

Mid-State Regional Meeting MINUTES
Education Conference Room (C128), Utica College
May 24th, 2011
3:00 – 4:30pm

In attendance

- ◆ Cazenovia College: Kim Wieczorek
- ◆ Cornell University: Bobbi Townsend
- ◆ Dr. Weeks Elementary: Dare Dutter (principal)
- ◆ Syracuse University: Peter Kozik, Tom Bull
- ◆ Utica College: Lois Fisch, Patrice Hallock, Terry McDonald (also of Syracuse University)
- ◆ Wells College: Bryan Duff

Thank yous

- ◆ For facilitating funding/food: Kim Wieczorek
- ◆ For hosting this meeting: Lois Fisch, Patrice Hallock, Terry McDonald
- ◆ For organizing us all: Bryan Duff

In-process initiative report: Use of school-partnerships grant money by Dr. Weeks Elementary

- ◆ Bryan reminded everyone about the background: IM:PACT mini-grants, initiated by previous regional liaisons, were meant to support *multiple* partnerships (between schools with effective inclusive practices and schools seeking to make their practices more inclusive). Region voted earlier in the year to re-purpose these funds to support a *single* school in its efforts to become more inclusive. Tom had suggested Dr. Weeks Elementary.
- ◆ Tom explained how Dr. Weeks got connected with the Schools of Promise work headed by Julie Causton-Theoharis and George Theoharis. He noted that offering some funding to Dr. Weeks personnel was a helpful boost to get people on board.
- ◆ Work at Weeks has included bi-weekly afterschool meetings attended by 15-20 faculty and staff.
- ◆ Kim noted that she took invoices, written in terms of hours spent attending the afterschool meetings, and offered each teacher \$60.00 per hour for their time. Fourteen (14) teachers filled out invoices, totaling approximately \$2700 (leaving approx. \$900 in this part of the budget).
- ◆ Principal Dare Dutter reported on Dr. Weeks Elementary and its status as a school in good standing. Yet, there have been 2 groups not making the same progress: students with disabilities and English Language Learners. The efforts to create inclusive classes still resulted in students with disabilities being grouped together and separated from peers. When co-taught classrooms were in place, students with challenging behaviors (and without IEPs) were also added to those classrooms, creating even more challenges.

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- ◆ Current efforts are to use demographics of school to construct parallel demographics in classrooms (e.g., if 20% of students in school have disabilities, then only 20% of students in any classroom will be SWDs – and same principle will be applied to English Language Learners).
- ◆ Key detail to “hammer out” includes working out percent of time students get required services, often offered in pull-out model.
- ◆ Dr. Weeks has moved fairly quickly to make changes happen – as most schools are required to make changes anyway (due to budget and procedural changes in district).
- ◆ One key challenge is working with English Language Learners and ESL teachers, as model of ESL services has remained pull-out with ELLs being isolated from peers.
- ◆ Another challenge is that Dr. Weeks is being renovated next year, with K-4 grades moving to Shea Middle School and the 5th grade moving to Lincoln Middle School.
- ◆ Teachers do feel empowered as part of the process to be in on the decision-making around changes to classrooms and practices.
- ◆ Kim is working with Principal Dutter to make decisions on use of remainder of funds.

Completed initiative report: Inclusion Symposium and Preservice Mini-Grants

- ◆ Bryan reported the following details from the “Bookends for Inclusion” Symposium (April 8, 2011):
 - 120 people attended
 - 82 preservice teachers; 15 inservice teachers; 23 faculty members
 - 91 participants returned evaluations (with only 2 registering dissatisfaction, citing too-basic content focused on preservice teacher level/needs)
 - 85 of 91 participants agreed to a one-month follow-up survey
 - 33 participants actually responded to the one-month follow-up survey
 - To encourage participation in follow-up survey, raffle prize of \$120.00 Amazon credit for inclusive materials was offered. Chelsea Bremenour, preservice teacher from Elmira College, won the raffle.
 - Most of these follow-up responses offered substantial and specific feedback (e.g., several noted helpful information on co-teaching from Tom Bull and his co-presenters)
- ◆ Bryan and Kim reported the following details from the Preservice Mini-Grants initiative:
 - Preservice teachers from 8 different IHEs participated
 - Documentation from grant recipients on how they “reported out” on their experiences at their home IHEs has been collected
 - Terry and Patrice reported on enthusiasm sparked by preservice teacher presentations in Terry’s and Patrice’s courses
 - Bryan noted good attendance at the Wells College team’s presentation at the annual Activism Symposium held on campus (and attracting people from throughout our region)

