



Creating Inclusive Schools

The Work of the New York Higher Education
Support Center for SystemChange

**CREATING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS: The Work of the New York Higher Education Support Center
for SystemsChange**

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Setting the Context

This book documents the sixteen-year history of a development that rightfully was called “SystemsChange.” It was an effort to *create inclusive schools* by changing teacher preparation systems, professional development systems, and systems for supporting high needs schools, and by influencing the attendant policies and regulations. The development was supported by federal and state funds and was organized in projects across three consecutive grant periods. The New York State Education Department was connected to this development in multiple ways, and can take credit, in part, for the vision and leadership that made this endeavor a success. In the chapters that follow, you’ll get a good sense of the systems we were trying to change, some of the strategies we used, some successes we experienced, and what we learned in the process. Before we get into that detail, it would be useful to understand the NYSED context in which this development was situated and came to be.

Working with the NYSED in this type of venture was something new and untried. While it would have been logical to have this project under the support and direction of the NYSED Office of Higher Education, given that the main focus was to prepare teachers to work in inclusive environments, the project was supported by a different office, the special education office, within the NYSED.

In the early 1990s, special education functions, through the Office for the Education of Children with Handicapping Conditions, was then part of the Office of Elementary, Middle,

Secondary and Continuing Education (EMSC) within the NYSED. Fiscal support was an outgrowth of the significant need to move students with disabilities out of segregated, and sometimes isolated, classrooms and into more inclusive environments.

Issues that militated against

this happening generally came from teachers who often stated that they were not prepared to work with students with disabilities. NYS needed to move students from these separate locations because of the LRE requirements in the IDEA. Too many students, especially in the largest urban school districts were educated in these environments. Thus, the regulatory need to make general education classrooms more accessible matched well with the moral, ethical, philosophical, and some would add, the civil rights of students with disabilities to participate with other students. We needed to change how teachers perceived their own roles in relation to students with disabilities. The development of the Higher Education Support Center (HESC) for SystemsChange was intended to be a major means to make this happen.

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Matt Giugno

An interesting development occurred as the NYSED reorganized itself twice in the early-to-mid-1990s. First, the special education functions temporarily disappeared when the NYSED moved to a “field teams” concept. While one could say that it made sense to give these responsibilities to everyone, and not just the specialists, this was very impractical and was nearly a disaster. Much like classroom teachers, the NYSED was not prepared to take on this complex arrangement and responsibility. Then, in 1994, with a new Commissioner hired, the special education functions were moved again, along with adult vocational rehabilitation functions, and placed in a new office called the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities, or VESID. Conceptually, this would provide a seamless service system that would serve all citizens of NYS from early childhood through adulthood. Unfortunately, this created a new “silo” of specialists that removed the special education staff from their colleagues in the rest of pre-K through 12. Even in this shifting context, the Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling continued to grow and flourish, adding new college faculty membership and providing a strong influence not only on inclusive practices, but also on all of teacher preparation. Following these reorganizations, the HESC was established to advance this work and connect it to other NYSED initiatives and technical assistance centers.

In 2010, with school reform efforts clearly the major focus, VESID was no more. The special education functions were moved back to preK-12 (replacing the EMSC title with the Office of P-12 Education). This seems to fit much more appropriately with school reform and the new “Race to the Top” initiative. The adult vocational rehabilitation services were placed with other adult education services in what is called the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) which includes Vocational Rehabilitation (including Independent Living Administration), Adult Education (including General Educational Development (GED) Testing), and Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision. The current organization of the NYSED is now in position to ensure that all students are educated in the LRE since all P-12 efforts are located under one roof and are under one Deputy Commissioner.

In this context – really, these contexts – the HESC for SystemsChange was conceived and brought into being. In sixteen years, through its Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling, the HESC has accomplished some amazing things, all toward *creating inclusive schools*. This book offers accounts of that development as seen through the eyes and heard in the voices of many who were part of the effort. It was a unique undertaking and is an interesting read.

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Chapter 1

The Significance of HESC

One could argue that the most significant pioneering efforts in our field have come, not in loud dramatic bursts, but from measured steps taken by those who share a mission and have the steadfastness to move forward, even when the conditions around them are changing and challenging. Step-by-step, innovators move toward their goal. They attempt what can be accomplished, sometimes accomplishing even more. They respond to the changes and challenges that they confront, but are not distracted from their larger purposes. They persist. Their efforts change that which was. Step-by-step they build that which did not exist before.

First, as a SystemsChange project, then as a Higher Education Support Center, the project described in this volume was such a pioneering effort. Through sixteen years, this venture supported the mission first expressed by a few, but eventually adopted by many. It was and is the mission of *creating inclusive schools*. Step-by-step, we built a complex system that wedded colleges and universities to local schools and districts – all committed to this mission. Chiefly, through inclusive teacher preparation and partnerships with teachers and schools, we formed and re-formed the system to more closely align it with our view of inclusive schooling. No one ever said this would be easy and, indeed, it was not.

Even before the HESC, from 1990 – 1995, there was a SystemsChange project, an effort to help schools and districts in New York State move toward inclusive policies and practices in their service to learners with disabilities. Upstate and downstate, urban, rural, and suburban – districts of all types and sizes were invited to participate in the five-year project. About 40 joined in. Together, with leadership and challenge from the New York Partnership for Statewide SystemsChange, a federally funded effort, they crafted context-relevant programs to bring boys and girls back from segregated schools into their home schools and districts. At the elementary, middle, and high school levels, these learners were, for the first time, being educated with their peers. It was a great new learning experience for them, one which they had every right to expect.

It was also a new learning experience for the teachers and administrators who committed to the project. Not having participated in inclusive education before, they had much to learn. So did the counselors and therapists and social workers who had traditionally served these learners in segregated settings. So did the parents of these boys and girls who were so concerned that their children receive the services and support they needed to succeed. For all, the project presented an opportunity to learn, a challenge to

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but the mission is worth the effort.*

Jerry Mager

change the nature of schooling for learners with disabilities, and to change how we all think about ourselves and our relations with each other.

Luanna Meyer and Matt Giugno led the SystemsChange project in those early years. Their diligence and their vision helped create many models for how inclusive schooling could work. Luanna was a faculty member in the School of Education at Syracuse University. Matt was a staff member in the Office for Vocational and Educational Service for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) in the New York State Education Department. Together, they had a handle on relevant federal and state policies, and on data describing practices and results in the over-700 districts of the state, and on strategies for bringing about and sustaining change in educational organizations at multiple levels. And so they took steps toward the goal of changing the policy-practice-professional growth systems that interacted with each other in the design and implementation of better schooling for all learners.

It was not easy. Through the five years of the project, they encountered many challenges: policies and regulations that were interpreted as contrary to including learners; educators who believed that learners with special needs should be “protected” from typical students; parents who were reluctant to move their children into inclusive classrooms fearing they would lose services. Each challenge was met, sometimes making progress, sometime not.

We had created separate, parallel systems which were increasingly self-perpetuating in policy and practice. And the programs for preparing the teachers and administrators who would serve in those systems were equally separate and self-perpetuating. Without significant redesign of those preparation programs, the larger systems would remain intractable.

Jerry Mager

Perhaps the biggest challenge, the most pervasive challenge, was the refrain they heard from regular classroom teachers who rightfully declared, “I wasn’t prepared to teach these kids. I don’t know how to work with them.” The truth of their declaration was profound. We had created separate, parallel systems which were increasingly self-perpetuating in policy and

practice. And the programs for preparing the teachers and administrators who would serve in those systems were equally separate and self-perpetuating. Without significant redesign of those preparation programs, the larger systems would remain intractable.

In the second five-year project, from 1995 – 2000, the New York Partnerships for Statewide SystemsChange 2000, one of four components focused on creating a collaboration of colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs who would commit to developing and implementing inclusive teacher preparation programs.¹ Thus, the Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling was formed. I was asked to lead this

¹ The other three components also took on great challenges: including young children with emotional disabilities; including adolescents in middle and secondary schools; and re-educating special education technical assistance staff members about inclusive policies and practices. All four components were considered to be among the most difficult next steps in the process of creating inclusive schools.

component of the Systems Change 2000 project since I was instrumental, in the late 1980s, in developing the Inclusive Elementary and Special Education Teacher Preparation Program at Syracuse University – one of the first in the nation. I was pleased to join Luanna and Matt in this new five-year undertaking and to lead my colleagues in teacher education from across the state toward this end.

We sent out invitations to all colleges and universities, and we anticipated about ten institutions would make the commitment. But nearly eighteen showed up for the convening statewide meeting. Rather than arbitrarily limiting the number, we decided to include them all. They represented different regions of the state, undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation

programs, large and small institutions, private and public institutions, and programs for teachers leading toward different certification titles. Though most had programs leading to teacher certification in special education, other than Syracuse University, none had truly inclusive programs.

... We came to collective understandings of [the meaning of inclusion and inclusive teaching]. ... We recognized the variation in our perspectives born of our different teaching and teacher education histories. We came to appreciate the value of having multiple different programs, each of which fit well in its institution but might not fill well in another.

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The Task Force, as we began to call ourselves, met multiple times in the first year to consider three questions: What do we mean by inclusion? What is inclusive teaching? and What is inclusive teacher preparation? Through dialogue we came to collective understandings of these questions and the tentative responses we would offer. We recognized the variation in our perspectives born of our different teaching and teacher education histories. We came to appreciate the value of having multiple different programs, each of which fit well in its institution but might not fit well in another. Thus, though the Syracuse University program was already established and had graduated several undergraduate cohorts, I did not hold it as a model for others to replicate. Rather, I urged the Task Force members to begin to design teacher preparation programs that built on the strengths of their current programs, that would honor the good traditions of their institutions, and that would be sustainable in the long-term.

Through the next four years, the Task Force continued to meet multiple times, extending our dialogue and deepening our understanding of the issues. Members presented their program designs to receive feedback and suggestions from the other members. Shared readings, presenters from the State Education Department, teacher educators from other states, and our own evolving perspectives, kept the Task Force a place of lively discussion and continuous challenge. Members presented at state and national conferences, not only to share the mission we were committed to, but also to learn what we might from the work of others.

Over those years, a few institutions left the Task Force. But others joined in. By the end of the fifth year, twenty-three institutions were active in the Task Force. Most of them registered inclusive teacher preparation programs with the state, each suitable to

their institutions. A sense of growing momentum among teacher educators in the state toward inclusive teacher preparation became evident.

A year of transition, 2000-2001, and a new five-year project, 2001 – 2006, was supported by VESID. The Higher Education Support Center (HESC) for SystemsChange was created; the Task Force and its work in advancing inclusive teacher preparation and partnerships with local high needs schools became the primary focus. Connections were drawn with other state-supported initiatives such as the State Improvement Grant, the Regional School Support Centers, the Special Education Training Resource Centers, and the regional Joint Management Team structure.

But, again, it was not easy. September 11th brought significant changes to operational rules, and limits were placed on statewide meetings – the very means by which the HESC and its Task Force conducted its work. Persisting, we moved to create a regional Task Force structure that became a singular strength of the project. Not only did

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the most important work of *creating inclusive schools* occur at the local level, but it was through local school partnerships that colleges and universities were able to enhance their inclusive teacher preparation programs. Colleges and universities were able to collaborate with each other and with regional high need

schools on the challenges they faced in serving all learners well. A raft of initiatives supported individual, institutional, and regional projects that took steps aligned with our mission. Purposeful activities emerged everywhere. Further, many more faculty members, teachers and administrators, agency staff members, and other interested partners were able to attend regional meetings that might have attended statewide meetings. Participation swelled. The two annual statewide meetings served to give each of the seven regions opportunities to learn about what was developing in other regions of the state and to hear from leaders and policy-makers in Albany. The regional and statewide structures complemented each other in ways we could not have anticipated.

Getting the regional Task Force structure established and functioning was not easy. Identifying Regional Task Force Liaisons, setting an agenda, each aligned with our mission, coordinating efforts across the regions when needed, and helping set funding mechanisms at multiple colleges and universities, all took much learning, much problem-solving, and enormous patience. But the capacity that was built – in the form of shared knowledge and commitments, for collaboration among parties that had not historically collaborated, for leadership in addressing pressing and seemingly intractable problems, and in mustering and using resources toward these ends – exceeded expectations. And this new capacity has proven durable in individuals, in institutions, and even in the collective of each region. They can now address regional changes and challenges in ways

that they could not before. They can set their own agendas for regional development and take the steps needed to reach their goals. It was not easy, but we got there.

Another five-year grant from VESID allowed us to continue the work of the HESC and its Task Force from 2006-2011, but with a significantly reduced budget. Changes in personnel on the Task Force, in the partner schools, and in the State Education Department all presented new challenges and opportunities. It wasn't easy. We persisted. We built on the successes of the past projects. We more closely aligned our work with other state-sponsored projects. We developed initiatives that again connected teacher preparation with effective school practices in the pursuit of *creating inclusive schools*. The capacities that had been developed in the regions were assets that state projects called on in taking their own steps. We became allies of leaders within the State Education Department who were advancing regulations for teacher preparation programs that fostered inclusive schooling; we collaborated in designing these regulations, and assisted institutions and school districts in understanding their purposes and details. Thus, even with the reduced budget and a narrower focus, successes followed. They are evident in the reports from the Regional Task Force Liaisons, in the statewide HESC analyses of incoming data, and in national exposure through federal government and professional organization conferences and conversations. The steps taken in the last five years reflect the growth of the project from its origins, sixteen years earlier, and its maturity as a SystemsChange effort.

