

The Special EDGE

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Designing Success Stories

Working High Schools: Working Trends

A

Written with Larry Gloeckler, Executive Director of the Special Education Institute at the International Center for Leadership in Education; former New York State Deputy Commissioner of Special Education and Vocational Rehabilitation

n ideal school includes all of its students in the curriculum, instruction, and assessment—students in general education and students receiving special education services. While this, in some minds, remains a pipedream, an increasing number of elementary schools are working toward just this goal and realizing significant success in the process. On the other hand, high schools moving in this direction remain even rarer things. But they do exist. The even better news is that they offer direction to other schools that want to make an inclusive approach work.

Research being done by the International Center for Leadership in Education, in conjunction with the Council of Chief State School Officers, has helped to identify some of these high schools. Even more importantly, this effort has also identified a handful of central characteristics that contribute significantly to school success for all students. While there is no magical formula, there are indicative trends. One of the first discoveries in this process was that what works, works for all. Students with and without disabilities do well in

the same kinds of settings. So, what do these successful schools look like?

1. Size Makes a Difference

First, they are small. They are small in overall size or they have small learning communities built into their structures. Whatever approach they take to the “smaller is better” idea, they construct themselves so that somehow students personally connect to the school, they identify with a small group of teachers and fellow learners, they form personal relationships, they are noticed and included, they don’t get lost. Middle and later teens need this, and schools don’t appear to work as well for them without it.

2. Commitment to Excellence

Another common element has to do with a commitment to excellence. At schools where all students make significant progress, the staff is determined to ensure that the best education possible is available to every child. The more committed the staff to this end, the more effective the school. One of the primary convictions that operates as a kind of subset of this quality is the absolute belief on the part of every educator in the importance of literacy—for everyone.

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Improving Literacy in Older Students

Basic independence is barely possible today without the ability to read. Bills, credit card statements, Web pages, the front page of the local newspaper, letters from home—all need to be read and understood.

This kind of commitment from teachers, however, cuts both ways. High expectations are also placed on all students at these schools, although with one critical caveat: those expectations must be realistic, as well. This folds right back into the importance of a small, personalized school structure that allows teachers to know what is, in fact, realistic for each student.

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Informing and supporting parents, educators, and other service providers on special education topics, focusing on research-based practices, legislation, technical support, and current resources

A Student Voice

"Expect the Most From Us"

By Gina Semenza, Graduate of California's Youth Leadership Academy

I am very fortunate. When I was diagnosed with a progressive physical disability, my doctor only encouraged my mother to make sure I "achieve [my] potential." With my family's help, I have succeeded in a society that presents many hurdles for people like me. I have successfully made the transition through education and into meaningful employment. At the age of 23, I have a college degree, have held prestigious internships, and I am currently applying for a master's degree in public policy.

Source of Success

My success thus far is attributable to two main factors. First, the people in my life—my family, friends, teachers, and school administrators—had very high expectations of me growing up. I knew that I had no option of performing less than what my abilities enabled me to do. I never felt DISabled because my abilities were always emphasized in school. Secondly, as I approached my young adult years, I had the immense fortune to become a part of youth service programs such as Youth Leadership Forum for High School Students with Disabilities (YLF), sponsored by the California Governor's Committee on Employment of Persons with Disabilities. For the first time, I met successful adults with disabilities to look up to, learned about resources to help my transition into adulthood, and built friendships with peers who taught me about independent living, leadership skills, and perseverance.

Considering that almost 70 percent of individuals with disabilities are unemployed, I know that I am very privileged to have had those two strong forces in my life, and I try to show my appreciation by giving back to my community in any way I can.

Even though I never personally was involved in special education, I have come to witness special education first-hand, through the eyes of the youth I mentor. The most significant issue with special education that I see is the enormous disconnect between well-developed policies and programs that are set up to help students with disabilities and what actually is occurring with students.

Tyrisha

Tyrisha White is an amazing young lady, performing at a high level. She also has learning and developmental disabilities. She cannot tell time from a clock with hands, nor can she count out change to take the bus. Not because she doesn't want to. And I don't think it's because she can't learn.

She is eighteen years old and a senior in special educational classes at Leuzinger High School in Lawndale, California. Tyrisha asked me to accompany her on the first day of school this year. I came away from that experience with a number of suggestions for special education teachers.

First, give students with disabilities access to the same supplies and resources that general education classes have: white boards with colorful markers, for example, and public address systems that work well. Help students feel—by the tools you use, the way you dress, and the look of your classroom—that you believe in the importance of what you have to offer them, and that helping them reach their potential is the most important thing you can spend your time doing. I clearly had a better experience and more support in these areas than Tyrisha.

Don't Wait: Make Change

A student's success hinges on

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Toward Inclusive, Diverse Classrooms

T Written with Dr. Richard A. Villa

he notion of classroom diversity calls to mind the joke about the cement layer who quit his job: he wanted to work in the abstract, not the concrete. Certainly a commitment to diversity in our schools is much easier to support as an idea than it is as an actual, day-to-day practice.

In the fifties and sixties, diversity in schools often translated in people's minds to all things racial—if you lived in the deep South, it meant having African Americans in white schools; in California, it meant Hispanics; in North Dakota it was Sioux Indians. Now, however, the word diversity has taken on a richer and broader meaning, including students with widely different learning styles and intellectual abilities and, of course, students with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975 established the rights of children with disabilities to receive an education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The rights this legislation provides have evolved since its inception, with the ideal LRE becoming an inclusive classroom. As a result, students with special needs are proving in increasing numbers that, with appropriate supports, they can successfully learn and progress in general education settings, leaving no legal rationale for separate classrooms for general and special education students.

Secondary School Difference

Integrated instruction and inclusion is still not easy, though, and it remains particularly challenging in the later grades. The reason for this lies in certain realities: middle schools and high schools are simply

very different from elementary schools. They're traditionally much more static places: teachers tend to work alone in their content areas; students move lockstep by grade and by the sequence in the curriculum; and the focus remains on content rather than on teaching students. In addition, students in high schools are generally taught to be individualistic, competitive, and competent in content. Unlike elementary schools—

“The adults in charge must allow personality and individualization to inform their efforts.”

where students have the same teacher all day, with whom they often form a close, personal bond; students learn to claim an identity by the classroom they're in; and students work and play together daily in groups—traditional high schools present a much more fractured and isolated experience for both teachers and students.

