclusion
11. Yes I Can Awards
12. Raising Funds & Hope at JPll

Awakening Spirits

Entering my infant teaching career would be a very unique student who would challenge me like no other student had to date. C.J., as I shall call her in this article, was a wonderful gift of humour, inspiration and courage to my class and a perpetual challenge to my teaching skills. C.J.'s cerebral palsy caused her to face a wide range of academic, physical, social and emotional hurdles...none of which were easy to overcome. In addition, her condition caused her to be dependent on a wheel chair, a large wooden desk (placed in my class) and her own personal desktop computer. I had dealt with students with varying exceptionalities such as ADHD, learning disabilities, giftedness and such however C.J., was nothing like any of them.

Although she had been a fixture at our school for about 3 years, my contact with her had been brief though quite positive. Nonetheless, I approached her entrance into my class with a peculiar sense of foreboding, probably because I didn't know how to effectively integrate her and more importantly because I didn't want to be an impediment to her growth. However, after consulting with staff familiar with C.J., including the ERW, our SERT, the Itinerant Physical Medical Needs Teacher and her previous classroom teachers, the blurry bleakness of my outlook began to lift like a stubborn fog.

Academically, C.J. could read and write at a level that was at or above many of her peers, thanks to the efforts of C.J., her mom and with the assistance of our SERT staff. Thus, I felt confident that this part of her education could be dealt with successfully and apart from some modifications for mathematics, science, music and her workload, triumphant integration did indeed prove to be the case. My biggest obstacle, however, came in the subject area that I enjoyed teaching the most...physical education.

C.J.'s use of a manual wheelchair left me with a difficult dilemma. Due to her physical condition, she had to almost exclusively rely on our ERW to support her mobility, especially during periods of intense physical activity. This didn't pose a problem during our units on drama and

dance, which I integrate into physical education. Instead it was team sports, what I consider the heart of my program, that produced the most anxiety in me.

As we kicked off the year with soccer, I found myself curtailing a lot of my planned activities for fear of excluding C.J. For example, instead of having my students go through skill building drill exercises, I found myself explaining the rules and strategies of the game in more detail than I ever had. By the time I had finished, those kids probably knew more about the fundamentals of soccer than any other group of students I ever had. Yet, on the other hand, you could tell boredom was descending upon them like a seagull on leftover McDonalds food. I felt bad about this but saw no other way to keep the program rolling along without leaving C.J. not only out, but behind.

Eventually, as we began to play soccer games, I had decided to include C.J. by making her a referee and/or score keeper. This has been done with her in previous years. Somehow, however, this didn't feel right. I felt as if I were failing C.J. because I could not allow her to experience the joys of physical activity. Then, through the work of some guardian angel or something like that, the solution that I had so desperately sought, came via of all people....C.J. herself!

One sunny October morning, as I was preparing for the day, I sat with our ERW and discussed how we might get C.J. to participate more in Phys. Ed. Despite our best efforts, we couldn't come up with a workable method. Then, without warning, C.J. interrupted our conversation and said, "I'm sorry Mr. D. for causing you so much trouble. I wish I could walk so that I could make things easier for you and everyone but God doesn't seem to want me too."

Needless to say, those words stung



me like a piercing arrow. Yet, at the same time, it also illuminated the root of my problem. I had been more afraid of losing this battle than winning it. It was time to put caution in its proper place, to experiment, to take risks and above all, to treat C.J. just like any other student.

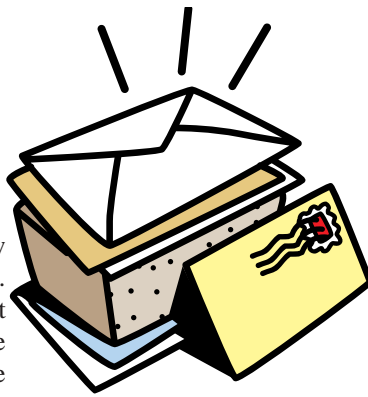
I wish I could say that this revelation immediately put my problems to bed. The truth is it did not. However, this new-found attitude allowed me to take the infant steps needed to succeed. At first, we began by having C.J. fully participate in our soccer games. I made her a goalie with either myself or our ERW controlling the movements of her wheelchair. She was given the responsibility of making the save and handling the ball. To my great joy, this worked out phenomenally for the width of C.J.'s wheelchair along with a body behind her made it very difficult for anyone to score on her. Pretty soon, all of the kids were begging to have C.J. on their team and more importantly, C.J.'s enjoyment and confidence were growing!

