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Differentiating Art Curriculum for Students With Learning and Emotional Disabilities

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Differentiating Art Curriculum for Students With Learning and Emotional Disabilities

by

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Abstract

Participation in the visual arts should be a pleasurable, vital learning experience for students with special needs. Art teachers without formal training are challenged by differentiating curricula for these special education students due to current teacher certification requirements. Art teachers of special education students strive to provide the most creative atmosphere possible while struggling to balance the demands of behavior management these children require.

To understand this dilemma, this paper begins with an exploration of disability’s integration into our education system and the impact of federal legislation on society’s desire to teach everyone equally. It presents theories of creativity that will contribute towards a definition of the creative process that can be applied in a classroom environment. This paper concludes by offering instruction methods and strategies, with an emphasis on creativity, that have proved successful in teaching art to children with disabilities.
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Preface

The best thing you can do is trust your uncertainty and keep pushing till it both feels right and looks so simple; you will wonder what took you so long.
Ned Herman, The Creative Brain

When I began my graduate research in creativity and education four years ago, I was also embarking on a new career as an art educator. Both a student and a teacher, I found myself immersed in two settings that slowly began to inform one another, but my transition into teaching was not an easy one. I completed requirements deemed necessary by the New York State Department of Education, certifying me to teach art to any student within the NYS public school system, and then accepted a position with the Board of Cooperative Educational Services. BOCES is a public school that provides educational services such as vocational and special education programs that complement component school districts. After just one day on the job I realized how unprepared I was to help the students I was now responsible for. I had been hired to teach special education students whose disabilities are so severe or disruptive that they can not be accommodated among the general education population. Each new crisis stymied me. How could this certification process allow me to be there without appropriate training?

At the same time, as a student, I was delving into the origins of the creative process, immersing myself in courses that challenged and questioned my own creativity. I found myself observing excellent teachers,
then trying to utilize their teaching strategies to engage my students, to encourage and enhance their own creative process. It has been an uphill battle with small successes along the way.

Today, with eighteen months of teaching behind me and my creativity studies nearly complete, I am closer to understanding my frustration. Due to current NYS teacher certification requirements, teachers of subjects considered non-academic: music, gym, art, and computer technology, are often left to cope with students' special needs on their own. These teachers are expected to differentiate curriculum and manage classroom behavior for students with a wide range of physical, emotional, and learning disabilities without any formal training or certification in special education. Because the art classroom tends to be a less structured environment, I struggle with behavior management while trying to provide the most creative atmosphere possible. What makes a good teacher? What is creativity? Is the creative process necessary for learning? How is a child identified as having special needs? How has society responded to disability in our schools? Are there teaching strategies common to effective teachers? Examining these topics will support my attempt to understand my place as a general art educator in a special education environment.

To begin answering these questions, I have researched how the special needs component of our education system has evolved. At the same time, understanding creativity and the creative process is vitally important in the training of effective art teachers. It is important to seek out, experiment
with, and assess different teaching methods and strategies to be an effective educator. Therefore, this paper begins with an in-depth look at the special needs movement, its inclusion in the American education system and the effect of federal legislation on society’s desire to teach everyone equally, regardless of disability. I will use the terms disability, special needs, and exceptionalities interchangeably. The paper then explores theories of creativity to help me define and present a working definition of the creative process that can be applied in a classroom environment. It goes on to present instruction methods and classroom strategies, with an emphasis on creativity, that have proved successful in teaching art to children with disabilities. I believe that these three avenues of inquiry provide a framework for, not only myself but, all teachers who desire to focus on student abilities and minimize their disabilities by using specific methods to foster creativity. This will enhance learning as well as provide a creative atmosphere in the classroom.
Origins of Special Education

An effective teacher must have a real understanding of her students and their specific needs. Examining how children with disabilities are integrated into our education system can lead to this understanding. In this section of the paper, I hope to gain an awareness of why special education today is structured the way it is.

This country's commitment to education for all began with the founding of Jamestown in 1607. Those settlers brought with them values and beliefs derived from their European roots and as a result, schooling in colonial America had the same class and gender distinctions common in Europe. Specifically, education was reserved for wealthy white males while ignoring females, minorities, and those less fortunate (Spring 23). These European ideas of class structure and privilege did not die easily as illustrated in the outspoken opinion of William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia. Berkeley supported this exclusion and in 1671 railed against both free public education and access to books:

“I thank God, there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have them these hundred years, for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government” (qtd. in Pulliam & Van Patten 56).