Connections

What the elementary school experience—and its increasing success with inclusion efforts—might suggest for high school teachers is that some kind of personal connection, not isolation, needs to be present in order for instructional efforts to succeed. So an emphasis on content at the expense of the individual serves no

one well. And when it comes to effectively working with a classroom of students who all perceive their worlds differently, who process information a little (or a lot) differently, and who might even experience all of these differences through the additional filter of a language other than English, the adults in charge must allow personality and individualization to inform their efforts.

Assessment Revisited

A new look at the purpose and forms of assessment may help. Schools currently use test results as IQ scores or as vehicles for placing a legitimate disability label on a student. Assessments could also be effectively used as an examination not just of how smart a student is (a deficit approach) but as a process of discovering how a student is smart. The facts that would emerge from an exploration of strengths and how to use them can creatively and effectively direct what goes on in an inclusive classroom.

Teacher Training

Teacher preparation also presents a significant challenge in the effort to make inclusive classrooms the norm rather than the exception in high schools. Many special education teachers in high schools are almost single-handedly responsible for teaching content. But these are teachers with training in special education, not in English composition, physics, or trigonometry. So their students who have disabilities—but who also have many untapped talents and abilities—even when they're presented with the general curriculum, may be deprived of access because one teacher can know only so much, especially at

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3. The Right Start

A consistent innovation among successful high schools has to do with the way they treat their incoming ninth graders. Every high school teacher knows that students enter the ninth grade with widely varying degrees of abilities and academic experiences. Successful schools take this seriously. In these places, ninth graders who show up able to perform ninth-grade math, for example, are immediately challenged. Those who show up behind the curve are quickly placed in enrichment classes that give them the time and the focused instruction they need to reach an appropriate level of ability as quickly as possible.

This approach is not just the special privilege of ninth graders, however. It is applied at all four grade levels. In addition to increased test scores, one visible result is particularly evident during the second semester of senior year. While seniors in many schools during their last semester are planning “senior cut days” and simply biding their time, at the most successful high schools they are still being challenged and expected to learn right up until graduation—whether they are still struggling to read fluently, whether they have successfully mastered grade-level literacy skills, or whether they are facing their college-level advanced placement exams. There is very little senioritis—everyone is too busy learning.

4. Administrative Support

Of course, in order for teachers to sustain the high level of commitment needed to support every student at every level, they need the support of effective leadership: an administrator who is a “port in the storm” of the day-to-day drama of classrooms filled with blossoming adolescents, lesson plans and activities, parental con-

cerns, and more. When, in the middle of this, a leader is present who is able to offer a clear direction, teachers themselves become more successful in keeping their larger goals in view. Interestingly enough, with this kind of leader in place, staff changes decrease—at administrative, instructional, and support levels. This, in turn, makes for a more stable environment for students, which also contributes to their success.

There are several qualities inherent in this kind of leader:

- A visible (though not necessarily flashy) enthusiasm and energy
- Solid administrative, organizational, and communication skills
- A clear focus that remains intact, regardless of shifting political or situational winds
- The ability to use data—everything from numbers on attendance and discipline to scores reflecting literacy and mathematical achievement to percentages of students involved in extracurricular activities
- The ability to create a climate that reflects the underlying principles of respect and responsibility for—and from—all students

In the business world, it is an accepted principle that the heads of any organization must model the expressed values of the place—in the way they design the goals, treat the staff, and think about their customers. Schools are no different.

5. Use of Data

A fifth central characteristic of successful, inclusive high schools involves the collection and effective use of data to guide teachers in their decisions about what to teach and how to teach it. The reasons why the data is collected and the way it is being used are clearly articulated and actively shared with students, parents, and other stakeholders.

6. Quality Curriculum

Data, when it is used well, becomes

inextricably bound with a high-quality curriculum to guide instruction, a sixth element of a successful high school. It’s not uncommon for teachers to feel more than a little paralyzed by the amount of material that most state standards represent. To examine how this wealth of requirements could be reasonably parsed out, the International Center for Leadership in Education surveyed 21,000 people in an effort to discern what skills are most important.

Not surprisingly, one clue to how teachers in successful schools operate, as well as how their curriculum is designed, has to do with the quality of absolute practicality. In successful schools, state standards are closely examined with an eye for what students will, in fact, need after they leave high school—whether they’re on track for college, the world of work, or some degree of independent living. Business connections and postsecondary partnerships regularly enrich high schools. One corollary to this pragmatism is the sense that what is learned in high school is not an end in itself. Curriculum is shaped expressly to give students what they need in the challenging world ahead of them.

7. Professional Development

How all of this happens calls forth the next feature: the importance of professional development. Any effort to keep teachers on top of their game must be seen by everyone as important. And then any professional development effort must be sustainable over time and integrated with what is happening in the classrooms. Additionally, when working to make schools inclusive, the most important areas to address when planning professional development have to do with the effective use of data, with differentiated instruction, and with behavior and the principle of respect.

8. Integrated Efforts

Professional development cannot consist of disconnected efforts that take place once every three months, introduce teachers to something new, and then leave them alone to figure out an application. Successful schools set aside days for enrichment and work to do justice to the time used, the effort and resources involved, and, most importantly, the students who may or may not see the benefit. This time must involve concerted, integrated efforts that directly support ongoing classroom activities, that nurture collaboration, and that focus on creating a climate of support for all students.

Staying Current

One sidenote for effective instruction: teachers need to keep uppermost in their minds the fact that the world is changing, and the world of work right along with it. When we look at students and identify them as fitting best into entry-level positions after high school, we have to bear in mind the current reality: these kinds of positions today require a much greater level of expertise than they did even ten years ago. Those jobs that most of us remember as being entry-level are now decreasingly available in this country; many of them are being shipped overseas. As a result, the world of work requires our students to be more competitive and more highly skilled than ever. Particularly for students with disabilities, we need to do our utmost to help individuals develop those capabilities that will allow them to find jobs and stay competitive in adult life. Special education teachers need to be especially cognizant of this need, keeping abreast of workplace climates and trends and taking advantage of what general education has to offer in the way of content and skills.

Through the work of the

International Center for Leadership in Education, a picture is starting to take shape of a successful, inclusive high school: students connect; expectations are high for everyone; leadership and professional development are focused and purposeful; curriculum is carefully crafted and pragmatic; and goals both large and small are informed by what is happening in the larger world. In this kind of place, everyone supports the basic purpose of the institution—preparing all young adults for whatever world they will face after twelfth grade. This promises to translate into success for all.