This success then led to more triumphs as the year went on. Here is a partial list of them:

- During volleyball, C.J. participated in the skill building lessons by using a small nerf ball to practice with rather than a standard volleyball. During volleyball games, I wheeled her around the positions of her court and she hit the ball when it came to her. However, when it was time for her to serve, I wheeled her up to the net, gave her the nerf ball and/or a balloon and helped her to throw the ball up underneath the net instead of over it. This was quite successful and often allowed her to score 3-4 points in a row.

Continued on page 10

Dear Special Ed...



Dear Special Ed,

In the fall, we are supposed to receive a new student diagnosed with Marfan Syndrome. I have never heard of this syndrome. Is it MS? I'm a little nervous. I want to meet the parents with some background knowledge - what can I do?

Signed: Inquiring Mind

Dear Inquiring,

The best and most valuable primary source of information is through the parents and involved outside agencies. Signed Consent Forms will allow you and your team to find out more about the student rather than the syndrome.

Having said that, there are excellent websites that can serve as a basic secondary information source. You could try <http://www.medicinenet.com> It is a doc-

tor-produced website which provides medical information organized by diseases and conditions, procedures and tests, and medications (non-prescription and prescription drugs). If you need a medical definition, they have an award-winning medical dictionary. You can also search for medical information using their search function. There you will find that M.S. is an acronym for Multiple Sclerosis not Marfan Syndrome.

All Education is Special: Ed

Dear Special Ed,

I remember reading an e-mail about the ICT Service Desk telephone number being changed. Is that the same as the Information Technology Help Line that was referred to in the Winter 2003 edition of the Special Education Newsletter? I'm confused!

Signed: (like I said) I'm Confused!

Dear Confused,

You're not that confused after all! You are right. If you experience technical difficulties with the IEP Engine you can call the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Service Desk at:

Local: 905-366-DESK (3375)
Long Distance: 1-866-376-5215
CEC / Keaton: extension 7190

All Education is Special: Ed

Every Child *continued from pg. 1*

environments, a concerted effort has been made to do justice to the tenets of balanced literacy. How does this help students with special needs?

"Students with special education needs, like all kids, need opportunities to succeed."

Natalie Nevins shared an example, "Right now, we are studying osmosis and the students are using models, oral presentations and demonstrations to communicate their understanding. We start with a scenario and invite students to 'show us what you've got' and they are doing it!"

Technology is also authentically embedded in the curriculum through on-going connections to the curriculum. "Right now, we are studying data management use of the *writer's workshop*. In workshop, we allow kids to have a place; to have a voice."

The school motto "Every child, a promise" also means that students who are in transition to secondary receive careful attention to transition planning. Staff indicate that they believe that it is important to "start early with an emphasis and focus on strengths."