Fortunately, over time, attitudes began to change in regard to the importance of education.
Several factors intervened to bring about significant advances in public acceptance of universal schooling. First, as the colonies eventually became the United States, this country shaped its future through the creation of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. These laws would come to directly affect the future of American education. Secondly, land expansion of the United States provided opportunities and drastically changed the social landscape. Industrialization created jobs and contributed to the growth of cities but it also caused pollution, crime, and the development of urban slums. Many new immigrants did not speak English and were unaccustomed to the American way of life. The country needed a citizenry that could participate in decisions and contribute to the nation’s economy, but most people were functionally illiterate (Kauchak 149).

Slowly, viewpoints shifted and these changes spurred an historical attempt to make education available to all children in the United States. Under the influence of lawyer turned educator Horace Mann, Massachusetts passed the nation’s first compulsory school attendance law in 1852. By 1900, 32 other states had passed similar laws (Kauchak 150). The notion that public education, in the form of tax-supported schools, should be a right of all citizens began to take root. While public education had always been available since the early 1800’s, the decision to send children to school had largely been up to the parent. Most parents, especially those of limited means, chose to keep their children at home so they could contribute to the family’s survival. Compulsory attendance laws reshaped the face of
American education, from a system designed to meet the needs of children of the upper class to a multi-faceted system addressing the varied academic, social, and vocational needs of a diverse population (Lilly 3). This movement represents the initial impetus for much of special education as we know it today.

In colonial North America, conditions such as blindness, deafness, mental illness, and intellectual inferiority definitely existed. Persons exhibiting these disabilities would be isolated from society in the form of residential institutions. This institutionalized care consisted of methods based on accepted European methods: shackling, isolation, and bloodletting. The primary goal of these residential school programs was to provide corrective education that would alleviate the handicap condition and allow numbers of these disabled individuals to return to the community (Lilly 3). American reformers, such as Thomas Gallaudet and Samuel Howe, worked to establish public institutions that would provide treatment and formal education to persons with disability. Gallaudet founded the nation's first institution for the deaf in Connecticut in 1817 while Howe, in 1848, established an experimental school for the blind in Massachusetts. Together, they convinced donors and legislators the potential for teaching students previously considered uneducable helping forge more compassionate and optimistic attitudes regarding disability (Osgood 20-21). Two other factors also had a profound impact on the emergence of special
education: the establishment of the public school as an accepted and influential part of society, and the development of intelligence tests.

The structure of the public school system had been through significant changes throughout the mid to late 1800's. As schools became overcrowded, methods were put into place to improve school management and facilitate classroom behavior. One of these changes was to implement assigning students to classrooms according to chronological age. As Osgood notes, this graded school model represented an attempt to streamline school organization by establishing a prescribed educational ladder that students could ascend in mass numbers at a predictable pace (23). This proved problematic in terms of instruction and behavior management as the differences of disabled children began to negatively impact the progress of learning. Thus began the earliest examples of teachers and administrators requesting segregated settings for children who were different and unsuccessful in school. Rather than alter the curriculum to meet the needs of these students, the prevailing thought was to remove them from the classroom altogether. Such practices led to the establishment over the next several decades of a wide range of separate settings for students who overtaxed the efficient operation of schools and classrooms (Osgood 24).

Perhaps the most important and far-reaching event with respect to special education was the development of intelligence tests (Lilly 4). Frenchmen Theodore Simon and Alfred Binet developed tests to predict which children would require special assistance in school. Test items were
grouped by the age at which most children could complete them. The most famous and lasting outcome of this research is the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, first presented in 1916 and used to this day in a revised form. Intelligence testing held out the promise of a fair systematic means to assess ability. These tests were widely used throughout the United States because they were efficient, they could be administered on a wide scale, and they were thought of as scientific (Lilly 4). Intelligence tests appeared at a time when public schools faced increasing numbers of students providing a platform from which to label those children who deviated from the norm. This identification of the mildly retarded was a significant milestone in the history of special education. More importantly, Lilly argues, the basis for school problems was firmly established as existing in the individual, not the interaction between the individual and his school environment, an assumption that still permeates the categorical structure of special education services today (5). The school in which I work is an example of this school of thought. The tendency to identify students with disabilities and remove them from the classroom still continues today. As the reality of classroom size and student diversity affects the efficiency of instruction, administrators increasingly assign students, who don’t fall in the normal range of intellectual, physical, and behavioral parameters, to separate classroom environments. As I explain in the next section, integration will eventually be implemented but segregation of special needs students continued as the preferred education model for decades.
Transition to Inclusion

Educators eventually realized that segregated classes and services were not meeting the needs of students with disabilities so they searched for alternatives. This pursuit was occurring in the aftermath of the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka case. In this unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled that separate education facilities are inherently unequal and that racially segregated schools generated "...a feeling of inferiority" (Kauchak 169). This landmark decision was monumental for students with disabilities because the concept of equal opportunity was applicable to them as well as to students of minority background. This legislation provided greater constitutional protection for minorities and the precedents set in the Brown case resulted in sweeping changes in school policy and approaches to students with disabilities (Yell, Rogers, and Rogers 221).