Resources for learning more about the high schools that informed this article are available at <http://www.LeaderEd.com/>, the website of the International Center for Leadership in Education. 📌

Gina

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self-esteem. So much depends on the teacher's perception of disability. Time and time again, teachers' expectations for students with disabilities rely on the perception of each child's disability, which often translates to a possible underestimation of student's ability to achieve high levels. For instance, if the teacher believes standardized tests and the exit exam are too hard, the students will believe it too. Every child deserves the same treatment and opportunities. Always hold high expectations for your students, no matter their abilities. Nevertheless, telling students they can do it is not enough; you must also show them. Expose all students to successful adults with disabilities. Students with or without disabilities can begin to be aware of another aspect of diversity in our society. There is no substitute for diverse and positive role models for our

children and even for us. For students with disabilities, introducing them to adults with disabilities will prove to them that they can be successful—because, oftentimes, students with disabilities are told they can be successful but never see any proof of it.

I believe everyone in education is there trying to do right by the students. However, there are children with disabilities who are definitely being left behind. Maybe it can be attributed to a lack of understanding about disability in our society. Even with great public policies, people are still too often unaware of disabilities issues. Well-intentioned people frequently use language (e.g., “handicapped” or “wheelchair-bound”) that puts the disability before the person. This suggests that disability awareness is lacking in our schools. People in education are aware and understand that children from an ethnic minority, for instance, should not be treated differently, and yet, that level of understanding does not often translate naturally to people with disabilities.

Strides are being made to remedy the disconnect between special and general education. Yet many students cannot afford to wait. Many students with disabilities are being left behind in our era of “No Child Left Behind,” where the emphasis on achievement and progress is measured solely through standardized testing. Change must happen at the local level—with each child, in each classroom, at each school. Teachers, administrators, and those entrusted with children's education must be advocates. I know the pressure for teachers and administrators is already huge, but children with disabilities are depending on you. You will be amazed and inspired, time and time again when you see what youth with disabilities can accomplish with your encouragement and support. 📌

Shasta's Approach to Career Training

A

By Sue Sawyer, Director, School-to-Career Transition, Shasta County

s schools implement educational reform, like the recommendations in the High Performing High Schools Initiative, special education professionals work hard to balance their efforts to help youth with disabilities achieve high academic standards against these same students' need to acquire skills for success in life settings—work, home, and community.

More and more frequently, students who struggle academically are not able to take elective classes in career-technical training and life skills because they are required to take more classes for academic remediation. Teachers are increasingly concerned that these students may leave high school with a double deficit: lacking a high school diploma and lacking the life skills they need for adult living.

School-to-Career and WorkAbility I have worked as a team to meet these challenges in Shasta County. Our focus is to engage teachers and counselors in developing strategies to seamlessly integrate workplace skills and career information into classrooms that are guided by the standards-driven curriculum. Our goal is to prepare all youth, including youth with disabilities, for successful transition to life settings.

Curriculum Development Initiatives

We no longer have the luxury of teaching workplace or academic skills in isolation. So teachers in Shasta

County have been working with School-to-Career to approach these challenges from a new perspective. School-to-Career sponsors staff development opportunities to shape curriculum and teaching strategies that focus on “learner outcomes”—what students need to know and do in their lives after high school. This has resulted in a kind of curriculum



mapping that is particularly useful for teachers as it allows them to develop strategies for teaching high academic standards, but in the context of real-life applications.

What Students Need

The first step towards mapping this kind of integrated curriculum requires that teachers learn what students actually need to know and do in life settings. Shasta County's School-to-Career program, in collaboration with WorkAbility, has provided opportunities for educators to explore these settings and identify

essential skills that students will need. In teams of three, teachers visit three businesses that represent various industries. For example, teams of math teachers from middle schools, high schools, and the community college visit financial institutions, manufacturing firms, and architectural companies to explore the application of math competencies in these work settings. Educators then interview employees, follow them through their workdays, and interview human resource managers in search of answers to one central question: “What do I expect students to be able to do with what they learn from this class?”

Employment Literacy Standards and Certification

Once teachers gathered the data from this workplace research, School-to-Career staff compiled it. From there they developed the Employment Literacy Standards

that define what students need to know and do in the local workplace, and they placed them into a rubric. With the help of employers, this has been broken down into essential competencies for a number of areas: interpersonal skills, communication skills, personal qualities, thinking skills, basic skills, problems solving, and technology. The rubric reflects three levels: the basic skills required for early job experiences and/or supported employment; the proficient skills needed to advance in jobs that require more hours, higher rates of

pay, and/or increased responsibility; and advanced skills required in leadership positions in the workplace.

These Employment Literacy Standards have then been correlated with core academic standards, career development standards, and technology standards.* They are then supported by teaching, learning, and assessment strategies that are based on the research of Dr. Ruth Stiehl (Oregon State University), who offers extensive guidance on how to reconstruct existing courses and programs in support of outcomes that are relevant to the needs of learners in the twenty-first century. (These are described in her book *Outcomes Primer*, written with Les Lewchuk, copyright 2002, published by The Learning Organization.)

All of the standards are cross-referenced to academic content standards, resulting in a document that integrates high academic standards into direct applications for the workplace. School teams have used this schema to integrate workplace standards into the curriculum, establish behavioral expectations for the classroom, and develop learning plans for WorkAbility, our Career Pathways Express programs, and Shasta's Work Experience Education. Some middle schools are participating and have developed a grading system for evaluating citizenship skills based on age and grade-appropriate applications of the standards.

Leadership Standards

A critical component of the Employment Literacy Standards is the development of leadership skills.

This has profound implications for youth with disabilities, since these young people need to develop a personal transition plan and especially acquire leadership skills in order to advocate for themselves in their IEP meetings, their classrooms, their eventual places of work, and their communities.

The goal is to develop, within the context of life settings, those leadership strategies they'll need in real life. Working to meet this goal left

disability in a larger perspective.