In 2011, this series of projects came to an end. Sort of. The mission to which we all committed remains at hand. We have made tremendous progress. We have changed in some important ways the norms of teacher preparation and the expectations of teaching practice in service to all learners. Yet there is still much to be done. And there are many current pioneers who stand ready to continue this effort. The relationships that have been built, the changes in policy and regulation governing inclusive schooling and inclusive teacher preparation, and the capacity that has been built within the larger system – all represent steps that have been taken. Teacher educators at colleges and universities across the state, teachers and administrators in partnering local schools, partnering agencies, policy-makers at the local and state levels – all understand that there are next steps to be taken to achieve fully inclusive schools. And no one says it will be easy. It hasn't been up till now. But the mission – *creating inclusive schools* – has been and is worthy of the effort.

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Chapter 2

Building Capacity through Collaboration

What does research tell us about collaborations that work, and to what degree does this inform our own ways of looking at the HESC initiative – its work and its accomplishments – over the sixteen years? We wished to get a sense of how our project fits the contexts of successful efforts beyond the scope of educational inclusion. To do so we examined a strong sample of research into serious organizational collaborations, primarily in health and human services. The findings provide us with insights that confirm that mutual commitment to clearly defined goals and responsibilities, multi-directional communication, and trust can accomplish far more than organizations working in isolation.

The needs are many, and so complex. Improving the nutrition of Palestinian women and children, strengthening families in urban America, addressing environmental pollution: such broad and important goals that no single organization or approach could possibly reach.

Working together, though, health and human service organizations are finding they can create solutions to complex social problems. Research tells what successful interagency collaborations look like, and what they can accomplish. These partnerships differ in organization and purpose, but they have common traits that help them achieve their common goals. (The citations are included in Attachment 2.)

The HESC collaboration was built on a similar premise of crossing boundaries to reach a shared goal. The mission of creating inclusive schools required fundamental changes in colleges and universities and in the providers of elementary, middle, and secondary education.

Organizations may work together to pool their resources to solve shared problems or reach mutual goals, and results of their collaboration can go far beyond their individual capacities to serve. However,

there are benefits to the collaborating organizations as well. Not only do they share existing knowledge among themselves, but they create new knowledge and strategies for meeting their common purpose – producing what have been called “synergistic solutions.”

Such was the experience of *Mère et Enfant*, a small NGO working in the West Bank and Gaza. Having sparse internal resources, *Mère et Enfant* built partnerships with other health and human services organizations in the region. Researchers examined each of these partnerships, and concluded that their collaboration could indeed reach strategic goals, create new knowledge, and increase organizational influence. However, not all partnerships achieved these three effects to the same degree; in fact, the nature of the interagency relationship to a great extent determined what effect was reached. Partnerships characterized by multi-directional information flows and deep interactions

were most able to create new understandings and strategies for reducing infant mortality and treating malnourished children.

Social services are frequently offered by multiple organizations in the public, not-for-profit, and for-profit sectors. To make efficient use of resources and assure comprehensive services, interagency networks are gaining prominence. Research into such networks for delivering family and children services in Los Angeles County found that the successful collaborations had similar processes and outcomes. The authors concluded that the most important indicators for effective partnerships were resource sharing and trust building. Such partnerships addressed clearly defined goals – in this case providing intensive home-based services for families in crisis, aimed at improving family functioning and removing the risk of placement in foster care.

One study examined collaborations among various levels of government organizations involved with issues of environmental protection and public health. Researchers examined interagency partnerships addressing (a) air pollution and respiratory illness, (b) ground water contamination, (c) lead poisoning, (d) fish consumption advisories and chemical exposure, and (e) bioterrorism and emergency preparedness. These partnerships had been formed because the environmental problems they addressed crossed traditional organizational boundaries. The study concluded that prior experience with collaboration was likely to increase trust and improve joint problem-solving; not a surprising finding, the authors commented, but significant in pointing out the need for organizations to be patient with the process of building a collaboration.

The HESC collaboration was built on a similar premise of crossing boundaries to reach a shared goal. The mission of *creating inclusive schools* required fundamental changes in institutions of higher education *and* in the providers of elementary, middle, and secondary education. The necessary changes in perceptions, policy, and practice could not have

Inclusion was more than an ideal, stronger than a philosophy; it combined scientifically proven educational practices with a belief in human equality. HESC provided the means to make the ideal of inclusive education a reality.

been accomplished unilaterally or imposed from outside. Such SystemsChange could only occur when all partners embraced the ideal of inclusive education and a determination to make it a reality. With patience and trust, the partners created policies and practices for students, practicing teachers, and future teachers: the new knowledge made possible by collaboration. They worked together to develop the capacity for inclusive education.

Recent trends in government initiatives explicitly include NGOs, including faith-based organizations, as eligible for participation; in some cases, such collaboration is required as a means of combining resources, expertise, access to stakeholders, and credibility in the community. However, collaborations formed at the behest of third parties – say, to comply with the requirements of the funding agency – can be collaborations in name only and, as such, are ineffective or even detrimental to the effort.

Throughout the literature is the theme of a common goal, important enough to bring organizations to relinquish autonomy, contribute resources, and accept shared risk.

The collaborations described above were built upon an overarching purpose of social change and the improvement of human lives: alleviating infant malnutrition, reducing foster care placements, eradicating lead poisoning, and eliminating educational segregation.

Leadership was an essential factor. It was important that the leaders of each organization were committed to the goal and willing to make the necessary internal adjustments. Even more important was the convener of the partnership, a strong leader who was able to manage the process that is collaboration: to maintain communication, reconcile differing points of view, sustain energy and focus on the goal, and draw upon the talents and contributions of all. The reflections of HESC participants in the next chapter make clear the credit they give to the leaders throughout the project.

Research makes clear that organizations may work together to solve shared problems or reach mutual goals, and the results of their collaboration can go far beyond their individual capacities to serve.

A partnership is not a discrete entity, but a process for reaching a mutual goal by creating new knowledge and strategies, drawing upon one another's expertise and building a new system. This was seen in Los Angeles County, where agencies developed the means to intervene with families in crisis. This was, indeed, an essential purpose of HESC.

HESC was a common-sense collaboration, joining the resources of organizations with interrelated purposes. The colleges and universities educate teachers, but beyond that, they conduct and examine research to discover the best possible practices for bringing all students to the highest level of success. The schools and districts teaching elementary, middle, and secondary students have the day-to-day responsibility of meeting the needs of all children. Professionals from both sides of the equation brought

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Ann Monroe-Baillargeon

to the table their expertise and their willingness to question assumptions. What they took away was a new way of looking at their own professional practice and their shared commitment to inclusive education. HESC was

something greater than a means for connecting schools and IHEs. Throughout Chapter 3, the HESC participants make clear their belief that through HESC, they were part of a vital process for educational change.

Inclusion was more than an ideal, stronger than a philosophy; it combined scientifically proven educational practices with a belief in human equality. HESC provided the means to make the ideal of inclusive education a reality.

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Collaboration, Not Competition

It has often been said that in collaboration “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” (attributed first to Aristotle). This has never been demonstrated clearer to me than in my role as Regional Liaison for the Midwest Region. As liaison for the past nine years, my goal has been to facilitate and sustain collaborative partnerships among colleges, universities, and regional network agencies (i.e., BOCES, Teachers Centers, School Support Centers, Parent Centers, etc.) as we sought to support each other in our work of preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms, and supporting high needs schools in increasing academic success for all students. The benefits of these collaborative partnerships have been significant, including, information sharing and communication, allocation of resources including in-kind facilities and services, pooling of professional knowledge and expertise, and, professional mentorship and support. I have come to understand that collaborative partnerships are made, not born, and the process of building inter-relational professional collaborations among traditionally competitive IHE’s and/or agencies is complex.

Reflecting on this process, I initially identified it as developmental, the milestones being: (a) getting folks to the table, (b) identifying needs, (c) setting goals and (d) completing projects. Although our collaborative partnership could be seen by others through this developmental lens, upon further reflection as facilitator of this process I realized the energy of our relational work was discovered more in the complex spiraling of the process rather than the simple developmental milestones. Practices that remained consistent were:

1. Access to meetings, information and resources
2. Building and sustaining our professional community
3. Immediate response to regional needs
4. Increasing capacity through shared resources
5. Mentorship and advocacy

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Ann Monroe-Baillargeon

Chapter 3

Sixteen Years of TF / HESC

Personal perspective on meaningful access

I can only imagine what the early Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling was like, not having yet become part of an organization that helped to permanently change the conversation about students with disabilities gaining meaningful access to the general education curriculum in New York State. I can speak to where I was in 1995 – 2000 when the Task Force began. I was working as a school principal and part of my job description had me chairing IEP meetings K – 12. Aside from the fact that, when I first began, I was unpleasantly shocked to hear the students present addressed in the third person as if they weren't seated at the table, I was asleep when it came to the inequities that the system I represented perpetrated. I had come of age and was working in a system that didn't abide differences.

My colleagues around the meeting table had been raised in the same system. Like me, they failed to question what had become routine: tests of children had indicated

I was asleep when it came to the inequities that the system I represented perpetuated. I had come of age and was working in a system that didn't abide differences. My colleagues around the [IEP] meeting table had been raised in the same system.

Peter Kozik

weakness, and the weakness needed to be remedied. The remedy was often found in a setting segregated from their peers. It was easy to decide what to do. The system not only segregated children but my school district received money back from the State for every child with a weakness for whom it had purchased a slot. It was not until I worked as a

principal in a small, rural high school that I understood what my complacency meant for children. There I witnessed one special education teacher deliver the Regents curriculum in three core subjects to eight students with learning disabilities in a room the size of a walk-in closet. Across the hall, another special educator played matching games with students with developmental disabilities whose visual memories, I knew, were like steel traps.

1995 – 2000: Gathering Around the Cause

By grace, I landed at the Higher Education Support Center for Systems Change at Syracuse University in 2002. My experience aside, the folklore I've gleaned about 1995-2000, from those first members, is rich in the pictures and sounds of colleagues newly energized by their common mission to ensure a socially just and equitable public system of schooling for all learners. A handful of institutions were involved in this early work. Against the backdrop of New York State's newly conceived registration of teacher preparation programs offering dual certification in childhood and special education, this

early Task Force, as it was then called, met several times a year mostly in Albany, NY. These meetings were lively exchanges of curricula, of syllabi, of institutional missions, of current practices, and of ideas about the

preparation of teachers to meet the needs of students with disabilities in general education. Members came and went, and gradually the group arrived on the radar of Project Managers at Vocational and Education Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID). As

Those first members [were] ... energized by their common mission to ensure a socially just and equitable public system of schooling for all learners. ... Teaching, for the Task Force, has come to mean teaching everyone in the same classroom the concomitant benefit of helping create better teachers overall: teachers who are content-ready and student-centered; with a battery of strategies to empower all students to learn.

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one of four initiatives to develop inclusive practice in New York State, the newly minted Task Force was provided a contract for the purpose of designing, developing, and registering dual certification programs. The initiative was realized as a series of mini-grants awarded to institutions for program redesign. The New York Partnership for Statewide Systems Change 2000 and 2001 was officially born. Forty-one out of forty-two proposals from around NYS were funded at \$3,000 each. Activities under the initiative included hiring consultants, visiting other colleges and universities, developing course modules, and revising course work. Outcomes of the mini-grant program included program revision, better communication between education and liberal arts faculty, co-teaching within institutions, and stronger inclusive field placements.

From these experiences, some common themes emerged which informed fifteen years of continuing work together. The first is the galvanizing force of a common goal. The idea of inclusion, providing equal learning opportunities, for all students, regardless of disability within students' home schools, proved to be a rallying point for faculty of good will. Of all the potential factors to unite and propel Task Force success, this factor has proven to be the most meaningful. In addition to the power of this social justice agenda, inclusion for the Task Force has become synonymous with good teacher preparation. Teaching for the Task Force has come to mean teaching everyone in the same classroom with the concomitant benefit of helping create better teachers overall: teachers who are content-ready and student-centered, with a battery of strategies to empower all students to learn.

The second theme is the acknowledgement of diverse viewpoints and the continuing and powerful conversation which can result. From the beginning, diverse view points on the outcomes of inclusive teaching, whether or not, indeed, all students were successful in inclusive classroom models, helped to focus discussions about teaching, research, and service. Instructors representing all points in the debate were welcomed into the conversation. Rather than insist on one way of appropriating inclusive practice, the goal remained steadfast, and the discussions about the means to fulfilling

this practice contributed to the richness of the work. As a result, nothing about implementing successful inclusion was taken for granted.

A third theme that developed from the early days of the Task Force was the value of carefully structured, close collaboration. The mini-grant program informed future collaborations by beginning to develop clear parameters and by encouraging that faculty and eventually school district personnel function as equal partners in any undertaking supported by the Task Force. This led in the years following the mini-grant program to requests for proposals and to statements of agreement that described in great detail the relationships formed and their purposes. The collegiality enjoyed at the frequent meeting of institutions in the period 1995 – 2000 carried over as the project expanded and extended its mandate and its reach.

The idea of inclusion, providing equal learning opportunities for all students regardless of disability within students' home schools, proved to be a rallying point for faculty of good will.

Peter Kozik

Finally, the early years of SystemsChange and the Task Force proved it takes relatively small amounts of money to encourage commitments and invigorate change. More important than large awards of money, has

been the support of an entire network of like-minded individuals, the celebration of small but significant successes, and the recognition that the work of inclusion takes earnest effort and service to a goal greater than any one individual.