The 1960's brought a consensus that including the special needs student in a regular classroom was no guarantee of being authentically integrated into the classroom community, and that segregation provided benefits for the child that could not be realized any other way (Osgood 50). It was thought that children with disabilities, or exceptionalities, in regular classrooms were likely to suffer rejection and isolation when they were inevitably unable to maintain the same academic and social pace of their regular education peers.
Questions concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of this school model eventually surfaced. By the early 1970's, many prominent educators both within and outside the field of special education were in open revolt against what had become an entrenched and mostly segregated system of education (Osgood 84). This period saw significant expansion in all areas of special education and was a time of self-examination for special educators and administrators alike. In 1968, Lloyd Dunn published a widely cited, landmark article titled, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded: Is Much of It Justifiable?" This article clearly questioned the character of special education and challenged educators to question, reflect, and critique their teaching practices and motives. In Dunn's view, the reliance on special classes for children identified as mildly retarded was not only ineffective but indefensible:

"I have loyally supported and promoted special classes for the last 20 years, but with growing disaffection...In my view, much of our past and present practices are morally and educationally wrong...Let us stop being pressured into continuing and expanding a special education program that we know now to be undesirable for many of the children we are dedicated to serve" (qtd. In Osgood 81).

Dunn's article would serve as a catalyst for reform within the special education community and resulted in a movement termed mainstreaming. Mainstreaming is the practice of moving students with exceptionalities from segregated settings into regular classrooms (Kauchak 98). This inevitable
move to integration, while a positive transformation, brought with it a whole new set of problems. One of the major issues stemming from the concept of mainstreaming centered on preparation of regular educators to assume the new responsibilities involved (Lilly 54). The specialized help that general education teachers were supposed to receive often wasn't provided leaving them to cope with students' special needs on their own. Also, students with exceptionalities were sometimes placed in general education classrooms without the adequate support and services they needed. In response to these issues, educators and legislators developed the concept of "least restrictive environment" (LRE), one that places students in as normal an educational setting as possible while still meeting their special academic, social, and physical needs (Kauchak 98). Both terms, *mainstreaming* and *LRE*, sparked controversy as the education community struggled to form a consensus as to their definitions.

There were skeptics of mainstreaming and LRE who questioned their impact on the structure and financing of public schools as well as the readiness of regular educators to adapt to the integrative approach. Interpreting these movements proved challenging as teachers recognized that children have educational strengths and weaknesses which dictate varying education programs. Schools had to demonstrate that they had done all they reasonably could to accommodate every child, despite disability, in the regular classroom as required by law.
The current buzzword in special education is inclusion, a comprehensive approach to educating students with exceptionalities. At its core, Osgood notes, inclusion embodies the right of every child to be educated in a common setting where her individual needs and those of all other children are addressed completely and effectively (198). Inclusion attempts to integrate students with special needs into the regular classroom through instructional adaptations. While this definition doesn't appear to be different from the concept of mainstreaming, McLesky & Waldron explain the bottom line throughout the mainstreaming movement has been that the student will adapt to the classroom, while inclusion assumes that general education curriculum, instructional practices, and classroom organization will change to meet the needs of all students (14). In other words, inclusion sets forth to eliminate that separation between regular and special education, to make the disabled child a true member of the general education community.