Self-Advocacy

In our research, we discovered that students often had a difficult time defining their disabilities when they attempted to access adult agencies. As a result, they failed to qualify for services. In addition, we saw our youth struggle to see themselves as potential college students. In response, we worked with Shasta Community College to design a self-advocacy curriculum that is approved

An example of Shasta County's rubric of Employment Literacy Standards:

Teamwork		
Basic (Early employment experience)	Proficient (Skills needed for advancement)	Advanced (Skills needed for leadership opportunities)
Understands the value of working as a member of a team	Cooperates with others to achieve results and accepts personal responsibility for the success and/or failure of the team	Assumes a leadership role on the team
Contributes to the team as a willing participant	Actively engages as a contributing member of the team; shares ideas, suggestions and effort	Facilitates the group process (assigns roles, defines goals, expectations, rules)
Cooperates, follows the rules and procedures set by the team to achieve results	Demonstrates understanding of group dynamics (sharing ideas, negotiating, problem solving, working through conflict)	Demonstrates ability to engage each member of the team
Shows sensitivity to each member of the team	Shows sensitivity to cultural diversity	Resolves differences of opinions, builds toward consensus
Recognizes that individual contributions impact the success of the group and the organization as a whole	Understands team members share responsibilities to accomplish the task	Supports the decisions made/actions taken by the team

teachers with a particularly promising approach: while special education teachers have been encouraging students to advocate for themselves at IEPs, they are now helping students understand the issues around disability awareness, focusing first on the ability of the youth and putting the

by the Community College Chancellor's office. Our students now can take a self-advocacy class and earn college credit at the same time. While our goal was to help them develop the skills they need to advocate for themselves with transition

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eleventh grade, they go to the prom, in tuxedos and limos. A high school diploma gets them to Hawaii. Many of the students who get involved in POW's tutoring and after-school programs apply to college. According to Sweet Alice, most are admitted.

Currently over 120 young adults are in college because of POW. When asked for the total number of college graduates who have been supported by her efforts, she laughs. "Keeping numbers makes you think you've done something important . . . I guess I have done something," she says, "but not nearly enough."

People have asked for her formula for success in working with young people. They all get the same answer: personalized service. In those rare moments when she's not attending funding sessions or planning summits or IEP meetings, you might catch her standing over her own bit of wrought iron railing on Lou Dillon Avenue, breathing in her neighborhood, looking for the possibilities. She offers one directive: if you see something that needs to be done, don't ask.

Just do it.

For all that she does locally, Sweet Alice knows the importance of getting involved in the world beyond her neighborhood. After the Columbine High School shooting, she took a dozen students to Colorado to help in whatever way they could, and then she brought 15 Columbine students back to Watts for a couple weeks, just to give them a place to recover from the horror of what had happened. She also took a group of students to help in the Oklahoma City bombing and then again to New York City after the 9/11 attack.

On close examination, it becomes clear that Sweet Alice operates out of a strong ethic of accountability—for

herself as well as for others. If she says she'll be somewhere or do something, she's there, doing it; and she expects the same of others. That ethic is informed, though, by compassion, and by some other important intangible. Perhaps it's an intuitive sense of where the real need is—in a person or a particular moment. Perhaps it's simply the patience to sit attentively with someone until she has figured out what it is. For Sweet Alice, it doesn't matter if that person is a teenager, a legislator, or a young mother. She's with them until they find an answer.

Over the years, Sweet Alice has worked with many public figures. The walls of her office at POW are covered with pictures: Sweet Alice alongside Al Gore, Nancy Reagan, Diane Feinstein, Jimmy Carter, George H. W. Bush, and others. But you never get the feeling that she is making any distinction, or that she'd rather be anywhere other than right where she is. And right with you.

While Sweet Alice doesn't have an advanced degree in business, community organizing, or adolescent psychology, she does have that one rare thing: a confirmed belief in the worth of everyone. In each person she meets, she sees talents that are worth recognizing and developing.

Sweet Alice has been working for over 40 years now to make her neighborhood a better place, and she has no interest in stopping. When asked if she gets tired and would like to retire, she responds with "For me, this isn't work. I love what I do." And then, a bit more reflectively, "I'll retire when I die. The need is too great." 🍷

Parents of Watts is one of many Parent Training and Information centers (PTIs) throughout California. Go to www.calstat.org/pticontact_revised.html for a complete listing.

agencies, at the same time they are earning college credit and seeing themselves in a new way: young adults who may in fact have the skills they need to attend college.

These efforts are a proactive response to creating opportunities to prepare youth with disabilities to graduate from high school and successfully make the transition into the workplace. We have been able to implement these strategies and thus create a better learning environment for our students by designing curriculum and teaching methods that encourage high academic achievement, while they prepare students for the world of work. These efforts have helped these students become effective self-advocates as they work toward success in higher education, in the workplace, and in independent adult living. 🍷

Additional resources for developing integrated curriculum/transition programs are available through the following websites:

www.cord.org
Center for Occupational Research and Development
www.cabrillo.edu
Cabrillo College
www.nces.ed.gov
The National Center on Educational Statistics

*While only two of the Employment Literacy Standards are addressed by the California High School Exit Exam (basic skills and problem-solving), all are embedded in the core academic standards. These other skills are as critically important in preparing for success in the world of work: interpersonal skills (teamwork and leadership), communication skills (listening, speaking, and customer service), personal qualities, and thinking skills (visualization, decision-making, learning how to learn).

Addressing the Algebra Requirement

If x equals the number of high school students in California who will pass an algebra class before graduating, and we're solving for x , this is one answer that's easy to find. Education Code Section 51225.4(b) now requires that all high school students complete the content of Algebra I (in the form of a specific course by that name or a combination of two courses in mathematics: see www.cde.ca.gov/be/ms/pol/policy04-01-march2004.asp) in order to receive a high school diploma.

The new requirement—which the California State Board of Education in 2004 confirmed applies to all students, including those in special education—does not exist in isolation. It is affected by other requirements, especially those in the No Child Left Behind Act that place new conditions on the qualifications that classroom instructors must have in order to teach. As a result of these two forces, school districts like Lodi Unified have changed the way they provide algebra instruction. The result is a new mode of operation that holds a lot of promise.

Catherine Conrado, Special Services/SELPA Administrative Director at Lodi Unified School District, describes how this new requirement and its aftermath affected planning at the district level. “Last year there was a huge shift in thinking, in instruction, and in service. It made us all cognizant of the fact that . . . we can't just help kids where they are. We have to know the standards and help kids

connect and move towards them.”

A Clear Understanding

Basing her approach on Lodi USD's planning process, Conrado describes four basic conditions for designing a program to help special education students meet the algebra requirement. She says what is needed first of all is a clear understanding of what is expected from students. “The standards need to be understood. Special education instructors, especially pull-out instructors like resource specialists, need to be familiar with the standards. Once you have that knowledge, you then ask yourself



how to implement programs that get students there.”