Peter Kozik, Ph.D. is Project Coordinator for the New York Higher Education Support Center and Chairperson of the Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling at Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

Participating in the Task Force

Two of my colleagues from Nazareth, one a defined “general” educator and one a defined “special” educator, had been telling me about trips back and forth on the Thruway between Rochester and Albany to meet with a SystemsChange group. They had been asking me to join in, but alas, I had a dissertation to write. One week (literally!) after my dissertation defense I found myself meeting my colleagues at the Thruway exit at 6:00 a.m. to travel to Albany to join this group. Little did I know how that early morning ride and subsequent first meeting would be pivotal to the direction of my future professional work in higher education and to the design and development of ten inclusive teacher education programs at Nazareth College. I came from a “general” education background, so many of my early memories of Task Force meetings are centered on my own learning, as each of us were trying to understand the language of others to build a vision of inclusive teacher preparation programs. I remember sitting with Joan and Nancy and Lois and Laura and Jerry and others as we shared what we currently were doing as teacher educators to prepare our candidates to meet the needs of all learners, and then thinking about what we might do. Each of the institutional teams moved to take this vision and craft new inclusive programs – for the Nazareth College team, we spent the eight hour drives back and forth to Albany with a lap top computer trying to capture our new found

knowledge and collective understandings to re-envision inclusive teacher preparation at Nazareth College; we moved from single and dual certification programs to an inclusive undergraduate teacher preparation program. And then we designed other inclusive programs until now, more than fifteen years later, these ideas are integrated into the fabric of how we define ourselves as a School of Education. Thank you.

Kathleen DaBoll-Lavoie, Ph.D., is Chair of the Department of Inclusive Childhood Education, Nazareth College of Rochester, Rochester, New York.

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Kate DaBoll-Lavoie

What does inclusion look like?

For the first years, the key task was to establish a clearer understanding of what the Inclusion movement was and how it impacted teachers. One of the first needs was to establish a common understanding of Inclusion and inclusionary practices.

Craig Hill, Ed.D., is Chair, Department of Adolescence Education at Nazareth College of Rochester, Rochester, New York.

Inclusion was a “fuzzy” concept but it intrigued us. Including students with disabilities within the regular classroom was an admirable movement but preparing teachers to practice inclusion with effectiveness was a challenge. Inclusion was being recommended by the state, but was minimally practiced in a variety of ways in many of the schools we visited and used for fieldwork.

Soon after receiving an invitation to meet with other institutions of higher education offering teacher certification programs, we found ourselves in an Albany conference room with a small group of other teacher educators from across the state who were interested in revising programs to better train teachers for inclusion. We immediately shared our “war” stories, pitched our programs, presented our problems and all asked the essential question, “Just what does good Inclusion look like?”

“General Jerry Mager” of Syracuse University took up the charge! He organized us using an “Inclusion” model with special educators collaborating with general educators. Teacher Education programs of large universities met with representatives of other similar institutions, while those of us from smaller schools met together to share ideas for revised programs with strong inclusive perspectives and to get feedback and suggestions. Those institutions who had already taken the leap to inclusive programs listened carefully to the others to provide assistance and guidance. What was so admirable and important was that we were all encouraged to develop our own inclusive model rather than follow one template.

Joan M. Black, Ed.D., is a Hudson Regional Task Force Liaison, and formerly a Professor of Education at Marymount College, Tarrytown, New York. **Neil Garafano, Ed.D.**, is formerly a Professor of Marymount College, Tarrytown, New York.

That first meeting of the Task Force, where we all discovered, to the consternation of many, that “inclusion” was a concept without a construct. That was very quickly remedied with the collaboratively created *Knowledge, Values, and Teaching Practices* matrix, which was originally printed in “Knowledge, Values, and Teaching Practices Needed for Inclusive Teaching,” by L. Dorow, L. Fisch, L. Ellsworth, and J. Uhry in *The Educational Forum*.

Lois Fisch, Ph.D., is a Professor at Utica College, New York. She wrote in cooperation with **Laura G. Dorow, Ed.D.**, of Utica College.

Teacher preparation for inclusion

In the early 1990’s, the two of us who were colleagues teaching in the Marymount College Education Program in Westchester County were dissatisfied. As we prepared our pre-service teachers, there was a resounding movement towards “Inclusion” rumbling in many of our districts and throughout the education community. Yet we continued to offer programs which prepared our students as teachers for either “regular” or “special” education, and rarely did the “twain” meet.

The collaboration that took place with fellow college/university colleagues from across the state involved stimulating group discussions and problem-solving, thinking outside the box, and respectful consideration of ideas. ... As a result of the task force experience, we felt so energized and became increasingly committed to providing new teachers with the best tools for inclusive teaching. ... We examined new resources, ways to provide collaborative and co-teaching experiences, and worthwhile inclusive fieldwork opportunities and site-based courses.

Joan Black and Neil Garofano

The theme of Inclusion and the search for strategies for its effective implementation, which would go on for the next fifteen years, were set into motion during the very first year of the Task Force. Although a good deal of time has passed since the beginning stages, we often reflect on how memorable and critical our early experiences were that provided the impetus for the development of our inclusive teacher education programs.

The collaboration that took place with fellow college/university colleagues from across the state involved stimulating group discussions and problem-solving, thinking outside the box, and respectful consideration of ideas, which were “priceless.” J. B. & N. G.

The most enduring outcome from the Higher Education SystemsChange project was the extensive collaboration among higher education faculty who prepare teachers in the state of New York. The goal was to have each participating higher education institution send a minimum of two faculty to the SystemsChange meetings. The two faculty were each to be involved in “regular education” or “special education” programs within the higher education institutions. We started with a small group of participants of twenty schools in the first year and it has grown to nearly seventy now. The participants in the project established strong relationships and collaborations among each other. These efforts greatly benefitted their institutions and the broader good of establishing

inclusionary teacher preparation programs. These relationships were strongly established through the dialogues and work nurtured by the SystemsChange project.

[After establishing a common understanding of inclusion,] the next major phase of the project was defining how Inclusion impacts teacher preparation for both special education and “regular” education. As we engaged in these discussions with a focus on preparing all teachers to teach, support, and include all students within their classrooms, clarity was established for members. This was a major shift away from the isolation of many special education students. It was also a major shift for “regular education” teachers to be prepared, plan, and adapt for a range of learners in their classrooms.

As we engaged in these discussions with a focus on preparing all teachers to teach, support, and include all students within their classrooms, clarity was established for [Task Force] members. It was a major shift away from the isolation of many special education students. It was also a major shift for “regular education” teachers to be prepared [to] plan and adapt for a range of learners in their classrooms.

Craig Hill

We then began to develop teacher education programs for our institutions with inclusionary pedagogies and many members of the project developed dual certification programs. The group critiqued and supported one another with suggestions and ideas as we developed our plans at different colleges/universities. As we began to implement our plans we again met as a group and discussed benefits and barriers to the plans. Many of the participants implemented new teacher certification programs from this collaboration process. We were also well prepared for the major initiative by the Regents and the NYSED to re-register all programs by February of 2004. C. H.

Dual certification programs

Even today we frequently recall how our two hour car trips to Albany to meet with the Task Force were filled with spirited conversations to identify the key elements to integrate within our new inclusive programs. We explored ways to co-teach courses, have more coordination between general and special education course syllabi and planned to require *all students* to pursue a dual certification program in general and special education. As a result of the Task Force experience, we felt so energized and became increasingly committed to providing new teachers with the best tools for inclusive teaching. After each Task Force meeting, we couldn’t wait to go back to the drawing board to redo and further revise our certification programs. We examined new resources, ways to provide collaborative and co-teaching experiences, and worthwhile inclusive fieldwork opportunities and site-based courses. Our efforts resulted in new state approved dual certification programs in childhood/special education and adolescent education/special education with a strong inclusive perspective. Our inclusive journey had begun! J. B. & N. G.

Dissemination

As we implemented programs, the leadership of SystemsChange supported participation in both state and national conferences. We presented the collaboration

The SystemsChange Project has provided a strong network of higher education teacher educators in the state of New York that have established an outstanding collaboration model surrounding the implementation of inclusive practices within their individual institutions' teachers preparation programs.

Craig Hill

model nurtured by the Systems Change project and disseminated information on how to bring about changes within institutions and state systems. This process validated and supported individuals participating in the project in their individual institutions and broadened their exposure to a national dialogue on Inclusion and teacher preparation. C. H.

We were all driven by our shared mission, to assure that all teacher preparation programs, schools and classrooms embraced the concept of inclusion. Not contented to limit ourselves to New York State, we quickly began to present at national conferences. Our ongoing collaborations culminated in twenty-one different group presentations at state and national conferences! More stunning than the mere number of presentations, though, was the quality of that work. Work that lives on in the values, ideas, and teaching practices that have been incorporated into teacher preparation programs throughout the country. L. F.

Standards for inclusive teacher preparation programs

Finally, because we were never content to miss an opportunity to spread the word, nineteen institutions, led by the Standards Development Committee (Laura Dorow, Kathleen DaBoll-Lavoie, Lois Fisch, Craig Hill, Gerald Mager, Joan Black, Nancy Dubetz, and Merrily Miller) developed the first ever set of standards for inclusive teacher preparation programs, published in July 2000. L. F.

The excitement, sense of purpose, and strong friendships created by the HESC live on in all of us, in our programs, in all of the others we have touched throughout the years. It is a proud legacy indeed.

Lois Fisch

Reflections of one Task Force member

HESC created opportunities for general educators like me to deepen my own understanding about inclusive practices and ultimately encouraged me to see myself as a

leader charged with supporting inclusive teacher education through my involvement in the New York State Association of Teacher Educators.

I was most involved with the Project between 1995 and 1999. As a new professor at SUNY-New Paltz in 1995, I learned that members of my department (Elementary Education) were interested in partnering with members of the faculty in the department of Special Education to design a teacher preparation program that would prepare elementary educators to be effective teachers in inclusive classrooms.

I was a general educator and had little personal experience in teaching children with special needs, but had been working for many years in preparing teachers to work with English language learners (ELLs), and thought that many of the challenges faced by teachers of ELLs were similar to the challenges that teachers of special needs children must face – Individualizing instruction to meaningfully engage ELLs in participating in the general education classroom requires teachers to seek ways to re-design learning experiences for children with limited language skills, optimize the use of classroom resources (including the children) to make grade level content comprehensible, and most importantly, acknowledging that all children can learn if the teacher can create the right conditions for learning.

I was fortunate to be invited to serve as the representative for my department from New Paltz on the Statewide Task Force, and remember attending the very first meeting, where I first began to develop relationships with colleagues from other colleges and universities who would become indispensable sources of expertise in preparing teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms, and some of whom ultimately would become great friends.

From 1995 to 1997, we worked on developing a five year program at New Paltz that would leave to a certification that encompassed both general and special education preparation (there was no ‘inclusive’ certificate). Task Force meetings provided a location for sharing drafts of ideas for the program with sympathetic colleagues who willingly shared their expertise. In addition to this support, my own understandings about inclusive education and teacher preparation deepened with opportunities to share our Task Force work at national and state conferences, and very importantly, to participate in the development of a set of standards for inclusive teacher education.

I want to close by sharing that my participation on the Task Force, I believe, provided the inspiration for me to eventually become more involved in the New York State Association of Teacher Educators. A number of my colleagues from the Task Force attended ATE and NYSATE, and had assumed leadership roles in NYSATE and NYACTE. It was through my professional interactions with them, that I eventually decided to run for a position on the NYSATE Executive Board, and later, to run for positions as secretary and then, president elect. As President Elect, I had the opportunity to engage in conversations with NYSED leaders about how best to prepare teachers to meet the needs of all students. In these conversations, my experiences on the Task Force and the knowledge I had acquired regarding inclusive practice served me well.

Nancy Dubetz, Ed.D., is Associate Professor, Undergraduate Childhood Program, Lehman College, CUNY, Bronx, New York.

2000 – 2006: The Job of Building Capacity

With a foundation of twenty-four New York State colleges and universities dedicated to developing quality inclusive teacher preparation, HESC (the New York Higher Education Support Center for SystemsChange) at Syracuse University was formed. Support for the project was provided by the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities which, at the time, oversaw the delivery of special education services to children K – 12. Funding for the project was drawn from discretionary funds allocated under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). At the same time, New York State received a federal School Improvement

As a final product for the first iteration of the Task Force, faculty from several colleges and universities created the Standards for Inclusive Teacher Preparation Programs. ... Among the practices included is a significant emphasis on collaboration which is seen as critical to the success of inclusion. This emphasis on collaboration became a major focus of the second iteration of the project.

Peter Kozik

Grant (SIG) to improve the academic achievement of students with disabilities in high needs school districts. The Regional School Support Center (RSSC) program, a portion of whose funding came from VESID, began at the same time under the auspices of the state-wide BOCES network and the United Federation of

Teachers, Teacher Center in New York City. This confluence of programs with regional representation around the state created an opportunity for the Task Force (TF) on Quality Inclusive Schooling, the institutions which had an impact on K-12 teaching by virtue of their teacher preparation programs and their professional development expertise, to be invited to the table. Therefore, in addition to the goal of planning, implementing, and enhancing quality inclusive teacher preparation programs which had carried the Task Force through its first five years, the goal of providing professional development to selected high needs schools was added in 2001.

As a final product for the first iteration of the Task Force, faculty from several colleges and universities created the *Standards for Inclusive Teacher Preparation Programs*. This document provides details regarding excellent practices, focused on the development of inclusive curricula, classroom teaching, field experiences, and research. Among the practices included, is a significant emphasis on collaboration which is seen as critical to the success of inclusion. This emphasis on collaboration became a major focus of the second iteration of the project. From the development of a model of regional consortia to supporting models of co-teaching in high needs schools to investigating the purposes and results of school-community partnerships, collaboration was understood as the principal means to building capacity.