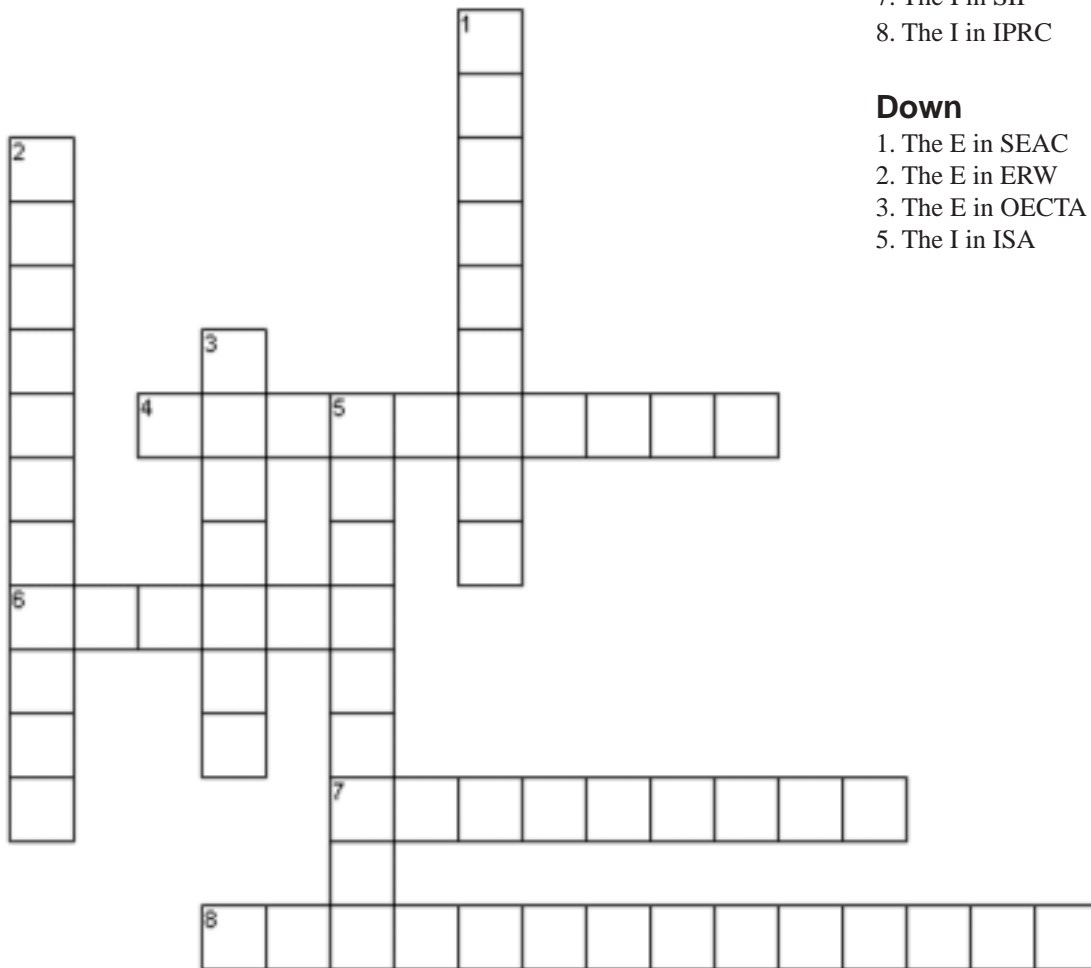
A tour of the school provided an opportunity to witness the philosophy in practise. The tone of the school was one of engaged learning. Everywhere in the school, the commitment to supporting students with collaborative teams was evident. All students appeared authentically engaged and focused on learning. The walls and halls provided an opportunity to see evidence of the celebration of children's learning and in the accomplishments of the students in this inclusive community.

At St. Alfred, every child is truly treated as a promise. Everyone belongs.



Ms McDonald had a Class E-I-E-I-O

Visit Puzzlemaker at DiscoverySchool.com



Across

- 4. The I in IEP
- 6. The O in EQAO
- 7. The I in SIP
- 8. The I in IPRC

Down

- 1. The E in SEAC
- 2. The E in ERW
- 3. The E in OECTA
- 5. The I in ISA

Word Scramble

Word Scramble Answers
(Winter 2003 Issue page 4)

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Individual Education Plan | 7. Child and Youth Worker |
| 2. IPRC | 8. Educational Resource Worker |
| 3. Intensive Support Amount | 9. Teacher |
| 4. Behaviour | 10. Needs |
| 5. Autism | |
| 6. Deaf | |

Dufferin Peel Catholic Schools celebrate Success!



Board Chair Arthur Peters and Program Superintendent Brendan Barnet present a framed copy of the Celebrate Success poster to David Riche.

On Monday, April 14th, at the Program and Faith Committee Meeting, a special presentation was made to David Riche, a student from Good Shepherd. David was presented with a framed copy of the Celebrate Success poster, a promotional poster to announce the publication of the premier issue of the Special Education Newsletter. David Riche, along with Charlotte Castiglione, an Educational Resource Worker, are proud representatives of both the students and staff in the Dufferin-Peel Special Education community in this promotional poster.

Charlotte claims that, "Every day with David is an adventure! His smile and laughter has been a source of joy in our class for the last year and a half. If you're ever having a bad day, just look at David and all your worries disappear!"

David's teacher, Irma Braga agrees and adds, "David brings joy to our room with his happy face. Each day he surprises us with a new word."