Partnerships

Secondly, she says, general education teachers must be partnered with resource specialists, and the partnerships have to be supported from the superintendent through all the layers of school administration and staff. “By partnered I mean they go in and out of each other's classrooms,” says Conrado. “In our most successful case, an algebra teacher went to a resource specialist's classroom to ensure that they're delivering the same instruction. Instructional assistants and resource specialists all need to be familiar with algebra. You have

to schedule the kids so the resource specialists or special education assistants can be in those classes, and then you have to follow up with study skills classes where the skills are pre-taught, taught, and re-taught. There has to be clarity in expectations and in the way those expectations are communicated.” To keep necessary communications going, the superintendent, curriculum people, department chairs, principals, and other interested parties need to meet together to address the challenges involved.

Communication

Good communication with parents is another important part of the program because of the central role that parents play on the IEP (Individualized Education Program) team. As Conrado points out, the IEP team is the body that determines the services a student will receive. If it identifies a necessary accommodation, then “we can accommodate students so . . . they have the (algebraic) formulas available or they can always use a calculator.”

And lastly, good communication with the student is essential. “The student has to rise to a level of work,” says Conrado, adding that this is true throughout general and special education. Erin Lenzi, Resource Specialist at Tokay High School in the Lodi USD, says that during the last year, out of 65 algebra students, 28 were special education resource students, and all but two passed. She notes the two that did not pass failed “by choice, by not trying, which of course is their right.”

Algebra, continued on page 11

the more advanced levels. And then those high school teachers who have a single subject credential and know their content well often do not have specific training in how to adjust their instructional tactics and their classroom environments to meet the needs of a young adult who has a sensory impairment, or who has an attention deficit disorder (ADD), or who is emotionally troubled.

Highly Qualified Teachers

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is, either directly or indirectly, pushing schools toward a solution. This legislation requires that all teachers be “highly qualified”: they must demonstrate subject matter competence in every subject area they teach. This leaves special education teachers in a quandary. In order to continue to teach core content under NCLB, these specialists would need to get credentialed in every subject they address in the classroom—practically impossible at the middle and high school level. But the good news is that, under NCLB, they could also collaboratively plan and/or co-teach with “highly qualified” credentialed general education teachers who have mastery in their respective content areas. Co-teaching or collaborative teaching is an efficient and effective way to address the “highly qualified” dilemma for specialists, while simultaneously achieving both legislative goals: inclusive classrooms from IDEA and highly qualified instructors from NCLB, together yielding equity and excellence for all students.

Benefits of Collaboration

When special and general educators work together in inclusive settings, everyone gains. General education students, for example, benefit because there are more adults present in an inclusive classroom. As a result,

all students can receive extra support in learning difficult material. Everyone also can benefit from the differentiated instruction that comes from teaching a group of students that is widely diverse in abilities and learning needs. The unique strategies and ideas designed for the few regularly turn out to augment the learning of the many.



There is even more. In inclusive settings, students not technically eligible for special education services end up getting extra help beyond academics. For example, special educators carry an expertise in positive behavioral supports. These professionals are often able to recognize—and work successfully with—a young adult who may be ADD-like, but not ADD enough to qualify for special services; or a child who clearly sits on the other end of the behavioral and communication continuum and has traits that are closer to autism. Special education teachers bring an understanding of human behavior and a larger repertoire of strategies and instructional ideas for serving every unique kid (and every kid is unique), even those not technically eligible for special education, but who still need a little extra personal understanding or instructional adjustment.

Leadership

All of this being said, there is still one additional—and most critical—component to successful inclusion in high schools: administrative leadership. A successful inclusive high school requires a general education administrator who doesn't view special education as “the problem child” and who doesn't send a student into a resource specialist's (RSP) classroom just because this student learns things differently or reacts differently to his world. The number one predictor of a school where general education teachers have a positive attitude about including students with disabilities in their classrooms is the degree of administrative support for the practice. An administrator needs a number of very definite skills and attitudes: first and foremost, the ability to articulate a vision and a commitment to inclusion; then to build consensus and to marshal resources; finally the ability to model, through behavior, the solution, which amounts to being responsible for educating every student.

The good news is that these necessary administrative qualities are not inborn talents of a select, charismatic few. Committed administrators can learn how to be effective leaders and support inclusion. They can learn how to avoid burnout, how to give emotional and personal support, how to use assessments, how to create and use a structure that reinforces what they're trying to do, and how to get and use feedback to continually inform the direction they're taking. And they can learn how to get support for themselves. It's critical that administrators keep in mind the fact that they don't have to do it all themselves—physically, intellectually, or emotionally.

The Real World

A tremendous amount of work at all

levels is required for a classroom to be truly and successfully inclusive. One of the best human justifications for this effort rests in the reality of the world that students with disabilities face the minute they leave high school: they will not, most of them, be moving into the special education workplace, or eating at the special education restaurant, or visiting the special education library. And general education students will find themselves on college campuses and at various worksites needing to work with and alongside the people who populate our increasingly diverse country. An inclusive education is the best preparation for students, with or without disabilities, to meet and navigate the world of adulthood. Grant Wiggins—a renowned expert in curriculum, assessment, and school restructuring—insists that we will never successfully educate all children effectively until we stop seeing diversity in students as a problem. This amounts to social justice. 🍌

Dr. Richard A. Villa is president of Bayridge Consortium, Inc. in San Diego. He travels worldwide, providing consultation, technical assistance, and training related to systems change, differentiated instruction, collaborative planning and co-teaching, and inclusive education. Dr. Villa can be reached at 619/795-3602 or by email at ravillabayridge@cs.com.

Algebra

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The Diploma

Ultimately, Conrado says, “everybody has to keep in mind that the goal is to have a diploma. If the students don’t get algebra, they don’t get the diploma.” To this end, Lenzi works with her students with special needs at Tokay High School in a study skills class in the morning, reviewing material and how to take a test, for example. Then the students spend the

rest of the day in general education.

According to Lenzi, the algebra requirement has given her and other resource specialists, “a different job.” No Child Left Behind also pushed them in this direction, since it requires that there be a “highly qualified” instructor in every classroom. In California, “highly qualified” means that instructors must have a bachelor’s degree and a credential (or be enrolled in an approved intern program), among other conditions.

This naturally leads to the partnering arrangement Conrado described. Instead of teaching algebra and giving students math credit from her instruction outside the general education classroom, Lenzi has become a second teacher in a general education classroom, where students now need to be if they are to get academic credit. Lenzi provides resources and support to the students with disabilities in the general education setting.

Benefits for All

She says she ends up serving the needs of all the students—in general education and special education. Every student benefits from having two teachers in the classroom, and the scores reflect it. And although her job has changed, she does not think it has gotten either easier or more difficult. Only different.