Although the frequent and regular meetings of the Task Force appeared to be the best way to continue the work on inclusion and to communicate its progress, the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001 forced a change in thinking and led to a propitious accident. As became true in other parts of the world, the events of 9/11 resulted in

government travel being curtailed throughout New York State. The six or more yearly meetings were limited, and, although eventually two state-wide meetings a year were allowed, the meeting frequency with which the Task Force's close collaboration had been engendered was threatened by circumstance. Therefore, the HESC, in 2002, embarked on a regional structure. The Task Force became divided into seven regions around New York State. Each region was headed by a faculty member from a local institution working under subcontract to the HESC and Syracuse University. Regional meetings were held four to seven times a year for local IHEs. The purpose of these regions was to communicate initiatives from HESC and from the New York State Department of Education, to expand the work of the Task Force to additional colleges and universities, and to encourage local initiatives to create partnerships and advance inclusion through regional collaboration. This new focus on local leadership and regional collaboration resulted in increased ownership of the work of the Task Force and increased capacity within colleges and universities, within regions and across partnerships with high needs schools, most of which, to begin, were designated by the SIG. Regional liaisons and faculty who participated in collaborative projects and in research work during this period not only developed greater expertise in inclusive practices but also grew professionally in navigating institutional mechanisms to solicit and receive funding.

These years felt like an explosion of activity. HESC staff meetings became peppered with brainstorming; new initiatives were introduced throughout the year. Study groups on a variety of topics emerged. Task Force members found energy in the freedom to experiment, to fail, and to reflect on their efforts. Hearing about the Task Force, struggling school districts

stepped forward to engage in partnerships. The scope of the work became breathtaking, 53 separate subcontracts were awarded to IHEs around the State in one year alone. By 2006, the Task Force had grown to 60 IHEs.

After five years of initiatives, the HESC and the Task Force

and its members had undertaken myriad tasks with regard to promoting inclusion through various initiatives. Their efforts represented 166 awards from among 21 initiatives totaling \$1,213,025.

In addition to supporting regional work, the HESC sponsored initiatives ranging from investigations of teacher decision-making and serving learners with low incidence disabilities, to partnerships focused on co-teaching and transition planning. The SIG project encouraged connections between institutions and high needs schools for the development of fourth grade ELA strategies, the creation of parent centers in schools, and the analysis of disproportionate representation of minorities in special education. The RSSC around the state tapped into Task Force expertise for sustained professional development focused on literacy, inclusion in secondary schools, and the use of data for

2001 – 2006 saw the conversation regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education curricula in New York State change permanently. Rather than focusing on student deficits and the diagnostic model of determining potential success, as one educator put it: “Prove to me that these children should not be here.”

Peter Kozik

achieving results. Faculty fellowships promoted active research agendas focused on Response to Intervention (RtI), membership in inclusive communities, and peer assisted writing strategies, among others. Two international inclusion conferences, each for over 1,400 participants, were developed and implemented, representing the work of several hundred inclusive educators from around the world. Most importantly, however, 2001-2006 saw the conversation regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education curricula in New York State change permanently. Rather than focusing on student deficits and the diagnostic model of determining potential success, as one educator put it: “Prove to me that these children should *not* be here.”

The shift in the conversation developed in tandem with an expansion of the Task Force and increased collaboration among various networks throughout New York State. Because the Task Force mandate added the goal of working with high needs schools, parent and advocacy groups, teacher centers, school district personnel, early childhood centers, and technical assistance providers from VESID came under the Task Force

Because the Task Force mandate added the goal of working with high needs schools, parent and advocacy groups, teacher centers, school district personnel, early childhood centers, and technical assistance providers from VESID came under the Task Force umbrella. ... By nurturing connections, encouraging conversations, implementing collaborations, and advancing research, the HESC through the Task Force began building a Statewide capacity for systems change and had succeeded in establishing a strong presence for continuing the work of reaching and teaching all learners.

Peter Kozik

umbrella. By the end of 2006, almost 150 different organizations claimed membership in the Task Force. In addition to regional collaborations, two State-wide meetings a year brought together professionals and advocates for students with disabilities from the seven regions, and a burgeoning website added some 5,000 pages of information, resources, activities, and research on inclusion. By nurturing connections, encouraging

conversations, implementing collaborations, and advancing research, the HESC through the Task Force began building a State-wide capacity for SystemsChange and had succeeded in establishing a strong presence for continuing the work of reaching and teaching all learners. P. K.

Participating in HESC

The HESC experience was everything a well-organized collegial experience ought to be, and was for the nine years that I was part of it. It was a forum for useful and up to date information on a variety of topics as related to the special needs of exceptional children. It was a platform to hear innovative ideas and new policy directions. It was a gathering point to network with a variety of role holders, so that one's point of view was automatically broadened. It was a space to create new ideas and document effective practices. It was also possible to ask questions in a nonjudgmental atmosphere where you

didn't feel that you had to know everything to be part of the group. It was driven by the best professional development ideas and practices; continual learning was taking place. The glue was the HESC staff,

and its openness to explore new directions. They were also exceptionally helpful with gathering and distributing information and making accommodations as were needed. I had the privilege of partaking in various HESC initiatives and presentations,

allowing me to work shoulder to shoulder with other like colleagues. HESC was a model for other similar initiatives where many interests are brought together to perform a broad mission. I looked forward to the twice a year gatherings, and other opportunities to meet and discuss issues. I will miss it – as will others – for its vital contribution to educational excellence.

Grace Ibanez Friedman, Ed.D., is formerly a Professor of Education at St. John's University, New York. New York.

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Grace Ibanez Friedman

The transition to HESC

Some of the best brainstorming and creative problem-solving occurred on rides along the New York State Thruway between the New York State Education Department in Albany and the project office at Syracuse University. One of the most memorable moments for me resulted in the initial plans for expanding the Task Force on Inclusive Education and formulating the Higher Education Support Center for SystemsChange. In 2001, federal grant funding for the original Partnership for Statewide SystemsChange had ended and VESID's one year of support was drawing to a close. Nineteen independent institutions of higher education had committed to develop inclusive teacher preparation programs. The New York State Education Department had been awarded a State Improvement Grant and committed to improving Least Restrictive Environment rates for students with disabilities by promoting inclusive programs. Jerry Mager, project director and I accepted the challenge (in response to a competitive RFP [Request for Proposal]) to design a plan to increase the number of institutions of higher education offering inclusive teacher preparation and find ways to link these institutions of higher education with local schools to create, support, and advance inclusion.

Our experiences and research on SystemsChange led us to some simple principles around which we decided our plan for what became the next seven years of the project. These four principles were:

1. What pre-existing initiatives, relationships, and structures could be built upon to support new goals?
2. In what meaningful ways can we benefit the college(s) and faculty while they pursue a new way of preparing teachers?
3. How do sophisticated adult learners learn best?

4. How can we be sure that the project outcomes will be sustained beyond the life span of the grant?

These four principles manifested in products, outcomes, and relationships that should be self-sustaining beyond the scope of the Higher Education Support Center. A series of “initiatives,” culminating in Initiative number 24, were designed as competitive

[We] ... accepted the challenge ... to design a plan to increase the number of institutions of higher education offering inclusive teacher preparation and find ways to link these institutions of higher education with local schools to create, support, and advance inclusion. Our experiences and research on systems change led us to some simple principles ... [which] manifested in products, outcomes, and relationships that should be self-sustaining beyond the scope of the Higher Education Support Center.

Melissa Price McMahon

grants, valued by institutions of higher education for the recognition and resources generated. The initiatives were targeted at areas of research, practice or policy and were intended to result in publications, presentations, or faculty expertise. Some of the initiatives were designed to facilitate a collaborative examination of new practices (like Universal Design for Learning and Preparing

Teachers to Engage with Families) across institutions and regions. One enduring initiative was designed to support the creation and/or enhancement of regional groups which partnered local IHEs, schools, agencies and State Education Department entities. The results of these initiatives are well-documented.

Melissa Price McMahon is the former Project Coordinator for the New York Partnership for Statewide SystemsChange and the New York Higher Education Support Center for SystemsChange, 1996 – 2007.

The results of collaboration

The networking and mutual support from the individuals at the consortium table was a source of professional growth for all. Specifically, I remember when a school district approached the consortium for support for a School Improvement Grant to address issues of racial disproportionality in special education. As members of the consortium discussed our ability to provide this help, we recognized that this was not an area of expertise that any of us had. Through conversation, three of us, a SETRIC leader, a Regional School Support Center person and I agreed to work with the district and learn along the way. Periodically, we brought the information back to the consortium for brainstorming activities and in-depth discussion. The results most importantly directed the district to look beyond their referral practices into support for transitioning students. In addition, the consortium, as a whole, grew in their knowledge around the issues, and our work was shared in *Multiple Voices*, a journal of the Council for Exceptional Children.

As a result of my affiliation with the HESC, I was also able to take advantage of the opportunity for CAST training in March 2003. Initially, I thought after twenty-five years of teaching special education, what could possibly be new. Really there was nothing new but

the exposure to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), was a significant paradigm shift. It challenged me to not only teach about UDL but to design my classes with that level of accessibility, modeling for those going forward with what a UDL class is. Presently, we are starting a campus based program for individuals with disabilities ages 18-21+ here at Nazareth College. The professional development for faculty is based in a UDL framework.

[I was challenged] to not only teach about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) but to design my classes with that level of accessibility, modeling for those going forward what a UDL class is. .. As teachers, often we do not see the effect of our practice. Being able to visit and see my former students, with their present students creating classrooms designed for all learners, is the premier example of how the HESC's influence on me pays it forward.

Ellen Contopidis

Ellen Contopidis, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Education at Nazareth College of Rochester, Rochester, New York.

Dissemination

“Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children.” (Sitting Bull) This quote inspired one of my proudest moments in the history of the New York Higher Education Support Center experience. On May 17 and 18, 2006, approximately 1000 participants gathered in Tarrytown New York for the 11th Conference on Inclusive Schools and Communities. Our conference title was *Building Capacity through Learning Communities* and that was precisely the goal we had planned for conference participants. Our team identified conference strands consistent with the newly developed State Improvement Plan. These strands included positive behavior supports, response to intervention, Universal Design for Learning, disproportionality, inclusive early childhood education, engaging with families of students with disabilities, and transition planning, among others.

With support from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education's IDEA Partnership, we invited guest speakers from a wide range of organizations and agencies across the country with specialization in these areas. Additionally, we invited researchers and practitioners to submit proposals for workshops to address these same conference themes. The result was 124 different workshops on issues which were immediately relevant and specific to education in New York State. Our website development team, led by Steve Wirt, developed a wonderful web-based database to allow us to receive workshop proposals, review them with off-site personnel, schedule workshops, and create the conference program. We used the same web-based program to collect registrations, print receipts, and name tags. This technological achievement was the result of many meetings, hours of programming and trial and error. I was immensely proud of our conference planners and our technology team. We built the capacity to support complex conference organization for future events.

We supported a number of future teachers from various institutions to participate in the conference. These undergraduate students came from several colleges and

universities to add new voices to discussions and provide an opportunity for these future educators to hear from the diversity of professionals, parents and persons with disabilities committed to solving problems in education. We waived the registration fee for college students on the condition that they interview and record responses from a given number of conference participants. Results of those interviews and feedback from the students themselves indicated that this process opened their eyes to new perspectives and opportunities.

For me, the ultimate success of the conference occurred during the last session of the first day. At that point, all of the conference participants were invited to attend one learning community session focused on one of the conference strand topics. These sessions brought together participants from all walks to do something unique. Instead of listening to a lecture or presentation, participants were all invited to work together as equal partners to define and clarify the nature of the topic, brainstorm possible solutions, discuss information garnered during the conference, and commit to continued conversation and study of the issue. For me, it was thrilling to see parents, teachers, administrators, college faculty and students, state agency representatives, national experts, and persons with disabilities meeting together to work toward solutions to difficult issues in education. It was a rare opportunity for representatives from all these constituencies to focus on solving resistant issues in education. In that very moment, I felt the power of a collective resolve and energy born of diversity that I had never felt before or since. M. P. M.

Regional implementation

Logistics and increasing collaboration

Geographically, the Midwest region spans approximately 120 miles north to south and 90 miles east to west. One way we created geographic access for individuals to meet was to move our meetings from place to place around the region. The generosity of

Attendees varied from meeting to meeting, hence the importance of beginning each meeting with introductions, updates, and inquiries. Establishing our community at each meeting confirmed our culture of trust and encouraged less experienced professionals to connect with and learn from more experienced participants.

Ann Monroe-Baillargeon

colleges, universities, and organizations provided meeting space and often refreshments for the meetings. Individuals' schedules changed from semester to semester with their teaching schedules, making a consistent meeting date and time impossible. Therefore, in addition to changing meeting locations for geographic accessibility we also changed

meeting dates and times to maximize attendees' availability. Attendees varied from meeting to meeting, hence the importance of beginning each meeting with introductions, updates and inquiries. Establishing our community at each meeting confirmed our culture of trust and encouraged less experienced professionals to connect with and learn from more experienced participants. Although we met regionally, nearly every six weeks,

regional needs changed from meeting to meeting. Colleges and universities found they needed to respond to new certification requirements, program re-registration, accreditation, and keeping abreast of research-based, clinically rich teacher education curriculum. School and family support networks (BOCES, School Support Centers, Teachers' Centers, Parent Centers, etc.) found their needs included collecting and analyzing school-based data and providing professional development based on data driven needs. As facilitator of this group, I found myself continually exploring the ways in which our diverse connections can serve our needs most efficiently.

Initially, during the time of definition and capacity building (2001-2006), the projects we completed seemed connected to our specific roles on the task force. College and university faculty focused on teacher education through sharing of teaching resources and syllabi. Support networks called upon faculty to provide

Initially during the time of definition and capacity-building ... the project we completed seemed connected to our specific roles on the Task Force. ... As time went on, we found [we were] Energized by our successful collaborations [and] we began to look deeply at how our collaborative projects might provide the greatest impact to the largest audience.