Good Shepherd's Vice Principal, Margaret Ramsay adds that, "David and his family are well known in the school. David and his brothers and sisters Dylan (JK), Gabriella (SK), Natasha (Gr 4), Victoria (Gr 6), and Jonathan (Gr 7), are an asset to the Good Shepherd community and a credit to their proud parents, Deborah and Robert Riche."

Michael Bator, Director of Education, commented in a letter to David and his family that, "David's joy and obvious enthusiasm for learning will serve as both an inspiration and an invitation to anyone who sees this poster."

Appreciation is also extended to Bruce Campbell in the Public Relations Department, for his creative design talents in the development of both the poster and the Special Education newsletter.

We are all Shepherds

Continued from page 1

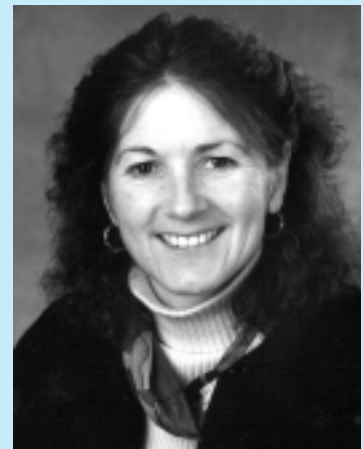
your ability to celebrate their success as demonstrated most recently, through the Special Education newsletter (*Especially Yours.*)

As I pass this portfolio over to the new superintendent of Special Education, I would like to take this opportunity to wish every success to Colleen Tovey-Shackleton, Principal for Special Education who assumes duties as principal for Holy Name of Mary Secondary in September. Colleen's expertise will be missed.

Thanks to Sheila McWatters who has been a constant support re: special education issues. Sheila will, no doubt, carry on the tradition of shepherdhood in the name of students with special needs as Superintendent for Special Education starting in September.

God Bless and thank you for all that you do in the name of students with special needs!

Brendan Barnet
Superintendent, Program Department



Sheila McWatters

Volunteers

As we near the end of another year – staff will be preparing to celebrate the many contributions made by their volunteers. Here are a few literary resources that may support you in that endeavor.

Prayer of Thanks for our Volunteers

I thank thee Lord for our Volunteers
Who've supported us throughout the years.
And who gave of themselves in their own way
To help those who struggle from day to day.
Our thanks for health and mind and soul
To aid us ever towards our goal.
For eyes to see the good in all,
And hand to extend before a fall.
For legs to go where need is great,
Arriving early and leaving late.
For ears to hear and heart to care,
When someone's cross is hard to bear.
A smile to show affection true
With energy and time – a task to do.
Together we ask Lord, if we may,
To serve you better day by day!

Quotes reflective of Volunteerism:

"A candle loses nothing of its light when lighting another." --Kahlil Gibran

"Blessed is the influence of one true, loving human soul on another." --George Eliot

"We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."
--Winston Churchill

"I am only one; but I am still one. I cannot do everything, but still can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do."-- Helen Keller

"The only gift is a portion of thyself".-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."--Margaret Mead

"Those who are not looking for happiness are the most likely to find it, because those who are searching forget that the surest way to be happy is to seek happiness for others."

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

"One thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve."-
- Albert Schweitzer



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Conferences



Ontario Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
2nd Annual International Conference
The Art and Soul of Teaching: Supporting Communities that Learn
October 15-18, 2003
Toronto
To register, or for more information, visit www.ascd.ca

Council for Exceptional Children
Ontario Federation Conference
Beyond Difference
November 6-8, 2003
Toronto
For additional information, go to www.cec.sped.org/ab/canadian.html

Ontario College of Teachers
Symposium
Enhancing the Profession through the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession and the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession
121 Bloor Street East, 6th Floor, Toronto
November 28-29, 2003
Registration Information will be available in June 2003. For additional information, go to www.oct.ca



Mississauga Ice Dogs Drop In at the Drop-In



On February 18, four members of the Mississauga Ice Dogs hockey team spent an evening at the PIP Drop-In. Robbie Shremp, Danny Revelle, Ian Maracle and Blair Jarrett enjoyed a fast game of floor hockey with a group of regular attendees. The Ice Dogs did not have a difficult time sustaining the level of excitement that the kids demonstrated throughout the evening. We sent them away with a rousing cheer and lots of luck for their first time in the play-offs.