Under this new arrangement, teachers and resource specialists work together during a common planning time, and they are constantly collaborating and offering each other feedback. In addition, they now have two sets of eyes to help with behavior management in the classroom. Other collaborations have increased, as well. Parent contact has improved since the two instructors have been able to share the workload, giving them more time to communicate with parents about their kids.

Conrado is confident that the majority of special education students

have the ability to pass algebra, and she places the responsibility at the district’s doorstep. “You have kids who are in special ed. because their disability is impacting their academic progress. In many cases these students were not placed in the right classes. There is a large group that is capable but whose needs have not been directly addressed.”

Why might algebra be particularly difficult for students who receive special education services? As Conrado points out, the subject requires a certain comprehension level of thinking and reading. Lenzi concurs: “It’s not so much the algebra as the higher level of thinking—as much as it is confidence. But the students are doing better in all areas. They have buy-in.” And as they experience success, they become confident that they can do more.

Student Satisfaction

Parris Hall, an algebra student last year, confirms this. “It’s easier to learn it this way. They show you step-by-step. I got more into math—before I wasn’t getting it, but they break it into pieces for you. Now it’s my favorite subject.”

Lenzi has advice for instructors who are overwhelmed by the new requirement: you need a sincere belief that students can learn. “You have to have a positive attitude—even if you have some doubt, don’t ever let the students see it . . . It’s [also] important to stress that the benefits of the program outweigh the challenges. We’ve seen real results,” she says.

Conrado’s impression is that no one involved is “interested in going back to the old model.” If the students get their way, it sounds like that won’t happen. Conrado has talked with students with disabilities as she visited these new classes. “The kids were telling me ‘We can do the work.’” It looks like in Lodi they can. 🍌

Improving Transition Outcomes

T

By Donna DeWeerd, Project Manager, ITOP: Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities Project

The California Workforce Investment Board received an Innovative Alignment Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy to work with federal, state, and community agencies and organizations to help young people with disabilities make the transition from school into the workforce. The resulting project is ITOP: Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities Project. The project is designed to work with a large group of stakeholders to help create a cross-agency, multi-year state plan to improve transitional outcomes for youth with disabilities; create a website to host a statewide map of resources for delivering effective youth services; and determine effective ways for youth with disabilities to access transition services.

ITOP is designed to accomplish the following over a five-year period:

- Map resources to identify available assets and resources for delivering effective youth services within the state
- Develop, implement, and evaluate a cross-agency, multi-year state plan to enhance transitional outcomes for youth with disabilities
- Conduct local pilot project demonstrations to determine effective ways for youth with disabilities to access transition services through community partnerships and intermediary organizations
- Demonstrate the long-term sustainability of the grant objectives within California by collaborating with federal, state, and local public-sector resources

Research points to four interventions that must be included in any program if it intends to support students in transition:

- Academic excellence, so that youth with disabilities will have every opportunity to be engaged in their learning and be supported to achieve high academic standards
- Career development, so that it is possible for these students to learn in the workplace and community
- Youth development and support, so that all youth with disabilities and the adults who care for them will have ready access to resources and services that help them make informed decisions about the future
- Youth leadership skills, so that all youth are able to take an active role in designing, determining, implementing, and evaluating the activities and opportunities provided to enrich their futures

Out of these findings, ITOP has been designed to develop, with the guidance of youth, a user-friendly system that exists to promote academic, career, and personal development excellence for young people with disabilities. This system will be designed to help these students achieve their personal goals and reach their highest potential through a readily accessible system of information on the supports and resources necessary for reaching such potential.

To learn more about ITOP or other transition topics, please visit the following websites:

For its stakeholder process, resource map, and searchable database of resources, visit ITOP's website at <http://www.improvingyouthtransitions.org/>

For research-based, quality elements, visit the website of The National Collaborative Workforce on Disability at <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/>.

For the Youth Council Institute and Intermediary Network for New Ways to Work, go to <http://www.nww.org>.

For the California State Workforce Investment Board and the State Youth Council, go to <http://www.calwia.org/>.

For Sonoma State University's California Institute on Human Services, go to <http://www.sonoma.edu/cibs/html/cibsmain/cibshome.html>.

For the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, go to www.dol.gov/odepl/.



The RiSE (Resources in Special Education) Library lends materials to California's public free of charge. The items listed on this page are just a sampling of what is available. Go to <http://www.pbp.com> to view the library's complete holdings and to request materials online. To order by phone, call librarian Judy Bower at 408/727-5775, extension 110.

High School Reform

Adolescents and Inclusion: Transforming Secondary Schools

By Anne M. Bauer and Glenda M. Brown. Paul H Brookes Publishing: Baltimore, MD; 2001. 294 pages. Purcell Marian High School is an example of a successful inclusive high school where all students learn, no matter their ability. This acclaimed inner-city school recognizes and celebrates the diversity in all learners, especially students with disabilities. Call number 23375.

Building Inclusive Schools: Tools and Strategies for Success

By Ann T. Halvorsen and Thomas Neary. Allyn & Bacon Publishers: Needham Heights, MA; 2001. 226 pages. This book provides a synthesis of best practices in inclusion and demonstrates that individualized instruction is enhanced, not lost, in supported general education classrooms. Call number 23385.

Deciding What to Teach and How to Teach It: Connecting Students Through Curriculum and Instruction

By Elizabeth Castagnera, Douglas Fisher, Karen Rodifer, and Caren Sax. PEAK Parent Center, Inc.: Colorado Springs, CO; 1998. 43 pages. Teachers love this short, simple, easy-to-read book. It is directed at the secondary teacher and includes many useful forms for sharing information on students with general education teachers. Call number 1200.

Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom: How to Reach and Teach All Learners, Grades 3–12

By Diane Heacox. Free Spirit Publishing: Minneapolis, MN; 2002. 163 pages. Any curriculum can be differentiated, even a standard or mandated curriculum. Drawing on Bloom's Taxonomy, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, other experts in the field, and her own experience in the classroom, Heacox explains how to differentiate instruction in a wide variety of scenarios to provide variety and challenge in how

teachers teach and in how students learn. Templates and forms simplify planning; examples illustrate differentiation in many content areas. Call number 1207.

Guided by Performance—Secondary: Building Stronger Bridges Between Learning, Curriculum, and Assessment

By Michele P. Monson and Robert J. Monson. Zephyr Press: Tucson, AZ; 1998. 256 pages. The authors discuss the framework for making educational decisions by focusing on student performance through performance assessment packages, which use curriculum-centered, standards-referenced, classroom-based assessment strategies. This volume targets a middle school benchmark grade (8) and a high school benchmark grade (11). Call number 21306.

Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School

By TheodoreSizer. Houghton Mifflin Company: New York, NY; 1996. 198 pages. In the third and final volume of the Horace series, America's preeminent school reformer offers his personal and candid meditation on what works—and what doesn't—in our schools. Call numbers 22939, 22940.

Inclusive High Schools: Learning from Contemporary Classrooms

By Douglas Fisher, Caren L. Sax, and Ian R. Pumpian. Paul H Brookes Publishing: Baltimore, MD; 1999. 209 pages. Through the experience and perspectives of the book's authors, high school teachers, administrators, and parents will recognize common challenges in inclusive schooling and find proven strategies that can be adapted to their own needs. Call numbers 23062, 23063.

Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms

By Diane Ravitch. Simon & Schuster: New York, NY; 2000. 555 pages. In describing the wars between competing traditions of education, Ravitch points the way to reviving American education. Call numbers 23106, 23107.

"Small Victories in an Inclusive Classroom"

By Michael Mahony. In *Educational Leadership*, 54. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Alexandria, VA; 1997. 4 pages. A teacher discusses

results of including special needs students in a high school English class and looks at grading, collaboration, and instructional strategies. Call number 21151.

Special Education in an Era of School Reform: Accountability, Standards, and Assessment

By Ronald Erickson. Federal Resource Center for Special Education: Washington, DC; 1998. 37 pages. This book addresses some of the critical questions being asked by educators in the areas of results-based accountability systems, standards, and assessment systems, including accommodations. Call number 21374.

Special Education in an Era of School Reform: Preparing Special Education Teachers

By M. Hardman, J. McDonnell, and M. Welch. Federal Resource Center for Special Education: Washington, DC; 1998. 34 pages. The authors examine three principles that are driving change in preparing teachers: collaboration and cross-disciplinary training; general and special education interface; and field-based training for partnerships between higher education and public schools. Call number 21164.

Teaching Learning Strategies and Study Skills to Students with Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorders, or Special Needs: For Middle School and High School

By Stephen Strichart and Charles Mangrum, II. Allyn & Bacon: Boston, MA; 2002, Third Edition. 236-page book and trial CD. In addition to its new coverage of strategies for reading, spelling, and vocabulary, this handbook provides more than 150 reproducible activities that promote "Active Learning" and offer students suggestions and strategies to help boost their performance and transform them into independent learners. Call numbers 21348, 23149.

Voices from the Field: Success in School Reform

Developed by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory: Austin, TX; 2000. 2 audiotapes and 18-page guidebook. This series combines practical, real-world advice from practitioners and leaders in educational reform, built from six strategies for the successful implementation of school change and improvement. Call number 23348.

High School Reform

<http://www.ascd.org>

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) addresses all aspects of effective teaching and learning: professional development, educational leadership, and capacity building. Because ASCD represents all educators, it is able to focus solely on professional practice within the context of "Is it good for the children?"

<http://www.nassp.org/breakingranks/breakingranks2.cfm>

Breaking Ranks II: Strategies for Leading High School Reform is a report of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, an organization that devotes a large part of its website to school improvement. *Breaking Ranks II* is written for school principals and leadership teams and offers a local and national point-of-view on student performance and high school reform.

<http://www.principals.org/breakthrough>

The website of *Breakthrough High School: You can do it, too!* offers a monograph that documents the ideas and methodologies behind the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Breakthrough High Schools project. This 58-page document identifies successful, high-minority, high-poverty high schools.

<http://www.inclusiveschools.org/aboutus.htm>

The National Institute for Urban School Improvement supports inclusive communities, schools, and families in their efforts to encompass all children, all curricular reforms, all teaching reforms, all support personnel, all policies, and all strategies for student assessment, in order to ensure the rights of excluded learners.

<http://www.pacificresearch.org/centers/csr/index.html>

The Pacific Research Center offers a plethora of free, downloadable reports. Topics include testing, facilities, higher education, high-poverty high performing schools, and ten points for making California schools better.

<http://www.ourpublicschools.org/research/index.html>

Promising Futures: A Synopsis of 2001

Education Reform Research is a free, downloadable handbook by the California Alliance for Public Schools. It recaps 2001 education research, including information about class size reduction, early intervention, after school programs, parent involvement, and facilities improvements.

<http://www.arc.org/rapp/resources>
Reporting on Race, Education, and No Child Left Behind is a 88-page handbook, produced by Applied Research Center's Race and Public Policy Program. It details the racial and special education provisions provided by the No Child Left Behind Act. An accompanying slideshow gives a quick look at the content of the handbook.

<http://www.essentialschools.org>

The Small Schools Project from the Coalition of Essential Schools works towards breaking larger public schools into smaller schools, with the goal of creating a more personalized school environment.

<http://www.s4s.org>

The goal of *Standards for Success* is to align high school and college standards through a database of high school assessments. This site provides examples of college syllabi and student work in all subjects and offers a free booklet, *Understanding University Success*, outlining standards and necessary skills.

<http://www.tash.org>

TASH is an international association of people with disabilities, their family members, other advocates, and professionals fighting for a society in which inclusion of all people in all aspects of society is the norm. The TASH website offers numerous

printable and online resources in support of this effort.

<http://www.tash.org/chapters/caltash/>

California's branch of TASH can be found at this website.

<http://teachcalifornia.org>

The TEACH California website offers information about becoming a credentialed teacher in California.

http://www.disabilityemployment.org/yp_ylf.htm

This website provides information about the California's Youth Leadership Forum. It also offers numerous resources for people with disabilities who are interested in employment.

Legislation

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ai/pt/>

This page from the California Department of Education's website describes California's Principal Training Program that was established pursuant to Assembly Bill 75. Online application to this program can be made at <http://www.ab75.org> or by calling 209-468-5914.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/cal/mal/mard03sbetrngprvdr.asp>

This webpage provides information on the Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program established by Assembly Bill (AB) 466, which provides incentive funding for professional development for teachers, paraprofessionals, and instructional aides. For more information, call 916/319-0827.