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professional development as needs arose. As time went on, we found that if we collaborated in planning events, such as a regional day long workshop with Paula Kluth, a well-known international consultant on inclusive education, we could maximize her scheduled visit to the region to serve the needs of both the pre-service and in-service teacher community and support the work of teacher educators and school support networks. In doing so, we doubled the number of participants, and enhanced our work in teacher education and teacher support. Energized by our successful collaborations, we began to look deeply at how our collaborative projects might provide the greatest impact to the largest audience.

Ann Monroe-Baillargeon, Ph.D. is Mid-West Regional Task Force Liaison, and Associate Professor of Education at Alfred University, Alfred, New York.

Initiatives undertaken by the West region

The time period between 2001 and 2006 represented a decentralization of HESC efforts. We had moved in five years from a group of nineteen institutions dispersed across the state to fifty-one member institutions in ten regions. Our charge at the beginning of this era was to define ourselves and outline where we wanted to go as a region. In the West we began this process by holding a summer retreat where we developed a strategic plan for our region. This effort included seven faculty members representing five regional institutions and three school based representatives to help balance our perspectives on the needs of regional schools. We sought to take the two key goals of HESC and translate them into actionable strategies within our region. The initiatives below were developed during our first regional summer symposium, and illustrate how the HESC goals of enhancing inclusive teacher preparation programs, and working directly with regional

schools to extend their capacity to meet the needs of *all* children would be effectively addressed in the West.

- **Initiative I: Field Placement** – The WRE HETF seeks to improve the willingness and competency of future teachers to work in high-need inclusive classrooms by researching the characteristics of quality field placements and cooperating teachers and developing a field placement system (including a master teacher training component) that promotes the development of teacher candidates.
- **Initiative II: Urban Schools** – The WRE HETF seeks to close the gap in student achievement in high-need urban schools (Big Five) by researching and developing partnerships that will promote the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teacher candidates, teachers, and faculty within the WRE HETF institutions and these schools.
- **Initiative III: Building and Sustaining Partnerships** – The WRE HETF seeks to improve upon the existing relationships and develop new partnerships between member institutions and identified high need schools in our region by researching strategies for facilitating quality partnerships that include all children and promote school improvement planning, staff development, higher education faculty development, mentoring or pre-service teachers, accountability based on student outcomes, and partnership quality indicators to promote successful replication.
- **Initiative IV: Teacher Induction** – The WRE HETF seeks to support novice teachers in their first years of practice in high need inclusive classrooms by researching the challenges experienced by these teachers and developing regional opportunities that will facilitate the on-going professional growth of teachers in these schools.

I must admit that I was very nervous about the transition from a centralized to regionalized Task Force. When organizations experience this type of shift they also tend to stray from the original mission. I was concerned because the Western region is

The excellent work conducted with school partners from urban and rural districts will improve field experiences for future inclusive teachers and support new teachers as they develop the necessary skills to mentor the next generation of teachers.

Chandra Foote

somewhat unique as a result of our large geographic distribution and high number of represented institutions. I was impressed that so many institutions were represented at this planning meeting and surprised by the strong commitment of all of the participants to the original mission.

I was also concerned about undertaking a strategic planning process with a large, loosely united group that might lack the dedication and institutional backing to follow through on it. As I look back on our

accomplishments over the decade since our first planning retreat, I am most impressed that all of the IHE members present at that original meeting, except one who passed away

in a tragic accident, are still dedicated representatives, and our commitment to the initiatives, developed at the meeting, remain. In fact, we recently completed our final summer symposium focused on establishing a training module for cooperating teachers. Our goals for this symposium align directly with each of the initiatives developed in our first summer meeting. The excellent work conducted with school partners from urban and rural districts will improve field experiences for future inclusive teachers and support new teachers as they develop the necessary skills to mentor the next generation of teachers.

Chandra Foote, Ph.D., is Western New York Regional Task Force Co-Liaison, and Chairperson of the Early Childhood and Childhood Education Department at Niagara University, Lewiston, New York.

Professional development changing teacher behavior and student achievement

One story that to me tells a lot about HESC is the story of the work that was done in Central Islip that benefited students as a result of the collaboration of members of the task force. The story started with an Initiative 2: Partnership Exploration Grant between NYIT and Central Islip Union Free Schools. The purpose of the project was to explore ways to expand and enrich the partnership between Central Islip School District and New York Institute of Technology to provide research-based resources to teachers to increase student achievement. The partnership conversations took place over four months between NYIT faculty, Central Islip administrators, and inclusion teachers. The discussions covered: the task force summer institute; Central Islip School District's plan for inclusion classes; planning of the partnership project including; support for teachers and assistance in using research-based best practices especially in inclusive classes.

The Task Force provided a structure to develop relationships between stakeholders that helped coordinate efforts to benefit students. Subsequent to the projects described in this essay the school was removed from the "target" list of the State Education Department.

Dolores Burton

The partnership resulted in meetings with the teachers on their prep period to plan, to reflect on practice, and to examine student outcomes using an action research framework. There were ten sessions from September 2002 to June 2003. The data gathered from these sessions were used to target professional development activities for the teachers and to refine the planning process for the expansion of the inclusion program in the district. A one-week institute was held during the June 2003 for additional teachers assigned to inclusion classes. Data from the evaluation of the project was shared with teachers and administrators and used to help refine future professional development activities. The project was supported in part by the members of the task force that were SIG staff.

Professional development for the inclusion teachers continued over several years. The content of the professional development was guided by conversations between school personnel, task force members, university faculty and graduate students to overcome the present barriers to student successes in especially in mathematics.

During the next few years task force members, teachers and administrators participated in collaborative professional development projects to address the low passing rate on the sixth and fifth grade mathematics assessment. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered to ascertain the outcomes of the project including a teacher's survey examining attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding mathematics, curriculum mapping, formative assessment, use of manipulatives, and self-efficacy and interviews were conducted with the principal, assistant principal and director of mathematics.

The task force provided a venue to collaborate with members of the SIG team working to increase student performance in the district resulting in the ability to multiply the impact of these efforts. For example faculty from NYIT providing professional development in inclusion strategies especially in math and science were invited to meetings of SIG staff developers and school administrators' involved in the professional development in reading. The task force provided a structure to develop relationships between stakeholders that helped coordinate efforts to benefit students. Subsequent to the projects described in this essay the school was removed from the "target" list of the State Education Department.

Dolores Burton, Ed.D., is Long Island Regional Task Force Co-Liaison, and Associate Professor and Chair of Teacher Education at the New York Institute of Technology, Westbury, New York.

Demonstration of co-teaching

We had been colleagues at Marymount College and good friends for years. As members of the task force, we frequently traveled two hours to Albany together to

The time had come when we believed that we needed to "practice what we preached," so that our students would see co-teaching in action, a key ingredient to inclusive practices. In addition, as a part of our program revision, we were also encouraging cooperating teachers to consider the student teachers as co-teachers rather than as assistants or interns, typical of the model we had followed up until then.

Joan Black and Neil Garofano

meetings, while brainstorming ways to make the task force mission of creating an inclusive certification program a reality at our small liberal arts college in Westchester County. When our undergraduate teacher education department acquired state education approval for dual certification programs in

childhood/special education and adolescent /special education with an inclusive perspective, we felt the need to become co-teachers.

Although we had worked together for over eight years, we had never shared teaching sessions before. However, the time had come when we believed that we needed to "practice what we preached," so that our students would see co-teaching in action, a key ingredient to inclusive practices. In addition, as part of our program revision, we were also encouraging cooperating teachers to consider the student teachers as co-teachers rather than as assistants or interns, typical of the model we had followed up until

then. Consequently, we felt we needed to model co-teaching and chose to pair a literacy methods course and a special education strategies course to instruct together.

As we planned for the co-teaching experience, we set into motion a great deal of planning different aspects of teaching together. The literacy strategies course was required of all preservice teachers enrolled in the childhood/special education certification program. Our preliminary meetings involved ways to integrate the literacy course content with the strategies needed for special needs learners in the areas of spelling, writing, decoding and reading comprehension. We strove to make discussions related to diverse learners as a natural ingredient to each topic. We also needed to decide who would present each topic/strategy and also planned the projects and assessments on which to evaluate students, utilizing the same agreed upon criteria.

The literacy methods course section of the paired courses took place once a week in an elementary school in a three hour block. Pairs of students spent one of the hours in an assigned classroom as co-teachers, assisting the teacher and instructing lessons that were co-planned in the course session. Students would return from the field experience to the course for the remaining time to reflect on the instruction and degree of pupil learning in order to plan for subsequent sessions.

The special education paired course involved introducing students to a variety of classroom assessment techniques, behavior

management accommodations and methods of individualization, as well as strategies in reading and writing skills to support the special needs learners.

Joan was present at all sessions, while Neil attended a number of sessions of the literacy course and the entire special education course. We strove to have the students no longer see one of us as the “elementary education reading specialist” and the “special education specialist.” and in some ways we feel we succeeded. We also hoped that course participants would see themselves as responsible and capable of addressing all students within their inclusive classrooms and not rely on the special education services.

Lessons we learned from this co-teaching experience were invaluable. Based on student feedback, it was important that students believed that both of us had “equal voices.” We recommend that both instructors be present in most of each other’s original course sessions, otherwise one might be overstepping the “partnership” plan in the eyes of the students. It is also crucial to have time to reflect together on each session and to be able to be upfront with the partner concerning any teaching style, student interaction or class presentation that didn’t work or need change. As we often share with inservice and preservice teachers in staff development workshops, each co-teacher’s philosophy of assessment and objectives of instruction must be discussed and consensus needs to be arrived at *before* co-teaching is implemented. For co-teaching to be successful, specific

We are indebted to the Task Force for providing the impetus for the co-teaching endeavor. We were encouraged by colleagues throughout the state, who had shared their experiences and the benefits of co-teaching at the college level. ... Hopefully, the modeling of co-teaching provided our students with a desire to utilize it as a key vehicle for inclusive practices.

Joan Black and Neil Garofano

time needs to be set aside and established for co-planning and reflection to take place on a regular basis. Our planning sessions were invaluable to the success of the course sessions. It is also important to introduce the goals of co-teaching to course participants and to include student self-assessment of their learning and their reactions to the paired course experience throughout the semester.

Our co-teaching experience, which took place for two semesters, is still memorable for both of us, although it occurred a number of years ago. Our respect for one another's teaching styles was a key element to its success. We also had a good deal of fun with the experience as well, being a good audience for each other's jokes when the undergraduates didn't understand our humor.

We are indebted to the task force for providing the impetus for the co-teaching endeavor. We were encouraged by colleagues throughout the state, who had shared their experiences and the benefits of co-teaching at the college level. Co-teaching together truly provided us with insight into the life of a co-teacher and his/her responsibilities and challenges, so we could better prepare others for this special experience. Consequently, when offering staff development forums for teachers and working with our preservice students, we felt we "lived the life" of a co-teacher and it made our advice and strategies more authentic and realistic. Hopefully, the modeling of co-teaching provided our students with a desire to utilize it as a key vehicle for inclusive practices. J. B. & N. G.

2006 – 2011: Growth, Change, and Opportunity

Changes in funding, delivery, and priorities

Changes were in the offing in 2006. Budget cuts at the State level necessitated a 40% decrease in operating costs for the HESC. At the same time, leadership changes at VESID resulted in a change in outlook as to how the expertise of the Task Force should be

Efforts were underway to spread the work of the Task Force more broadly among the educational community. ...

The regions focused more closely on the development of product that could be easily used by teachers and administrators PK—16 and beyond. There was sustained growth in the use of the website as a channel for resources and promising practices by technical assistance providers and by advocates around the state.

Peter Kozik

utilized. At first these changes seemed dire. Staff had to be laid off and the project underwent a retrenchment. Regional budgets were cut as well, so the regional work which had enjoyed a period of prolific activity had to be recalibrated. Likewise the retrenchment involved a reconsideration of project priorities and a close examination of how best to continue the work under different leadership from the

New York State Education Department. The Task Force became more closely aligned to the goals of the State Performance Plan Indicators, twenty categories for improving the academic achievement of students with disabilities that included measures of drop-out rates and least restrictive environment (LRE). It adopted three broader goals, more

concretely focused on the improvement of teaching and learning for students with disabilities through the use of data and the achievement of outcomes: (1) To plan and implement quality teacher preparation programs, or to enhance the quality of those already implemented in order to prepare high quality teachers to serve the diverse student population of the State through inclusive practices; (2) to engage in and support partnerships with selected high needs schools to improve student outcomes as identified by the New York State Performance Plan; (3) and to build the capacity of multiple stakeholder groups to examine data, identify, create and/or develop strategies for advancing indicators in response to the New York State Performance Plan.

These changes had several effects on the Task Force. First, many of the initiatives provided by the HESC to the Task Force became organized around clear, specific, and measurable results. Explorations began of Task Force partnership activity to tease out the results of college and university involvement in high needs schools. Summer Symposia, a mainstay of regional professional development activity since 2002, came under scrutiny to determine the effects on teaching practices and student learning. At the same time, efforts were underway to spread the work of the Task Force more broadly among the educational community. The Task Force regions became more important than ever. The regions focused more closely on the development of product that could be easily used by teachers and administrators PK - 16 and beyond. There was sustained growth in the use of the website as a channel for resources and promising practices by technical assistance providers and by advocates around the state. The New York City region designed, developed, and circulated the book *A Resource for Inclusive Schooling* to over 1,400 schools. The Long Island Region regularly videotaped and distributed the proceedings of its symposia, focused on a variety of topics including Response to Intervention, Teaching English Language Learners, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. The Mid-West Region developed an inclusive resource for school administrators, *Duets and Dialogues*, a monograph describing the implementation of inclusion in model schools in New

... Dialogue over what constituted effective inclusive practice and how it could be replicated began in earnest around the state. More significantly for the Task Force, perhaps, faculty returned to their classrooms and changed their instruction to reflect their learning in visiting and studying these effective practices.

