

NYC Task Force For Quality Inclusive Schooling
“Creating an Inclusive Environment for All Students”
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Expansion of Options: Development of a Campus-Based Inclusion Model
for Students with Autism

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Presenters' background:

Dianne Zager

Dr. Zager is the Michael C. Koffler Professor in Autism, Director of the Center for Teaching and Research in Autism at Pace University and the Director of the Pace University Post-Graduate Advanced Certification Program in Autism. She has worked at Pace University as the coordinator of the Special Education Program in NYC for the past two years. Prior to joining the Pace University School of Education faculty, she was a professor at C.W. Post/Long Island University for 24 years, where she directed the Masters in Autism Program. Dr. Zager co-founded the journal titled, Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities. The third edition of her book titled, Autism Spectrum Disorders: Identification, Education, and Treatment by Erlbaum Publishing was published in 2005. She has presented numerous papers at conferences on special education and teacher preparation and has published widely in journals and books.

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Carol Alpern

Dr. Alpern is a speech-language pathologist. She has been an Associate professor and Program Director for Communication Sciences and Disorders at Pace University for the past 19 years. Prior to joining Pace University she worked at Nassau BOCES in a program for children with cerebral palsy. She also has a private practice specializing in children. Dr. Alpern teaches about inclusion in her coursework to both future speech-language pathologists and general education teachers.

Sharon Meadow

Ms. Meadow has an MS in curriculum and education, MS ed. in elementary education/ELA, and BA in elementary education. She has been working at the Pace University School of Education as a lecturer and clinical fieldwork supervisor. Prior to joining Pace University, she worked for the New York City Board of Education as a teacher for kindergarten through sixth grade levels in Districts 14 and 15. She also was an Early Childhood Educational Director at the Early Childhood Center located in Manhattan, New York. Ms. Meadow's interests lie in interdisciplinary instructional methods, differentiated instruction, and educational technology.

Sandra Salisch

Ms. Salisch has an MA in speech pathology. She has been working at Pace University for the past 30 years and is the coordinator of the Speech and Hearing Center. She provides speech services and supervises student interns working with clients that receive speech therapy.

Shelly Klainberg

Ms. Klainberg has an MA in special education and MA in school administration and supervision. She is currently the inclusion coordinator for P. 226 of District 75 of the New York City Department of Education. Prior to her position as inclusion coordinator, she was a teacher in a self-contained classroom of students with autism, and a high school level inclusion teacher. Ms. Klainberg identified the need for her high school students with special needs to continue their educational career and created the concept of the college level inclusion program in Manhattan. Her interests include autism advocacy and the promotion of social skills and self-determination in students with autism.

Teri Buch

Ms. Buch began her career teaching incarcerated/detained youth in Massachusetts. She worked at Bellevue Hospital teaching patients with social and emotional disabilities. She began working for the New York City Board of Education in 1991 and has been teaching at P.S. 226 for the past 7 years. This past year she has been teaching the students with Autism in Pace University's Inclusion Program. Ms. Buch accompanies her students that choose to participate in conferences and special campus-based events such as career fairs and shows.

Workshop Objectives:

- Introduce teachers and other service providers to a model college-based inclusion program.
- Describe the necessary components and steps in the development of a Campus-Based Inclusion Class (CBIC).

- Illustrate the reciprocal benefits of a CBIC for students with disabilities, general college students, faculty and staff.
- Highlight the key players and the role of collaboration in the CBIC.
- Provide incentive and a model for other universities to create a CBIC.
- Help secondary level teachers prepare their students for inclusion at the college level.

Topical outline

I. Campus-based inclusion program:

a. Rationale

b. Design

i. Academics

ii. Work experience

iii. Related services

iv. Recreation

II. Campus-based inclusion student body

III. Precursors to learning together

IV. Spring semester collaboration:

a. Goals

b. Outcomes

V. Speech-language therapy:

a. Goals

b. Procedures

c. Outcomes

VI. Pace students' perceptions of the inclusion model

Content of Session:

During this workshop the presenters explained that they faced a challenge when their students with autism, 18 years of age, were graduating high school. The teachers of these students were preparing the students for their transition out of high school. However, they realized that there was no option to pursue their educational careers in the Manhattan region. Dissatisfied with these circumstances, they took the initiative to create a campus-based inclusion program at Pace University. The program serves students between 18 and 21 years of age with special needs. The program provides students with autism with the opportunity to be fully included in the college experience. To meet the special needs of the students, speech-language services are provided. Moreover, the students are accompanied by a teacher from the NYC Department of Education when attending classes.

In the inclusion program, the students select their own classes, participate in recreational activities, travel to school independently and hold campus jobs (i.e., working the cash register and assisting customers at the bookstore). In this workshop session, the four students involved in the inclusion program gave a brief presentation. The students proudly introduced themselves and discussed their personal feelings and experiences regarding the classes taken, jobs held, friends made and special events attended at Pace University.

The teachers generally facilitate the processes, which occur in the classroom. Pre-service teachers work with the students with autism. This provides a rich learning experience for both sides. The pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to explore

the relationship between theory and practice, while the students with autism work on their social interaction, vocational and academic skills.

The speech-language pathologists provide services that address articulation and intonation patterns. The students work in computer labs where they practice pitch modulation to improve the quality of their speech. They are also given the opportunity to enhance their social communication skills by participating in role-playing activities. For example, a scenario is given such as going to the library to ask for a book for a course; the students then play the roles of both the librarian and the student.

The program has been highly successful. Pre and post-tests of the Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language (CASL) were administered and the majority of the students showed improved scores. In response to a survey, pre-service teachers have identified that working with the students with special needs has helped in the growth of their clinical skills and interactions with other clients. Additionally, the undergraduate, graduate and practicum students of Pace University made anecdotal reports regarding the positive experience gained from the program.

Overall, the presenters explained the significant need for the expansion of post secondary options for students with special needs in the Manhattan region. Although vocational programs are available for individuals with special needs, these high school students should have the same opportunity as typical high school students to further pursue their educational careers. Attending college enables the students to explore vocational options, develop vocational, academic and social skills, and ultimately experience another facet of life.

Relevance to inclusion:

Prior to the creation of Pace University's campus-based inclusion program, not a single college level program for students with special needs existed in the Manhattan region. The very existence of this program has presented a window of opportunity not only for the students currently enrolled, but also for any student with special needs graduating high school. The program is set up in such a way that the students are fully included in the college experience; they select courses, attend campus-related events, hold campus-jobs and so forth. As asserted by the presenters of this workshop, "inclusion at the college level is possible and it certainly works."

Goals, Concerns and Issues for Future Work:

One of the main goals of the campus-based inclusion program at Pace University is to prepare the students with the skills necessary for post-school employment. By the age of 21, the students will leave the Department of Education and transition into full-time independent employment. Therefore, the coordinators of the inclusion program are currently working with organizations that provide vocational training and job placements for a smooth transition to occur.