Report on new online forum for discussing Adolescence-level SPED

- ◆ Peter reported on New York State’s requirement for all general educators to take a stand-alone course and 15 hrs of fieldwork focused on students with disabilities. Online forum will focus more specifically on Adolescence-level general educators and the question of how to develop a course that helps them develop strong inclusive practice.
- ◆ Forum facilitators: Howard Weiner from Touro, Bryan Duff from Wells, Larry Maheady from SUNY Fredonia, Peter Osroff from Garden City Middle School, and Peter Kozik.
- ◆ Anyone can subscribe to the forum by sending an email (no content required) to adolescent-sped+subscribe@googlegroups.com
- ◆ Each week, facilitator posts a question or prompt to stimulate discussion and sharing of resources. The hoped-for end product—a result of analysis and synthesis of responses to the weekly questions—will be a template for the required coursework.
- ◆ Bryan Duff posted first question, premised on his experience with secondary preservice teachers not always responding well to inclusion-related materials: soliciting ideas about inclusion-related materials (e.g., books, articles, videos) likely to be effective with Adolescence-level candidates.
- ◆ Howard Weiner posted the second question: about connecting theory to practice.
- ◆ Sticking with the theme of Adolescence SPED, Bryan reported out on the recent meeting he attended in Saratoga Springs, assisting Pearson in constructing an assessment for the new SWD 7-12 Generalist certification. Noted that the coming assessment promises to be a rigorous test, both in content and in standards of proficiency, where preservice educators are asked to show competence across multiple content areas. Members expressed concern that such a test might contribute to a shrinking rather than an expansion of secondary-level teachers wanting to work with SWDs.

Report on future of statewide/regional work absent HESC

- ◆ Kim used Adolescence SPED report as a segue into the last agenda item: the future of regional and statewide work on inclusion. She suggested that some of the concerns about the new SWD 7-12 certification might be addressed at NYSATE/NYACTE’s upcoming “Day on the Hill,” a chance to speak directly with representatives, June 6-7 in Albany. Kim passed around a flier about the program. Lois reported on history of “Day on the Hill.”
- ◆ Peter described the possibility of creating a Special Interest Group, within NYSATE or NYACTE, that essentially would continue some of the functions of HESC. The autonomous regions then would come together at the annual NYSATE/NYACTE conference to share ideas and report progress.
- ◆ Lois suggested that connecting with NYACTE might make more sense because it has a larger budget and has school of ed leadership well represented.
- ◆ Bryan and Peter reported on recent Liaisons meeting held at College of St. Rose to discuss continued work of regions and Inclusive Task Force. Few liaisons saw lack of funding as a large

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stumbling block; in fact, liaison Chandra Foote from the West noted that lack of funding was actually encouraging greater participation, to rally around the work of the Task Force for inclusive practice.

- ◆ Peter reported on the rich diversity of projects from the various regions and how each region has a different “cast” – and that each might seek different kinds of sources for funding. Peter has sent a list of suggestions to Matt Giugno at NYSED and suggested tapping different avenues and ways of offering professional development around inclusive practice in trade for other services. Also discussed Career Ladder as part of Teacher Evaluation system in state.
- ◆ Lois noted the challenges of finding good placements in Utica and how Utica College has offered a series of professional development workshops from college/education faculty.

Adjournment

- ◆ Thank yous all around, with continued promise to communicate via Google Groups. You can send email to this Google listserve by writing tfqis-midstate@googlegroups.com and, if you're not already subscribed (if you were on the old list, you should be on this new one), you can send an email to Bryan Duff (bduff@wells.edu).