Peter Kozik

York State. Professional development sessions from State-wide meetings were regularly added to the website as were resources for teaching reading to students with low incidence disabilities. VESID's technical assistance network used website resources more than any other group, largely for professional development in schools. As a result of these changes and adjustments, new alignments and new opportunities emerged.

The closer alignment with VESID and the State Performance Plan Indicators by the HESC and the Task Force made resources available that would not otherwise be used to educate pre-service teachers in college and university programs. In 2007, VESID published three documents: *Determining Quality Indicators in Literacy, Special Education Practice*, and *Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports K – 12*. Reasoning that teachers

graduating from New York State preparation programs would utilize these Quality Indicators as professional development in schools in which they work, HESC embarked on the study and the design of these Quality Indicators as resources for teacher preparation. This effort culminated in colleges and universities mapping their teacher preparation programs against these evidence based resources and redesigning their curricula focused on best practices in these areas. Students at these colleges and universities benefitted from becoming exposed to front-line strategies for creating school and classroom improvement.

The SIG program from 2001-2006 transmuted into the S³TAIR project during this time in the HESC's history. VESID Regional field facilitators aligned with the seven Task Force regions began locating and validating effective practices throughout the state in Literacy, Special Education, and Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports. The validation process included site visits conducted by S³TAIR personnel accompanied by faculty from Task Force colleges and universities. Using an extensive validation rubric, dialogue over what constituted effective inclusive practice and how it could be replicated began in earnest around the state. More significantly for the Task Force, perhaps, faculty returned to their classrooms and changed their instruction to reflect their learning in visiting and studying these effective practices. Over fifty schools were validated models over two years and the Task Force assisted in developing relationships between these models and replication sites that wanted to improve. Over forty colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs benefitted from the validation process.

In the twilight of the project, the Task Force numbers 75 institutions. Over 2.3 million dollars has been awarded to teacher preparation faculty and partner schools to support the work of inclusion. One hundred ten partnerships have been formed between colleges and universities and schools around New York State since 2003, more than 25% of which are still functioning in 2011 without the advantage of funding from HESC.

It may still be hard to imagine, though, why such positive results should transpire for a 400 person organization whose members each had different personalities and different agendas for seeing students with disabilities succeed. One answer may be the power of positive intentions. Task Force members dedicated their efforts toward the single goal of teaching everybody, regardless of perceived weakness. For me, I am more convinced than ever before that ... "Good teaching is good teaching."

Peter Kozik

Much of the HESC story is the story of unintended positive consequences. 9/11 decentralized the Task Force and allowed each separate region to discover and develop its own identity and methods for achieving the common goal of inclusion for all. Hence, the Western Region focused on strengthening its colleges and universities through

quality professional development while answering the needs of low SES school districts. The Mid-West Region introduced the Task Force to the notion of consortium building, first designing partnerships with high needs schools with two or more colleges and universities providing support. The Mid-State Region focused its resources on pre-service

teachers, inviting them to participate fully in the experiences of best practice inclusive schools. The East Region contributed its expertise in evaluating outcomes and organizational development. The Hudson Region focused on parents and providers of schooling for English Language Learners as well as on quality secondary school inclusion and administrator education to support inclusive practice. New York City brought strong advocacy for early childhood inclusion as well as dynamic partnerships at all levels of schooling and policy changes at the Department of Education level. Long Island, where several of the longest running school partnerships have been sustained, assessed the needs of struggling local school districts regularly to discern issues of greatest importance to them.

It may still be hard to imagine, though, why such positive results should transpire for a 400 person organization whose members each had different personalities and different agendas for seeing students with disabilities succeed. One answer may be the power of positive intentions. Task Force members dedicated their efforts toward the single goal of teaching everybody, regardless of perceived weakness. For me, I am more convinced than ever before that, perhaps too simply stated, “Good teaching is good teaching.” The best teachers know each of their students learning intimately well, year in and year out. The best content teachers are successful because they care deeply for each individual student placed in their care and adjust their instruction accordingly. Good hearts and good minds led to fifteen years of Task Force success. It’s as if, in our tiny portion of the country, the late Senator Paul Wellstone’s notion about the common good found its empirical home: “We all do better when we *all* do better.” P. K.

Participating in regional collaborations

The next five years, 2006-2011, the time of growth, change and opportunity, we examined areas of expertise, and creatively explored resource development. We wanted to create tools that we might use

focusing on our regional programs in teacher development. During this time, we engaged in projects I never would have envisioned possible, a testament to our collaborative creativity and what later evolved into a culture of distributive leadership. As facilitator of the regional task force, I saw my role shifting from a more top down

connection of statewide driven priorities and New York State Education Department foci to regional projects and activities, to organizing more grassroots projects generated from local needs then advocated for and connected to statewide priorities. Large scale, greater impact projects were proposed by members and I was unclear as to how they would be achieved. I found these projects to be the greatest test of our collaboration and the greatest challenge for me as a facilitator. The six video vignettes which make up “Promising Practices in Inclusive Classrooms” and “Duets and Dialogues: Systems Change

After nine years of cycling through our work as a collaborative partnership, we as a region developed outcomes that were greater than any one of us could have imagined or produced individual. We had achieved through our interdependence a whole that was far greater than the sum of our parts.

Ann Monroe-Baillargeon

for Inclusive Education” are two distributed statewide and used by teacher educators, professional development networks, school administrators and teachers to develop teachers’ and administrators’ understanding of inclusive education practices and improve the learning outcomes for all students. At last, after nine years of cycling through our work as a collaborative partnership, we as a region developed outcomes that were greater than any one of us could have imagined or produced individually. We had achieved through our interdependence a whole that was far greater than the sum of our parts. A. M. B.

Growth through team building and shared responsibility

When I think about the New York City Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling (NYCTFQIS), the achievement that stands out in my mind is the growing commitment to work together and the growing diversity amongst the members of the Task Force. These key factors led to a strong Task Force focused on providing quality inclusive education to the public schools in NYC.

- When I became the regional liaison in 2004-2005, a small group of college professors attended meetings and participation for most of them, was not consistent. It was apparent that the individuals attending these meetings did not have a strong identity as members of the Task Force.
- Several events occurred that impacted the Task Force. During the early spring 2005, the NYHESC hosted a conference on Long Island. Two professors on the Task Force had a partnership project with two public schools and presented their work in a panel format. A professor of occupational therapy attended this presentation expressing amazement that a NYC Task Force existed and joined our group.
- After the regional liaison meeting in the spring of 2005, I expressed my concerns and frustration to HESC directors about this lack of interest and focus; I believed that a conference might be a good way to bring the Task Force members together.
- Very shortly after this meeting, contact was made with the SIG representatives from the United Federation of Teachers, NYC parent coordinators from Parent to Parent of New York State and the Cooke Program for Learning and Development, an organization representing private schools.
- A summer action grant was awarded to NYC and funding was used to build a team. Members who participated in formulating a team building approach received a stipend for their work. Attendance at meetings became more consistent and our members represented different disciplines and groups. The NYC Task Force had changed. We were becoming more diverse and inclusive.

In the fall of 2005, I presented a plan for a city-wide conference at a meeting of the New York City Task Force. On June 6, 2006, we held our first conference, “Supporting Inclusive Schools” at Pace University. All the Task Force members participated, whether it was by conducting a workshop, developing the brochure and fliers, advertising the

conference, or registering participants or carrying large boxes of supplies. The conference, attended by over 500 participants, was successful and this success energized the members of the NYC Task Force. They learned through interviews conducted by students and evaluations that the participants wanted to learn more about how to address the academic needs of all students.

- The next project proposed by one member (the editor) and agreed to by all was to create a forty page booklet. The enthusiasm for the project and the professionalism of the members changed the original booklet project that mushroomed into a 96 page book, “Supporting Inclusive Schools: A Resource.” Everyone contributed to the book, which was used in the smaller conferences sponsored by the NYCTFQIS; it is still being used in teacher education classes today in NYC and for professional development in the schools as well as in New York State. During this time period, we adopted the acronym NYCTFQIS.
- The growth of the Task Force led to changes in the structure of the group. The leadership role changed to that of a shared leadership. Members stepped forward to promote their ideas and take responsibility for the implementation of these ideas. These members took responsibility for planning and implementing conferences that were held at the United Federation of Teachers and Parent-to-Parent of New York.
- Another significant change occurred during this time period. Support for the NYCTFQIS by higher institutions of learning whose professors were members of the Task Force is another example of change. Initially, all NYC meetings were held at Touro College. During this time period, members began to host meetings with refreshments that were provided by their institutions. The colleges and universities also purchased advertisements in the Resource which contributed to the cost of printing and postage.

The change to a shared leadership NYCTFQIS led to a wonderful opportunity. During the fall of 2010, several members shared their expertise at our meetings. They provided professional development on various

The growth of the Task Force led to changes in the structure of the group. The leadership role changed to that of a shared leadership. Members stepped forward to promote their ideas and take responsibility for the implementation of these ideas.

Brenda Dressler

topics. This was an opportunity for members to learn about each other’s area of expertise. It also provided an opportunity to reflect how this expertise could be used to develop professional development for conferences and for the schools. A small group of members worked on research on quality indicators and presented their work to the state-wide Task Forces at a HESC meeting and in Saratoga Springs. This is another example of how NYCTFQIS members united in this opportunity to conduct research.

Brenda Dressler, Ph.D., is formerly the New York City Regional Task Force Liaison, and Professor of Education at Touro College, New York, New York.

Succeeding through collaboration

Stimulating meaningful collaboration for practical solutions to seemingly intractable and vexing problems inherent to teacher training programs.

Consensus-based collaboration can be a deadly affair. Working at an institution of higher education, you bear witness routinely to department level, school-wide, and college-wide meetings where opposing views are usually tactfully voiced, reworded by several others bent on getting their ten minutes in the limelight, unsurprisingly leading to unresolvable quandaries and preordained inertia. Much to say but little to show for it.

I believe what is truly astounding about what Jerry and Peter have accomplished is attributable to their unique leadership style. They are astutely focused on the prize, fostering quality teacher training and higher impact on public school instruction and student achievement in inclusive classrooms. They stimulate and guide creative projects through regional group work that capitalizes on local needs and the diverse expertise of stakeholders. They are always welcoming, patient and respectful in their persistent efforts at building and maintaining productive relationships amongst Task Force members. Brainstorming and problem-solving feels good and is both acknowledged and rewarded in our community of committed practitioners.

Consensus-based collaboration can be a deadly affair.

Working at an institution of higher education, you bear witness routinely to ... meetings where opposing views are usually tactfully voiced, reworded by several others bent on getting their ten minutes in the limelight, ... leading to unresolvable quandaries and preordained inertia.

Howard Weiner

This year I feel we are looking at the big picture by focusing on partnerships with high needs schools. It feels as if Jerry and Peter have steered us step by step to this ultimate challenge, to do something that impacts the achievement of all students. The initiatives and minigrants have stimulated

exciting onsite faculty interactions with classroom teachers and their pupils. Promoting and encouraging a sense that we are doing something important and having Jerry and Peter excited with us and for us is intoxicating.

The Initiative 23 grant [initiative] was a time warp experience for me. The self-study mapping real world strategies and skills that effective teachers use against faculty courses in a teacher training program is an excellent example of gently pushing constructive change. I received permission to ask all school of education faculty to see how their course assignments and activities compared with what we expect teachers to do in inclusive settings. The reactions among scores of stirred up instructors ranged from out of the woodwork conspiracy theories about trying to bring an end to teacher preparation programs as we know them, to enthusiastically

Promoting and encouraging a sense that we are doing something important and having Jerry and Peter excited with us and for us is intoxicating.

Howard Weiner

beginning a dialogue to what our program should be all about. Peter and Jerry encouraged me all through this process. I think the whole experience was great. I must say after starting Initiative 23 our meetings seem a little more action focused and a little less like a senate filibuster. So what if a half dozen faculty won't speak to me anymore.

Howard Weiner is the New York City Regional Task Force Liaison, and Professor of Education at Touro College, New York, New York.

Conferences and S³TAIR

As a member of the Long Island Task Force QIS since February 2008, I have had the privilege of working with a group of college and university faculty and other educators dedicated to improving education for student populations with the greatest challenges. The regional events planned and hosted by the Task Force took into considerations the needs of students and districts, as well as the climate of education. From effective classroom instruction to the use of data, and meeting the needs of English language learners to addressing student disproportionality, the Task Force was able to provide quality information and support necessary to promote student achievement within districts.

Looking at the Task Force from a broader perspective, I have been fortunate to have participated in each of the statewide conferences since my joining. The collaborative effort in which the regional work of each respective task force was shared has been an outstanding experience. The fields of policy, research, and practice intersected at these meetings through presentations by noted speakers and Task Force members and enabled networking in the truest sense of the word. I have taken many of the learnings from these conferences and implemented them in my daily work.

The collaborative effort in which the regional work of each respective task force was shared has been an outstanding experience. The fields of policy, research, and practice intersected at these meetings through presentations by noted speakers and Task Force members and enabled networking in the truest sense of the word.

Harold Dean

As a field facilitator for the S³TAIR state personnel development grant, the Task Force has been an integral part to the project. As site visits for practice validations came up, my regional Task Force members have been eager to assist. Their expertise and experience in the field has been well used, and is most appreciated.

Harold Dean is the Regional Field Facilitator for the S³TAIR Project, Long Island Region, Suffolk BOCES.