Philip Pocock C.S.S. is the location for the weekly Tuesday evening activ-

ity night. The Drop-In is open to all students who attend the Planning for Independence Program at any of the Dufferin-Peel high schools. The evening runs from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. The time may vary if a community activity or special event is scheduled. Everyone is welcome to join a game of floor hockey, shoot some hoops, play badminton, or just chill with the group listening or dancing to music. Making a variety of arts and crafts helps get everyone into the holiday spirit during the Christmas and Easter seasons. Whenever possible, we try to involve participation in the community. Members

have enjoyed a pleasant dining experience at Swiss Chalet, and a fun evening of skating at Scooter's Roller Skating Palace.

A keen group of students from the various high schools also volunteer to make the Drop-in a fun experience that benefits everyone.

For more information about the Drop-In, contact Regina Branco or Lisa Czeban through the Board e-mail or phone 905-602-7858.

Donna Dollin
Academic Resource Teacher
Phillip Pocock Secondary School

Social Work Week Round Up!

On behalf of the Social Work Department I would like to extend their sincere appreciation to administrative teams and staff for your kind support during Social Work Week (March 3-9/03). Through your efforts, we raised approximately \$1,000.00 from the raffle. Proceeds will go directly to families in need on our collective caseload. There were lots of nice stories from members of the social work department who received messages of thanks and tokens of support across the week. Thank you for taking a moment to celebrate us, and for helping us help families. It is a pleasure to work together with you!

Glenn Carley
Chief Social Worker



Inclusion

10 Common Misperceptions of Inclusion

How would you respond?



1. Inclusion is just an excuse for dumping students in general education classrooms. *How would you respond?*

2. Inclusion means that students who need and require special education supports and services won't get them. *How would you respond?*

3. Inclusion means that students must spend full time in general education classrooms. Heather, a Special Education Classroom Teacher responds, "Inclusion does not always mean that a student must spend 100% of their time in general education classrooms. The special Education teacher and the classroom teacher can work together to determine how they can best meet the needs of the student. Currently this year identified students and students who need extra help receive a combination of individual support, withdrawal, small group remedial program, small group instruction that parallels regular class instruction, in-class support and team teaching."

4. Students with disabilities in general education classrooms are shunned and mistreated by their classmates.

Ed, a Resource/Reading Recovery Teacher responds, "We teach acceptance and inclusion in a Catholic system. The special needs students are accepted by their classroom teachers which automatically sets the tone. It is my observation that students like to help/assist through a peer/buddy system." Ed adds that inclusion provides a two-way learning experience in which the students learn from each other.

5. Classroom teachers don't know how to teach students with disabilities, and fear lawsuits if they make a mistake or the student doesn't learn. *How would you respond?*

6. Typical students won't get the attention and support they need from classroom teachers if students with disabilities are also in the classroom. Marilyn, a Resource Teacher responds, "I think that this is a popular misconception that is often held by parents and members of the general population. It appears that the thinking is that the students who have disabilities in an inclusive environment are given the majority of attention, leaving little for the 'typical' students. In reality, the additional support provided to the school either in ERW or SERT assistance enables each student in the class to receive, when needed, additional assistance. Students in an inclusive environment learn valuable lessons from those with disabilities. Lessons about compassion, tolerance, honesty, caring and understanding. These are lessons that bring to a human being the most precious gift of all- an understanding and awareness of oneself."

7. When students with disabilities are placed in general education classrooms, all the lessons and learning get reduced to a lower level to accommodate them. *How would you respond?*

8. Students with disabilities need to develop relationships with others with the same or similar disabilities. In general education classrooms they are cut off from developing these relationships. An ERW responds, "The general education classroom provides a positive and beneficial learning environment important for developing relationships with other students. The skills and the learning experiences acquired in the regular classroom are often unattainable when a student is segregated from the general population. Students in the regular classroom provide a model for appropriate behaviour that a student with a disability can imitate. Valuable skills learned are turn taking, sharing and co-operation which helps the student to develop the social skills necessary to build relationships with other students. Building these relationships develops self confidence, positive self image and socialization skills which will enable the student with a disability to adapt in society with greater success."