If nothing else, special education is a field of persistent development and refinement of research and data. It has continued to evolve as a result of legislative action, court decisions, and practical experience. While there is no imminent end to the controversy over the proper extent to which children with disabilities should be integrated in regular classrooms, the beginning of a new century does provide an opportunity to consider what has brought the debate to this point and assess what we may have learned so far. As a general educator teaching within a special education environment, my
perception is that the distinction between the two movements is not that clear. The reality of special education today is somewhere in between. In my view it is unrealistic to pursue full inclusion as there is definitely a population of special needs students who cannot function an entire school day within the parameters of a regular education classroom despite accommodations and modifications. Alternatives need to always be available for that inevitable group of students for whom the inclusion approach does not work. Ultimately, what every educator strives for is pursuing what is in the best interest of each child.
Identifying and Assessing the Special Needs Student

Historically, the process of identifying and labeling children with disabilities has always been controversial. The early emphasis was on the most obvious cases of severe mental retardation, incapacitating emotional disturbance, and sensory impairments. The severely handicapped bore the brunt of socially stereotyped and educationally irrelevant labels: they have been called idiots, imbeciles, mongoloids, and cretins; they have been described as trainable, sub-trainable, multi-handicapped, autistic, schizophrenic, and developmentally young (Lilly 32). The expectations attached to these labels could hardly have been esteem-building or purposeful. There are those involved in the process of diagnosis that maintain that being labeled as having a disability is potentially stigmatizing (MacMaster, Donovan, and MacIntyre 102). However, developing a wide range of effective programs that meet the needs of these students required a formal identification process. For children with obvious physical, sensory, or severe behavioral disabilities, the process was relatively simple; determining the characteristics and even basic categories of those considered mentally less capable proved complicated and problematic. Before mental testing was accepted as a common practice, the process was subjective, casual, and widely inconsistent; the introduction of mental testing brought rigidity and oversimplification. Categories such as backward, dull normal, dullard, borderline and moron overlapped and substituted for each other among districts, researchers, and public
agencies, making determinations of prevalence and characteristics difficult (Osgood 27).

Reform in identification and labeling was the result of legal action brought on by parents of special needs students. Protecting children's rights in the classification process, specifically the misuse of tests for identification purposes was the basis of the first cases to be tested in the courts. Diana v. State Board of Education in 1972 was considered a landmark case exclusive to special education. This suit was filed in Monterey County, California on behalf of nine Mexican-American children whose primary language was Spanish, but who were placed in educable mentally retarded (EMR) classes after being given intelligence tests in English. Once retested in their native language, seven of the nine children scored above the cut-off level for EMR services (Lilly 29). This emphasizes the negative impact misclassification can pose: it most likely will lead to inappropriate educational solutions. A second case of significance, also filed in 1972, was the Larry P. v. Riles case. The plaintiffs in this lawsuit sought to have the San Francisco school district refrain from using intelligence quotient (IQ) test scores as the primary criteria for EMR placement (Lilly 20). As a result, intelligence tests have become suspect as the sole determiner of disability. Litigation continues to bring significant pressure in drawing attention to the issues of nondiscriminatory testing and the use of multiple measures in evaluation and placement of children into special education classes.
How does a child transition from a regular education student to being identified as someone who may or may not qualify for special education services? What guidelines are used today to assess eligibility for these services? Who initiates the process? Assessment can be fraught with many problems; classification within a school system is a messy process influenced by many individuals and conducted in an environment of rationed resources (McLaughlin et al. 46). However, a system does need to be in place and there are several ways in which a child can be initially referred for evaluation. The following section is based on information gathered from personal interviews with two experienced special education teachers. They provide insight and an honest perspective on the day to day realities of teaching within this unique community of students.

First, public schools across the country hold screening sessions each spring for every rising kindergartner in their district. Nancy Van Voast, a special education teacher with fifteen years experience, explains that the purpose of these screenings is to identify children who may have disabilities or to determine who may be at risk of not achieving at state designated performance levels. Screenings might include diagnostic testing to evaluate vision, hearing, and speech capabilities. The rationale behind kindergarten screening is not to assess readiness for school but to discover those children who may have significant learning or emotional disabilities and therefore, are at risk for school failure. Early intervention is the goal. Second, teacher referrals represent a major source of students identified for possible
placement in a special education program. At some point, Van Voast notes, "... it becomes apparent that a child is experiencing academic failure. Unsuccessful performance can present itself in many ways: delay in speech patterns, social immaturity, an inability to sit at one's desk and complete tasks, a deficiency in reading skills, to name a few". The grade level at which this most commonly occurs varies greatly. It is important to understand that the younger a child is, the more manageable they are. As classroom sizes increase and available resources are cut, the consequence is that some children who would benefit from early special education services manage to perform adequately enough to get by. Another experienced teacher, Melanie McCarthy says, "They are promoted from one grade level to the next until their behavior or academic performance is severe enough to cause sufficient disruption in the classroom". The classroom teacher is obligated to utilize all available regular program resources—remedial specialists, school psychologists, resource rooms, bilingual programs, for example—to identify and implement alternative instructional strategies in an attempt to reverse the pattern of failure. The length of time a given strategy is pursued, before initiating another intervention and before referring for special education services, can vary from school district to school district depending on their philosophy and resources. If, and only if, a variety of alternative instructional interventions fail should there be a formal referral for special education assessment.
The next step is for the school district to notify the parents that a referral for special education services has been made. An evaluation process begins; the purpose is to make sure that the child cannot perform adequately in the provided instructional setting. The classroom teacher and representatives from any outside resources that were used (psychologist, therapist, counselor, remedial specialist) assemble documentation to support their concerns. According to Van Voast and McCarthy, this evidence would most likely include progress reports, grades, examples of writing and other pertinent class work, notes of student behavior, and evaluations. Simultaneously, a series of intelligence, aptitude, and achievement tests are administered by a psychologist. The specific tests given may vary as different school districts tend to rely on the preferences of the specialists they work with. The teachers interviewed for this paper were unanimous in their belief that these test scores are subjective depending on who is administering the test and by the motivations of the child. This notion of bias in the testing arena is supported by research:

Aspects of the test situation, aside from the child's actual skill or ability that might influence test scores include familiarity with the particular test or type of test (coaching and practice); the race and sex of the tester; the language style or dialect of the tester; the tester's expectations about the child's performance; distortions in scoring; time pressure or lack thereof; and attitudinal factors such as test anxiety, achievement motivation, self-esteem, and countercultural
motives to avoid conspicuously good performance (Heller, Holtsman, and Messick 54).

According to McCarthy, "...while most teachers acknowledge the controversy about the use and validity of testing, the reality is that current practice dictates it". Once testing is completed and the documentation gathered, a referral meeting takes place. There are State and Federal guidelines that dictate the criteria to be considered in order for the child to be classified as a special education student. The meeting must include the parents or legal guardians of the child, a school administrator (usually the principal), a classroom teacher, psychologist, related services personnel, and the child, when appropriate age. This comprehensive assessment meeting has multiple purpose: (1) to locate the source of the child's difficulties in the classroom, (2) to identify the child as having one or more of the recognized disabilities as defined in State and Federal laws, and (3) to ascertain if the child is unable to progress effectively in regular education as a result of the diagnosed disability.

There are two possible outcomes of the referral meeting. The child may be found not eligible for classification. In such cases, a written notification of the findings with a list of the meeting participants is provided to the parents within ten days of the meeting. There are legal channels for the parents or guardians to appeal the findings. The most likely outcome is that the child is found eligible for classification as a special education student. In this case, a date would be set for a team to design an Individual
Education Plan (IEP) for the child. To be discussed in a later chapter, the IEP is a federally mandated contract that provides direction to be followed by all individuals named in the plan.

The information gathered from these teacher interviews underscores the importance of regular education teachers being properly trained in assessment practices. VanVoast and McCarthy, both 7th and 8th grade teachers, stressed that early intervention is the key. In most cases, it is the regular education teacher who will discover a child with a potential emotional or learning disability and make a recommendation for further evaluation.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

As a new teacher, I learned rather quickly that government legislation has a strong presence in special education settings, but I wasn't clear on how that had happened or why. I was expected to present appropriate curriculum for each of my students according to a federally authorized document. This means I must submit a monthly set of lesson plans to my principal that include goals and objectives which meet the modifications and accommodations stated in their education plans. As a mandated team (teachers, case managers, counselors, psychologists, school administrators, and even lawyers) we must determine what services are needed to provide the best education possible for every student we are responsible for. This section of the paper is my attempt to better understand how federal policy impacts my classroom.

In 1975, the US Congress passed and former President Gerald Ford signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, better known as Public Law 94-142:

It is the purpose of this Act to assure that all handicapped children have available to them, within the time periods specified in Section 612(2)(B): a free appropriate public education and related services designed to meet their unique needs, to assure that the rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected, to assist states and localities to provide for the education of all handicapped children and to assess and assure the effectiveness of
efforts to educate handicapped children.

For several reasons, this legislation is considered to be the most important in the history of special education. PL 94-142 authorized, for the first time, federal funding to be provided directly to local school districts for support of special education services. Perhaps more importantly, it is permanent legislation, without an expiration date, a rarity in federal legislation that is indicative of the seriousness with which Congress approached this commitment (Lilly 50-51). The directives outlined in PL 94-142 continue to serve as guiding principles in serving students with special needs.