Collaboration between S³TAIR and the TFQIS

The collaboration between the Task Force for Quality Inclusive Schooling (TFQIS) and the S³TAIR project has been instrumental in advancing inclusive practices in the Capital Region of NY. The Task Force has supported the validation of effective practices, the delivery of professional development and technical assistance to help refine existing

practices, scale up of validated practices within schools, and helped support the development of S³TAIR project partnerships.

The support of the Task Force members in the S³TAIR project validation process has been critical in vetting nominated practices. As a member of the S³TAIR validation team, the Task Force members offered the research and theoretical context for the evaluation of nominated practices.

The S³TAIR validation process includes a “next steps” or considerations for validation that participating schools must address in order to be designated as a validated practice. The Task Force schooling was instrumental in developing relationships between

The Fifth Grade team at Fonda Fultonville Middle School was validated as a best practice ... as a result of exemplary ... functioning of the Fifth Grade team. With the support of the TASK FORCEQIS members, this team was able to codify the critical elements that have allowed for their success, develop a framework to share with their colleagues, and have served as internal coaches in the implementation of collaborative co-teaching within their school.

Job Thomas

colleges and universities, and schools wanting to implement the “next steps” or considerations offered by the validation team. These relationships have included Task Force members providing technical assistances to schools that were looking to address systemic, procedural and instructional gaps. This engagement led these

schools to further strengthen their practices, and position themselves for validation within the context of the S³TAIR project.

Although the S³TAIR validation process looks for the generalization of the nominated practice within the school as criteria for validation, the Fifth Grade team at Fonda Fultonville Middle School was validated as a best practice. This was a result of exemplary best practice evident in the functioning of the Fifth Grade team. With the support of the Task Force members, this team was able to codify the critical elements that have allowed for their success, develop a framework to share with their colleagues, and have served as internal coaches in the implementation of collaborative co-teaching within their school.

The Task Force also played a critical role in the development of partnerships within the East Region. The Task Force facilitated a summer symposium that brought together several exemplary and low performing schools, including state network service providers. These sessions played a critical role in establishing relationships, evaluating need, and setting up structures to prepare the schools to engage in the partnership.

Job Thomas is the New York State Coordinator of the S³TAIR Project, Capital Region BOCES, Albany, New York.

As I recall the events and times working through the HESC they all seem to have present day implications and that is why I call this *HESC Pay it Forward*. I can specifically identify four areas of involvement that have present day influence on my work and

professional encounters. The first was the forming of an IHE consortium in the Mid-West region of New York State. As representatives from different teacher preparation programs and regional support centers came together we took to heart the larger NYS Task Force for Quality Inclusive Education goals of supporting one another and developing and supporting K-12 relationships. We also recognized that we were all juggling full plates at our respective institutions. The game plan became a collaborative effort to capitalize on our different areas of expertise and resources that would be available to all the students that we teach as well as all the districts in the surrounding area. These efforts resulted in conferences with local district teachers on co-teaching, bringing in guest speakers such as Paula Kluth and Doug Fisher, as well as producing a DVD on *Promising Practices: Everyday Classrooms that Make the Promise a Reality* and publishing a monograph entitled *Duets and Dialogue: Voices on Inclusive Practices in our School*. These materials and authors are continually used and referenced in my own teaching as I prepare future inclusive educators. E. C.

[Another] memory is probably the most personally gratifying. Over the past three years I have been able to work closely with the S³TAIR project as a member of validation teams for promising practices. This role took me to surrounding school districts to visit with teachers, observe them in action and look at the data indicating effective practice. In all I was able to go on nine visits. In six of the nine schools I unexpectedly met former students of mine who are presently involved in promising practices of inclusion. As teachers, often we do not see the effect of our practice. Being able to visit and see my former students, with their present students creating classrooms designed for all learners, is the premier example of how the HESC's influence on me pays it forward. E. C.

State Education Department point of view

As a New York State Education Department staff member, formerly with Special Education Policy and currently in the Office of College and University Evaluation working with registered teacher education programs, I was first introduced to HESC around six years ago (2005-06). At that time, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) had been around for a bit, but the new Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) had only been signed into law on December 3, 2004. The Department scaled up to support the implementation of these federal laws and was engaged in its own efforts to support student achievement. I was asked to present to HESC group about NCLB and IDEA requirements for highly qualified special education teachers.

The drive, vision and guidance this group provided reflected its deep commitment to inclusion for students with disabilities in this State.

Lisa Luderman

Standing in front of the group for the first time, I was impressed by several things:

- First, was their level of interest; it seemed as though they would hang on my every word. As a former special education teacher in public schools for fourteen years, I was well acquainted with getting and keeping audience attention, but this group far surpassed the level of engagement I ever achieved with my P-12 students. They

cared so deeply about the message I was delivering and wanted to be able to carry that message accurately to the teacher education candidates with whom they worked.

- Second, was the expertise of this group. Not only did they understand the ins and outs of preparing special education teacher candidates, they understood students with disabilities, the special education process and the way P-12 schools work. And they asked the hard questions, such as “When is the State going to provide a definition of inclusion?”
- Third, was the energy, commitment and drive this group possessed. Clearly they worked well together, even though there were differences of opinion. Clearly they were committed to inclusion, and clearly they were willing to take risks and push the envelope to further their mission.

Over the next five years or so, I continued to be a part of HESC. I would attend the statewide meetings as needed, often with Joe Frey, then the Deputy Commissioner, Office of Higher Education, who always supported the work of this group. Joe would be asked to speak to the group about the status of changes to the State’s special education teacher certification structure. As the manager of Higher Education, Joe always listened carefully to the comments from this group. He knew that they were the folks who were driving needed change, in the trenches, and preparing the next generation of special educators at the highest level possible. When Joe wasn’t available to speak, I would pinch hit for him and report back.

The drive, vision and guidance this group provided reflected its deep commitment to inclusion for students with disabilities in this State

Lisa Luderman is an Associate in the Office of College and University Evaluation in the New York State Education Department.

S³TAIR

I have had the pleasure of being associated with HESC over the past ten years or so as part of my role in facilitating first the NYS State Improvement Grant and then the NYS State Personnel Development Grant (the S³TAIR Grant). It is my experience during the years of the S³TAIR Grant that are most evocative of the role played by HESC. I will not write about one single experience, but rather about the totality of the experience. S³TAIR called upon higher education educators to collaborate with S³TAIR field personnel, schools at risk, and schools identified as having evidence based effective practices

The HESC was a wonderful opportunity, unique in the nation; its loss will be felt in many ways. ... It is my hope that the connections and collaborations initiated through the support of the HESC will be nurtured by those who benefited from them, and that the gains made will not be lost.

Wilma Jozwiak

resulting in good outcomes for students with disabilities. Across the state, higher education professionals rose well above expectations. Whether it was participating as site visitors in the determination of effective practice status for nominated

schools, helping to develop documentation and promotional materials about validated schools, working with nominated schools that narrowly missed validation in order to help them correct areas of deficiency, or working with the school partnerships between validated effective practice schools and schools at risk, higher education professionals proved their skill, innovation, and tenacity over and over. In one school, a higher education professional helped the program create and refine a promising practice to the benefit not only of the original nominators, but of the entire school, and potentially the entire district. In one region, a higher education professional worked with the field facilitator to develop and refine a very professional videography documentation for the project website that has become a model for the state. Across the state, higher education professionals who acted as site visitors took what they learned about the practice implementation back to their own classrooms and institutions, often pairing with the validated programs to offer outstanding field practice opportunities for their own teacher preparation students. Through it all, I was consistently impressed with the sense that these professionals, although tasked with teaching teachers-to-be, understood that every experience was a learning opportunity for them as well, and an opportunity to improve their own practice.

The HESC was a wonderful opportunity, unique in the nation; its loss will be felt in many ways, some, that will not be immediately obvious. It is my hope that the connections and collaborations initiated through the support of the HESC will be nurtured by those who benefited from them, and that the gains made will not be lost.

Wilma Jozwiak is formerly the New York State Coordinator for the S³TAIR Project.

A regional partnership

As part of the HESC my students, my program, my university, and I have reaped so many opportunities. As a result of Hofstra's association with HESC we established an inclusive education program for our teacher candidates, brought universal design for learning professional development to faculty, and partnered with high need school districts on Long Island to create after-school academic support programs. Personally, the Task Force members generously participated in my dissertation study and more recent research on RtI. The

experience of being Long Island Liaison helped to foster meaningful professional and personal relationships with other educators from colleges and universities all over Long Island, New York City, and New York State.

Perhaps most valuable of all has been the after-school programs that the Special Education Program at

Perhaps the most valuable of all has been the after-school programs that the Special Education Program at Hofstra created. First and foremost the Task Force showed how such relationships were possible through information and financial funding. ... We have taken what we learned and brought to another high need district. There have been revisions to accommodate the times, but we are continuing an effort that started as a result of our membership in HESC.

Darra Pace

Hofstra created. First and foremost the Task Force showed how such relationships were possible through information, and financial funding. The program I will be describing lasted seven years and only ended with the economic downturn. However, we have taken what we learned and brought it to another high need district. There have been revisions to accommodate the times, but we are continuing an effort that started as a result of our membership in HESC.

For seven years the special education program at Hofstra University and a school district on Long Island in New York partnered in an after-school tutorial program for middle school students receiving special education services, or considered “at risk.” This education program reflected the commitment of the university to education outreach to the community. In partnership with the Amityville Public Schools, Hofstra University offered an after-school tutorial program for seventh and eighth grade students. These students came from diverse racial, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. This partnership emerged as a result of a state improvement grant (SIG) offered to “high need” school districts within the state. The resulting program was only made possible through Hofstra’s involvement in the Higher Education Task Force.

Together the district and university crafted the plans for an after-school program that would afford district students the opportunity for support in areas of need. At the same time pre-service teachers in the graduate special education program would be able to work one on one with students with special needs in literacy and math.

The district provided bus transportation for the students to and from the university. Upon securing parent permission for the program with the assurance of confidentiality, student information was made available to the pre-service teachers for planning individual tutorial programs. The university tutors were master’s degree candidates, working toward certification in special education. The graduate students created materials for the district students to work on keeping in mind the state standards and the student IEP goals when appropriate. The University provided curriculum-based resources which support the universal design for learning—hands on manipulatives, graphic organizers, videos, and educational games. Snacks were provided by the university, but reimbursed by the district.

University faculty administered the program. The tutorials took place at the University in conference and breakout rooms, with technology capability. All rooms were accessible to individuals with disabilities. This after-school academic support program ran for eight continuous weeks during each fall and spring semester. The tutorial sessions last for ninety minutes, twice weekly.

The professors teaching the methods course that incorporated the tutorial time as field experience, monitored each session. The district provided three chaperones, and a special education coordinator, who observed and logged the strategies used in each instructional period. The district chaperones also provided the Hofstra faculty with feedback as to what district teachers considered the specific needs to be identified and therefore served as liaisons between the district and the university.

The initial funding of the program came from the SIG grants. When they expired the district took over the financial responsibilities. This became unsustainable after seven years and the program ended in May of 2010. In September of 2010 we moved to another

Long Island School District. Without funds changes to the program were made. Our students now work in an afterschool program we have placed within the middle school. We hope that eventually we will be able to move the program back to Hofstra to provide district students with the university experience that the Amityville/Hofstra partnership offered. Until then we are continuing with the idea of university outreach that HESC espoused for its great benefits to future teachers and district students.

Darra Pace, Ed.D., is the former Long Island Regional Task Force Co-Liaison, and Associate Professor of Counseling, Research, Special Education, and Rehabilitation at Hofstra University, Hempstad, New York.

Results of collaboration

The school had an average 69% failure rate on the 2006 New York State math assessment and the district was targeted by the state education department because of consistent low performance on state tests and a low graduation rate.

Examination of the interview data from administrators revealed the perception of a change in behavior among teachers. Examination of the pre and post teacher survey data documented a positive change in teachers' knowledge of instructional strategies and attitudes toward mathematics. The sixth grade assessment was given to students at the conclusion of the professional development initiative. Scores from the students in the classes of the participating teachers were examined against the scores of students the year before. The examination revealed a change in the passing rate from 26% to 52%.

The project was continued the following year with a similar outcome in student achievement for the fifth grade students. It was a collaborative effort to implement the factors found to be present in high performing schools into a low performing school district through professional development. D. B.

After the Task Force: what was accomplished

Reflection on work with NYS HESC

As I reflect on my memories of working with the NYS Higher Education Support Center for Systems Change; Task Force on Quality Inclusive Schooling (HESC), I am filled with pride having been instrumental in the successful outcomes that have resulted from the collaborative work of this project. I have been part of the Long Island Task Force for over eight years and my role was, simply, to assure that the parent and student voice was always included in the work of our group. Our task force worked within the framework of a “Community of Practice,” defined by Dr. Entienne Wenger as “a group of people that agree to interact regularly to solve a persistent problem or improve practice in an area that is important to them.” Our task force strived to have all stakeholders at the table at all times, with a focus on improving inclusionary educational programs. Many examples of successful collaboration come to mind as I attempt to share specific activities of our task force. As a parent

of two children with special needs and a professional development consultant in the educational field, I am committed to improve outcomes for all students. My expertise is in the field of building effective educational teams in education. As a result

The relationships that were developed amongst the stakeholders working on the Long Island HESC task force led to a number of successful collaborative activities, including conferences, symposiums and publications, always focused on inclusion and always including families.