9. Inclusive schools are a good idea, but not realistic. Teaching diverse groups of students is too hard for teachers and administrators. *How would you respond?*

10. Inclusion is too expensive. *How would you respond?*

Inclusion – A sense of Belonging for All

“We do not discover who we are, we do not reach true humanness, in a solitary state; we discover it through mutual dependency, in weakness, in learning through belonging.”

Jean Vanier

Life is not fair. How often have we heard our students utter this comment when something has not gone their way or they have not attained that mark that they thought that they deserved? How often have we as adults uttered the same comment when our day has not gone as planned? As educators, we deal with the unfairness of life on a daily basis when it comes to the needs of the students entrusted to us. We cannot make life fair, but we can instill in all students a sense of belonging and thus a sense of community. All students belong and can learn in the mainstream of school and community life. It is the diversity that we find among our students that brings opportunities for learning. It is this learning that brings strength, self worth, pride in accomplishments and respect for all of humanity.

From the initial inception of Robert F. Hall, the Academic Resource Department has followed a model of inclusion.

The Academic Resource Room has become the morning “meeting place” for many of our

identified students. It is where the students from the Planning For Independence Program gather to organize their day before heading off to their first period class. It is where friendships develop and grow. It is where we as adults are privileged to witness the care and concern that students show for one another. It is where we welcome all students, from the young man injured in a car accident, to the young lady who has come to inform us of her acceptance into the College Program of her choice. It is where students are allowed to make mistakes with dignity and then receive the support to help them learn from those mistakes. It is where the day begins for staff and students associated in many different ways with the Academic Resource Department.

With supports in place and the expertise and knowledge of our ERWs, inclusion in the mainstream classes for our higher needs students is successful. It is understood that the students have a responsibility to their integration classes and that they need to meet individual expectations as determined by their IEP. Because the Planning For Independence students have a choice in the selection of their classes and because their peers are important to them, we see a growth in maturation and responsibility in all students. We are not trying to “normalize or fix” our students, we are merely giving them the opportunity to learn together and to be valued for the gifts that they bring to any situation. Education helps prepare all students for life, but inclusion gives students the knowledge and tools to deal with life. The supports put in place for our needier students, often benefit all students within the class.

Inclusion does not end when the bell goes to dismiss the class. It continues on into the extra curricular activities of the school. Students from the Planning For Independence Program attend school dances, including the Semi Formal and Prom. They get involved in charity events such as bowlerama and the Terry Fox run and learn to give back to their community in order that they can also “serve God”. Students integrated into the Hospitality Course each take their turn at serving staff during the Café provided by the teacher and students in this course. Sports teams and clubs such as the badminton and curling clubs often have students from the Planning For Independence Program playing alongside their “regular” peers.

We live inclusion on a daily basis at Robert F. Hall and it is through living this experience that I can say that Inclusion has the ability to reduce fear of the unknown, and to promote friendship and respect among all.

In the words of Jean Vanier from the CBC Massey Lectures Series 1998

“It seems paradoxical to say that people with disabilities have taught me what it means to be human and that they are leading me into a new vision of society, a more human society. With and through them I have discovered the joys of celebration, love, working and communicating together in mutual respect and laughter”.

Elaine Etmanski
Academic Resource Department Head
Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School



Links...

Inclusion Websites

<http://circleofinclusion.org/>

The Circle of Inclusion Web Site is for early childhood service providers and families of young children. This web site offers demonstrations of and information about the effective practices of inclusive educational programs for children from birth through age eight.

<http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/index.html>

This web site is designed for general education teachers, special education teachers, parents, and school staff to help provide some answers about how inclusive education can be accomplished. Resources for making accommodations are included as well as links to other web sites and resource lists for learning more about inclusive education.

<http://www.inclusive-education.com/>

Inclusion Website - sponsored by The Master Teacher contains educational resources for all levels of personnel covering a wide range of educational topics.