CalSTAT Competition and Award

A Way to Share and Build on Your Success

Is your site realizing success in the area of literacy, positive behavioral supports, general and special education collaboration, or family involvement? Is your success something you would like to develop and share? CalSTAT, a special project of the California Department of Education, Special Education Division, is announcing its 2004 model site competition and award. The goal is to identify model sites in California public schools that are experiencing success in any one of the areas listed above and provide them with resources that will allow them to share their work with others and continue the success of their efforts. The benefits are numerous: a \$5,000 cash award, technical assistance for continuous improvement, ongoing opportunities to network and share information with other successful sites, and a \$2,000 stipend for a team to participate in the CalSTAT statewide Leadership Institute. More information and model site award applications are available on the CalSTAT website: <http://www.calstat.org/institute.html> or contact Marin Brown at marin.brown@calstat.org or 707/849-2265. The application is due November 15, 2004.

NOVEMBER 4–6

Association of California School Administrators Annual Conference

This conference offers discussions in multiple forums: general group sessions, hands-on workshops, and smaller seminars.

Examples of discussion topics include Twenty-first Century Education: Accounting for the Past and Future and Accountability and Evaluation at a Crossroads: Five Critical Choices for California Leaders. San Diego, CA. Download a brochure, registration materials, and hotel registration information at <http://www.acsa.org/events/index.cfm>, or call 800/890-0325.

NOVEMBER 11–13

Fall Forum 2004: Equitable Schools for a New Democracy

This forum presented by the Coalition of Essential Schools addresses inequality in schools. Discussions will revolve around helping all students, regardless of background, achieve their full potential. San Francisco, CA. To register online, visit <http://www.essentialschools.org/publications/docs/fforum/fforum.html>. To register by phone or email, contact Eidetics Conference Management at 925/676-5748 or eidetics@conferencemanagement.com. For more information, email Brett Bradshaw at bbradshaw@essentialschools.org.

NOVEMBER 12–13

Curriculum and Instructional Leaders Academy

Presented by the Association of California School Administrators, this academy is designed for both aspiring and beginning teachers and experienced teachers. Themes for this academy include closing the gap, equity and diversity, the No Child Left Behind Act, best practices, literacy, transition, and assessment and evaluation. Pleasanton, CA. Download registration materials at <http://www.acsa.org/events/index.cfm>, or call 800/672-3494.

NOVEMBER 18–21

High Performing High Schools: Helping All Students Achieve

This annual conference of the California League of High Schools focuses on personalized curriculum and modification of instruction and assessments. Attendees also have the opportunity to participate in roundtable discussions with other atten-

dees. High-level officials are also scheduled to address the audience. San Jose, CA. To download a brochure and registration form, visit <http://www.clbs.net>, and follow the link to Conferences. For more information, call 800/858-9365, or email info@clbs.net.

NOVEMBER 19–20

Curriculum and Instructional Leaders Academy

Presented by the Association of California School Administrators, this academy is designed for both aspiring or beginning teachers and experienced teachers. Themes for this academy include closing the gap, equity and diversity, the No Child Left Behind Act, best practices, literacy, transition, and assessment and evaluation. Fontana, CA. Download registration materials at <http://www.acsa.org/events/index.cfm>, or call 800/672-3494.

JANUARY 12–14

Opening Doors to Student Achievement, Leadership Matters!

This 2005 Pupil Services, Special Education, and Diversity Symposium presented by the Association of California School Administrators offers workshops

and seminars that address education topics for all students, with and without disabilities. Monterey, CA. Information and registration materials are available at

<http://www.acsa.org/events/index.cfm>. For more information call 800/ 890-0325, or email Lynne Ganas at lganas@acsa.org.

FEBRUARY 3–5

You're Gonna Love This: A Conference for Parents, Consumers, Educators, Adult Service Providers, and Others Concern About Quality of Life for Individuals with Disabilities

Presented by CalTASH and co-sponsored by the LA Inclusion Partnership Family Empowerment Center, this conference will feature 40 individual sessions and multiple keynote speeches. Topics range from best practices to whole school reform, assistive technology to advocacy, and much more. It is also an opportunity to network with other like-minded citizens. Manhattan Beach Marriott. For more information, call 310/258-4063. To download registration forms, visit <http://www.tash.org/chapters/caltash>.

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South Central's Sweet Alice

A young mother doesn't soon forget a legal injunction threatening to take away her child. While it's been over forty years since Alice Harris—most people now know her only as Sweet Alice—was successful at convincing a judge that she should be able to keep her daughter, she still hasn't forgotten her day in court. However, instead of being bitter about the experience, she has used it to make sure that no mother in her neighborhood has to face alone those same kinds of fears and uncertainties.

Sweet Alice's neighborhood is Watts in south-central Los Angeles. Tucked into an area of carefully manicured lawns—edged with rose bushes, bougainvillea, and wrought-iron fences—lies the parent training and information center that she started in the mid-sixties, Parents of Watts (POW). What began in her living room is still a local effort—a grass-roots, volunteer-driven, community-based set of programs with one simple goal: to provide people with the resources they need. But it has grown. POW currently owns 12 houses on Lou Dillon Avenue and provides over 15 different programs. At 68, Sweet Alice is still directly involved with them all: emergency food and shelter for the homeless; health seminars; legal and drug counseling; dispute resolution for the Hispanics, Koreans, and African Americans in the area; educational programs and tutoring for children and young adults; programs for unwed mothers; and parent training. Although for Sweet Alice, the word involvement is something of a misnomer. It's closer to full immersion. She regularly helps solve

problems between schools and families; she advocates for students, especially at their IEP meetings; she brings curtains to families in the neighborhood with bare windows;



High school graduates off to Hawaii, thanks to Parents of Watts

she helps look after young children. And through her various tutoring and student support programs, she helps young teens stay in school and prepare for college and the job market.

Sweet Alice is particularly passionate in her work with young adults. She devotes a great deal of energy to encouraging them to stay in school, stay away from gangs, and stay off the streets. As with most things, she has

achieved amazing success. She has kept countless numbers of high school students from taking a wrong turn or from not being able to recognize a right one—young men from failing grades and dropping out of high school, others from a life of gangs and drugs; one young woman from an abusive family, another from suicide, a third from institutionalization. And so it goes.

One of her houses provides shelter for people with mental illness who have just been released from the hospital, but who don't yet have the resources to become independent. Many of these people are struggling to recover from a life of drug abuse. Sweet Alice has them talk to teens in her neighborhood. She is convinced that there is no more credible voice to encourage young people to stay away from drugs than the person who "has been there and wants to come back."

Another aspect of POW is its incentive program for young adults to stay in school. If students make it through the tenth grade, Sweet Alice sends them on a field trip; the

Parents of Watts, continued on page 8

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