Helene Fallon

of the work we did with the Long Island Task Force, my colleagues and I were afforded countless opportunities to present workshops to students and faculty on building these teams. With a focus on increasing meaningful student and parent engagement in education, we presented to the pre-service teachers at all of the institutions actively participating in the work our task force. The data collected in our evaluations showed that 87% of the students we presented to felt the information received at these workshops was “crucial” to their education. Ninety percent believed the strategies learned would help them to be better educators and to be more understanding and accepting of ALL students. In addition, over 70% of the students had not yet attended classes that spoke to the importance of meaningful parent participation and collaboration or of the priority of getting students to understand inclusion and keep them actively involved in their education programs. A focus on student self-determination and self-advocacy was another area that our task force often discussed and has been committed to. The relationships that were developed amongst the stakeholders working on the Long Island HESC task force led to a number of successful collaborative activities, including conferences, symposiums and publications, always focused on inclusion and always including families. I am thankful for the opportunity to have worked with such a passionate, committed group of faculty and administrators from institutions of higher education. This project has had a tremendous impact on improving outcomes and it

saddens me greatly to see funding eliminated. Our task force is hopeful that we will have the opportunity to continue our work.

Helene Fallon, M.Ed., is the Training Coordinator for the Long Island Parent Center, and an adjunct faculty member at SUNY Stonybrook, and C.W. Post, Long Island University.

Passionate – that is the one word that comes to my mind about the colleagues I have worked with over the past ten years.

They care deeply about the New York Higher Education Support Center and the work we have successfully accomplished. They have always worked towards the common goal of helping others.

Whether it was the simple task of letting me know if they wanted lunch at the statewide meetings or deciding the best way to get results for the initiatives they were working on, they were always supportive of each other as well as doing the best for their region.

One and all, I thank you...YOU ARE THE BEST!

Iris Maxon is Office Manager and Secretary Extraordinaire for the New York Higher Education Support Center for SystemsChange.

Passionate – that is the one word that comes to my mind about the colleagues I have worked with over the past ten years. They care deeply about the New York Higher Education Support Center and the work we have successful accomplished. They have always worked toward the common goal of helping others.

Iris Maxon

Chapter 4

Lessons, Retrospect and Prospect

Lessons Learned

As is evident in these accounts and reflections, the HESC has functioned by design and by accident. That pleasant combination, over the sixteen year span, has resulted in so much more than was envisioned at the start. Some lessons have been learned in the doing. They may be useful to others engaged in similar long-term efforts. They are worth sharing here:

- *Keep an eye on the mission.* Over the course of many years, several funding cycles, and numerous changes in participants, it would have been easy to obscure our mission. We placed our purposes on agendas, on brochures, on the website, on handouts, and on the walls of our offices. Difficult decisions were sometimes made in consideration of how alternative choices would lead toward our goals or away from them. Asserting our mission allowed others to join with us, knowing what they were committing to. When challenges seemed greater than could be met, the importance of the mission sustained our efforts.
- *Take advantage of the commitments and capacities of individuals. Encourage and support their efforts to innovate.* The mission we pursued was much larger than could be addressed through a narrow reading of our structures and purposes. Individuals who worked with the HESC or with its support – college teacher educators, teachers and administrators in partnering schools, Regional Task Force Liaisons, representatives of community agencies and organizations – all brought so much more capacity and commitment to the work of the HESC than we could have expected. Our challenge was to respond to that potential in ways that further enhanced their creation of products and services, relationships and enterprises, such that our mission would, in some ways – unexpectedly and amazingly – be addressed. Supporting their efforts resulted in a much larger scope of accomplishment in the longer run.
- *Think large and think small. Act large and act small.* Efforts such as the HESC relate to both the larger system that it is a part of and that it tries to influence, and to the individuals, the small teams, the unique partnerships, the single college programs that it challenges and supports. Each initiative, each correspondence, each presentation, and each next step: All connect with the larger and smaller scales at the same time. Seeing that what is done on one scale affects what happens on other scales helps unify the system, helps make it internally consistent, and keeps it from undermining itself.

When challenges seemed greater than could be met, the importance of the mission sustained our efforts.

Matt Giugno and Jerry Mager

Further, in SystemChange, progress must be made on all scales if it is to be successful and sustained. Attend to and take action to effect change at multiple levels concurrently.

- *Be innovative, be flexible, be humble.* Many of the concepts, practices, and initiatives that were most powerful in the work of the HESC were not invented by the HESC. Rather they were garnered by HESC participants and leaders and partners from the wealth of research and descriptions of practice reflected in the literature of our field. National and state conferences were also rich sources of inventive thinking and programming. But we were innovative in our use of these borrowed ideas and tools, and in their application to our particular needs and circumstances on the large and small scales. When we invented our own concepts and practices, we had to be flexible in their application; just as those borrowed ideas and tools needed local interpretation, so too did our own innovations; then they would work and be useful. And sometimes, we could not make innovations, borrowed or invented, work for us; many ideas and tools seemed just not to fit, and we had to give them up. Then we had to be humble, recognizing the limits of our influence or capacities. We knew that without innovation, we would never accomplish our mission. But flexibility and humility allowed us to pursue further innovation with a degree of success and limited discouragement.

- *Be patient and be impatient.* Time and again, when we were ready to move ahead, we were frustrated by the slow response of others. On one scale or another movement was glacial. It is likely that others sometimes viewed the HESC itself as plodding. We had to learn patience. Others were doing what they could, as best they could, as fast as they could. It was just not what we expected or wanted. But our impatience served our mission as well. When we expressed that sentiment, others felt our commitment

... our impatience served our mission as well.

*When we expressed that sentiment, others felt
our commitment more fully, more directly.*

Matt Giugno and Jerry Mager

more fully, more directly. They were sometimes prompted to respond in a more-timely manner and in ways that more fully met our expectations. Impatience could be an engine. But the combination of patience and impatience might be best, even if difficult to orchestrate.

- *Recognize that the effects of these efforts bear on all scales – individuals, institutions, and the systems of which they are a part.* SystemsChange efforts, by design, influence all levels of the enterprise in their processes and outcomes. While individuals may participate for their own reasons, and institutions may commit for their own purposes, and the system itself may reflect particular dimensions amenable to influence, successful SystemsChange efforts will inevitably produce effects at all levels. Understanding and appreciating this dynamism is important. It will help interpret the engagement and response of participants at each level, even as the work unfolds. Not seeing the multiple levels of effect may leave leaders unprepared for unexpected responses and outcomes.

Retrospect and Prospect

The retrospective offered in this document makes evident that some really terrific things happened during the sixteen year span of the New York Higher Education Support Center for Systems Change and its predecessors.

Some of those terrific things have been personal, affecting the lives and careers of individuals connected with the HESC. Because of connections made and the opportunities presented, many faculty members, public school teachers and administrators, and staff members at community agencies changed their concepts and practices related to *creating inclusive schools*. In some cases, their leadership capacities were enhanced and their professional profiles were enlarged. They are different today because of what they contributed to the mission of the HESC.

Some of those terrific things have been institutional. That is, they reflect redesigned and newly created programs and initiatives. Many colleges and universities now offer inclusive teacher preparation programs, and across these institutions, programs address all levels: early childhood, childhood, and adolescent education; undergraduate and graduate studies; Initial and Professional certifications. Some of the institutions were not much associated with the HESC, but as the momentum in the state built toward this type of teacher preparation, they were drawn along, or at least they met with less resistance from the larger system in their efforts. No longer is the capacity of the teacher workforce for inclusion a challenge to the mission. Rather, teachers are now the key players in *creating inclusive schools* in New York State.

Teachers are now the key players in creating inclusive schools in New York State.

Matt Giugno and Jerry Mager

Some of those terrific things have been systemic. And this reflects the larger conception of the work in which the HESC has been embedded: SystemsChange. These sixteen years have witnessed persistent efforts at multiple levels to address the mission held by many individuals and selected institutions and agencies, and adopted by the HESC. Innovators at all levels – policy-makers, teacher educators, teachers, educational leaders, and community agencies – collaborated over time to reshape the larger system toward *creating inclusive schools*. We moved from a time when elements of the system did not understand and were not committed to inclusive practices, to a time now when those same elements consider inclusive practices the standard to be met. We moved from a time when the word “inclusion” was considered too controversial and was discouraged from use in policy and regulatory documents, to now when the system endorses such a use. We moved from a time when professional preparation, the services to learners already in schools who have been identified as needing special education, the challenges of high need-persistently low performing schools, and the interventions of resources and professional development teams were all thought of separate enterprises; we are now at a time when we see them as related enterprises that must be in sync if they are each to reach their potential and be sustained. That is, we now see the larger system and know that it is at that level to some of our efforts must be directed in *creating inclusive schools*.

Of course, even in light of what has been accomplished over these years, we are not yet there. While we have partnerships that we did not have before, we have too few and must further enhance those that we have created. Though we have supportive policies and regulations – related to teacher preparation, to practice, to the delivery of services, to assessment – none of us would claim that these elements of the system are where they might yet be. Though we have brokered the traditional boundaries of campus versus field, of theory versus practice, of preparation versus practice, and of consulting versus partnership, these boundaries remain obstacles to continuous innovation and intervention. Our accomplishments reflect steps that have been taken. And the HESC has been proudly part of the effort.

But, there is yet much to be done to achieve fully inclusive schools. Prospectively, and without doubt, new organizations, new partnerships, and new alignments of resource will step forward to continue to pursue the mission. That is already happening. Perhaps the experience of the HESC will provide guidance and support, through the accounts and lessons captured here. More likely, the capacities of the many individuals, institutions, schools, and agencies that have been part of the HESC who have already made it a success will be at the core of the next efforts. Others will join in. And, again, it will not be easy. It hasn't been up till now. But the mission – *creating inclusive schools* – remains worthy of the effort.

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Others will join in. And, again, it will not be easy. It hasn't been up till now. But the mission – creating inclusive schools – remains worthy of the effort.

Matt Giugno and Jerry Mager

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Attachment 2: Bibliography

Effective Large-Scale Collaborations: A Selective Bibliography

Chen, Bin. 2008. Assessing interorganizational networks for public service delivery: A process-perceived effectiveness framework. *Public Performance & Management Review*. 31 (3): 348-363.

Abstract: Cross-sectoral partnerships among public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations are increasingly gaining prominence in the production and delivery of publicly funded social services. This paper introduces a process-outcome framework to assess the interorganizational networks for delivering family and children services in Los Angeles County. Five collaboration processes of joint decision making, joint program operation, reducing organizational autonomy, sharing resources and building trust as independent variables were used to assess their impacts on five collaboration outcomes goal achievement, quality of working relationships, broadening partners' views, increasing partner interactions, and equitable influences. The findings suggest that public and nonprofit managers should pay special attention to improve the two processes resource sharing and trust building that promote well-functioning interorganizational networks.

Daley, Dorothy. 2009. Interdisciplinary problems and agency boundaries: Exploring effective cross-agency collaboration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. 19 (3): 477-493.

Abstract: Interagency collaboration is frequently described as a pivotal element of environmental and public health problem solving; yet, there is little systematic evidence to document the conditions under which interagency collaboration is effective. If, as is widely believed, collaboration can promote comprehensive problem solving, then understanding the determinants of interagency collaboration is fundamental to improving environmental quality and promoting public health. This article examines factors promoting or inhibiting effective working relationships between environmental agencies and state and local public health departments in Wisconsin on a range of environmental and public health policy problems. Data collected using a web-based Internet survey of agency personnel are analyzed. The results suggest that previous collaborative experience is important for public health departments at the state and local level, and structural incentives to collaborate are systematically linked to effective interagency collaboration.

Hardy, Cynthia, Nelson Phillips, and Thomas B. Lawrence. 2003. Resources, knowledge and influence: The organizational effects of interorganizational collaboration. *Journal of Management Studies*. 40 (2): 321-347.

Abstract: Inter-organizational collaboration has been linked to a range of important outcomes for collaborating organizations. The strategy literature emphasizes the way in which collaboration between organizations results in the sharing of critical resources and facilitates knowledge transfer. The learning literature argues that collaboration not only transfers existing knowledge among organizations, but also facilitates the creation of new knowledge and produce synergistic solutions. Finally, research on networks and interorganizational politics suggests that collaboration can help organizations achieve a more central and influential position in relation to other organizations. While these effects have been identified and discussed at some length, little attention has been paid to the relationship between them and the nature of the collaborations that produce them. In this paper, we present the results of a qualitative study that examines the relationship between the effects of interorganizational collaboration and the nature of the collaborations that produce them. Based on our study of the collaborative activities of a small, nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Palestine over a four-year period, we argue that two dimensions of collaboration - embeddedness and involvement - determine the potential of a collaboration to produce one or more of these effects.

Melendez, Sara E. 2002. Out of bounds. *Association Management*. 54 (11): 32-38.

Abstract: Businesses, governments, and nonprofit organizations are realizing that they must work together if they are to find lasting solutions to the complex problems that affect society. This realization has led the business community to redefine its performance standards, governments to rethink their objectives, and nonprofit organizations to redouble their efforts to meet increasing demands. One example of this trend is the Three Sector Initiative -- a collaboration among seven organizations in the government, business, and nonprofit sectors that has the aim of addressing the value of partnership among the three sectors and creating strategies by which leaders from each of the sectors can together address vital civil issues. A review of the Three Sector Initiative's work to date is presented, and several case studies that demonstrate cross-sector collaborations, their effective practices, and the considerable challenges that they face are presented.

Shaw, Mary M. 2003. Successful collaboration between the nonprofit and public sectors. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*. 14 (1): 107-120.

Abstract: A case study of land trusts and local governments is used to identify conditions that foster successful collaboration between the nonprofit and public sectors. Findings reveal that such social factors as experience on the part of key personnel in working with the opposite entity and genuine affection for each other are more important than economic benefits of the project. The findings suggests that a nonprofit entity interested in creating a viable partnership to improve a project should give careful consideration to assigning staff.