<http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/incl/inbib.html>

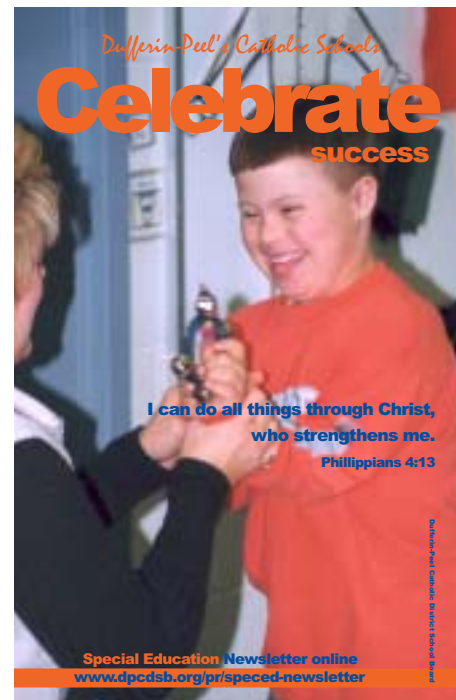
Includes an annotated bibliography of articles, books, journals, and multi-media on Inclusive Education.

<http://www.closingthegap.com/>

Through a newspaper, annual conference, and Web site, Closing The Gap provides practical up-to-date information on assistive technology products, procedures, and best practices.

<http://www.ed.wright.edu/~prenick/>

The Electronic Journal of Inclusive Education publishes research, reviews, scholarly writings and poetry concerning the inclusion of students with special learning needs in regular classrooms. The Electronic Journal is concerned with inclusion issues at all levels of educational endeavors : research , administrative issues, classroom teaching and exemplary university student work.



Special Education Newsletter online
www.dpcdsb.org/pr/speced-newsletter

Awakening Spirits

Continued from page 2

- In hockey, we did much the same thing as we did in soccer. In addition, we experimented by having C.J. play the forward position. When doing so, she carried a 30 cm ruler in her hand. As soon as the ball came to her, we stopped and allowed her to pass or shoot (depending on how close she was to the net) using a tiny plastic ping pong type ball and the ruler.
- During basketball, I purchased a small basketball net that hooks onto doors for C.J. A small ball came with the unit. She participated in all of our skill building activities using this apparatus. During games, we wheeled her around the court and whenever her team was awarded a foul shot, she took all of them by throwing the small basketball into the hoop of the small basketball net.
- In baseball, C.J. played all of the positions. When the ball was hit to her, either I, our ERW or a teammate would catch the ball and ask her to tell us where to throw it. This kept her mind in the game. When it was her turn to bat, I usually batted for her but she ran the bases since by now she was using an electric wheel chair.
- Our crowning achievement was C.J. participating in all of our track and field events. She used a small nerf ball for shot-put, independently participated in our 100 m sprints and relay races using her electric wheelchair and when we got to the long jump and triple jump, we had her wheel herself through the take off area and then our ERW and I lifted her out of her chair and up and over the sand pits or high jump bar. She really loved that.

C.J.'s progression continues this year. She is in a grade 6 class across the hall from me and from all accounts, is having a wonderful year. She is even using a laptop keyboard to input her work and now only uses the desktop when she has to print something. This has enabled her to stay in her class for all of her lessons.

In retrospect, my experience with C.J. reminded me of a passage I once read in the Bible, "All things impossible with people are

Continued on page 12

Yes I Can Awards

Chapter 391 is the local chapter of the Canadian Council for Exceptional Children, an international organization founded in 1922 to advance the education of learners with special needs and to foster the professional excellence and personal growth of its members. The Executive of the Chapter 391 invited Board staff working with exceptional children and youth to submit nominations for students they felt meet the criteria for a YES I CAN!! award. The awards were presented at a reception held on Tuesday, April 29, 2003 at the H.J.A. Brown Education Centre, Mississauga. A number of Dufferin-Peel students were honored.

Andre Natividad, a grade 5 student attending St. Raymond School in Mississauga, received a YES I CAN award for athletics. Andre has cerebral palsy and uses an electric wheel chair for mobility. Andre's award is in recognition of his outstanding effort and participation in several bowling field trips. Congratulations Andre in exemplifying the YES I CAN! spirit!



Congratulations go out to **Alexander Parent**, a grade 3 student at St Alfred School who has been selected to receive a YES I CAN! award for Independent Living Skills. Alexander's teachers, Ms. Curitti and Mrs.

Sergnese report with pride that Alex exemplifies a very positive attitude towards all learning. He sees the value of working hard and enjoys learning new things. He is definitely an excellent role model for others.



Monika is in her sixth year in the Planning for Independence program at Phillip Pocock Secondary School. Monika was selected to win the YES I CAN! award for community service. Currently, Monika has a co-op placement at the Tysdale Nursing Home. All the manners that staff have focused on are up front and center when she is with the Seniors. Vivian Michey, Academic Resource Department Head at Pocock reports that Monika even reminds the seniors that they have to say 'thank you'. The residents at Tysdale look forward each day to her arrival.

Patricia Osinski is a grade 6 student with Prader-Willi Syndrome at St. Elizabeth Seton. The recycling program at St. Elizabeth Seton school is of great interest to Patricia. She embraced the program wholeheartedly. Every Tuesday, Patricia assists with the collection of recyclable items from various classrooms and verbally supervises other students in the disposal of the recyclable items. This program enables her to socialize and verbalize with her peers in a supervised setting. She has developed more vo-

cabulary and increased social skills which has allowed her to be more interactive with other students, teachers and adults. Patricia has become the ambassador for recycling at Seton. Her enthusiasm for this program made Patricia a clear candidate for the "Yes I Can Award" for community service.



For more information on the Yes I Can Awards, check the Council for Exceptional web site at <http://www.canadian.cec.sped.org>

Raising funds and hope at Pope John Paul II

Excerpt from a parent letter distributed to Staff, Special Services Team members, Itinerant PDD/Autism Team and Administration of Pope John Paul II School as well as Brampton East/Caledon/Dufferin Family of Schools Superintendent, Michael McPhee.

The week of April 22 - 25 was "Autism Week" at our school, Pope John Paul II. "Since when?" you may be asking yourself. "Says who?" you could be wondering. Since Loretta Easton (ERW), Cherise Atwater (ERW) and Rose Maiolo (ERW) joined our team. This is what they say loud and clear...although Autism has neither cure nor cause to date, there is still so much we can do to help; and help they have and inspire, most definitely! A variety of activities were organized at a donation of one loonie per student each day in order to join in all the fun; and fun was had by all! Friday was "Toonie for Autism" day, an initiative the Autism Society of Ontario launched to heighten awareness in schools and raise much needed funds.

In addition to raising an astounding \$2,250 for autism, they raised hope! Awareness, knowledge, understanding and acceptance at our school continues to spread in large part due to the advocacy, commitment, leadership and 'roll up your sleeves' hard work of Mrs. Easton, Mrs. Atwater and Ms. Maiolo. In their capacity as ERWs here at Pope John Paul II School, they do not come to work every day and simply fulfill the requirements of their job. Instead, they come into work every day and provide a service to our Lord and Saviour, they are doing God's work, there is no question in my mind! Here are three professionals who lead by example, showing us how a disability can become ability. Blessed are my autistic children Domenico and Roberto and all of us who learn from them!

Mirian Sansalone,
Parent

Logo Contest Winner

Congratulations to Cecile Kendrick for her submission to our newsletter logo contest. If the name is familiar it is because Cecile is a retired St. Timothy Principal. She is also mother to Shirley Kendrick, Vice Principal of Special Education. Thank you, Cecile!

Especially yours...
education



Future Themes Fall 2003 Issue

- *Dufferin-Peel SEAC- A Closer Look*
- *Parent Volunteer Programs*

Would you like to write an article for the Special Education newsletter?

Please contact Special Ed. Department and/or send comments and submissions to:

Special Education Newsletter
Special Education Department
Dufferin-Peel Catholic DSB
40 Matheson Blvd. West
Mississauga, Ontario L5R 1C5

Voice Mail: (905) 890-0708 ext 4284

All submissions are subject to review
Recommended article length
200-250 words

If students' names, photographs, or work are used, a signed consent/waiver will be required.

Awakening Spirits

Continued from page 10

possible with God." By placing my trust not only in myself and our Lord but also with C.J., I was able to take my fears and use them as a springboard to do the one thing we always encourage our students to do; to take a risk. I began to understand that her situation wasn't a problem but a marvelous opportunity whose doors would only open if I allowed them to. Her dramatic statement to me in the fall had made me realize that what she was really saying was, "Treat me just like anyone else." Thank goodness that God helped me to listen to what she said rather than just hear the words.

Joe DiFranco
Teacher: St Thomas More