In hindsight, the long fought battle for fair and equal education for all, specifically the physically, mentally, learning, emotionally, and behaviorally disabled child, that finally resulted in PL 94-142 seems logical, inevitable and just. Despite the well-founded intentions of the law, PL 94-142 had its critics. The demand for all students to be served appropriately in a least restrictive environment with an individualized education plan at no cost to families presented monumental challenges in staffing, funding, curriculum development, and other logistical concerns (Osgood 118). Once again, the argument of integration versus segregation was at the forefront of the special education movement. Some educators felt the law did not push hard enough for inclusion; others took a more critical view of the law and its potential negative effects on public schools. These ongoing debates emphasized the contradiction of trying to mainstream or integrate
exceptional children within the traditional two-tier structure of special and regular education. Susan and William Stainback, key advocates for fundamental change in the education of children with disabilities, argued that the mandates of PL 94-142 were important steps for exceptional children:

It is now time in the historical evolution of special education to consider merging with regular education. This move could help ensure that all students not only receive an appropriate education, but that they receive it as an inherent right and not as a special provision... A dual system of education can serve to legitimize exclusion of some students from regular education, reduce opportunity for equal participation by other students, and sanction other forms of discrimination... Thus, it is important to explore, suggest, and attempt change (qtd. in Osgood 109-110).

Critics felt that PL 94-142 did not address the training requirements for special education teachers. As a result, Fuchs maintains, teacher training continued to be divided between regular education teachers and special education teachers in separate settings with little consultation or sharing of knowledge (115). I submit there continues to be a huge disconnect between what a state may require for teacher certification and what information that teacher needs to be effective in the classroom, especially in terms of the regular education teacher in a special education classroom. I believe this law, even after several amendments, does not sufficiently address the topic
of support services for regular education teachers who find themselves working in a special education environment. I am referring specifically to support in the form of teacher assistants and teacher aides. Furthermore, while PL 94-142 strengthened the importance of categories of disability and the need for definitive diagnosis and labeling of individual special needs, opponents argued that this practice would further stigmatize and separate those students from being genuinely part of the general education community. These categories contributed to their isolation and made extremely difficult the implementation of truly integrative programs (Osgood 120).

It is interesting to note that even President Gerald Ford had reservations about the ability of PL 94-142 to live up to its purported goals and objectives, even as he signed it into law:

I have approved S.6, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Unfortunately, this bill promises more than the Federal Government can deliver, and its good intentions could be thwarted by the many unwise provisions it contains. Everyone can agree with the objective stated in the title of this bill—education all handicapped children in our Nation. The key question is whether the bill will really accomplish that objective. Even the strongest supporters of this measure know as well as I that they are falsely raising the expectations of the groups affected by claiming authorization levels that are excessive and unrealistic.
In 1990, this bill was amended and renamed the Individual with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA, as it is better known, additional amendments were made in 1997. IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). For better or worse, over the last thirty years, this far-reaching, comprehensive law has changed how every public school, every administrator, every teacher conducts business and holds them accountable.
**Individual Education Program**

The two most basic rights guaranteed by the IDEA are that every disabled student is entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). To ensure a FAPE, a team of professionals and parents or guardians meet to determine the student’s unique educational needs, develop goals for the student, and determine the placement, program modifications, testing accommodations, and counseling needs through the development of an Individual Education Program (IEP). I am distinguishing the IEP for further discussion because it has significant impact on how teachers teach and how a student’s school day is structured. I refer to IEPs daily for guidance in meeting a student’s goals and objectives, for information about specific diagnoses and how that may affect my lesson plans. The first week of school, every teacher is given a printed copy of an IEP for each student she has. An IEP is a legally binding document that is required to be reviewed on an annual basis but my experience is that counselors and teachers evaluate student behavior and progress using the IEP continually throughout the school year. In New York State, school districts now have the opportunity to participate in IEP Direct, a confidential, on-line website that provides access to student IEPs for educators, counselors, administrators, and support service personnel. This recent technology allows for immediate retrieval of information and the ability to make adjustments to an IEP that will be available instantly to those individuals involved with that particular student. A rigorous
approach to documentation is consistent with the demands placed on special education to provide evidence that certain outcomes have been achieved (Paul and Churton 283). To that end, IDEA specified what information had to be included in an IEP. It should be noted that IEPs differ in format from school district to school district. For the following section please refer to appendix 1.

There are 10 major headings in an IEP:

1) Student and Guardian Information: In addition to basic contact information, this section provides space to list medications and the conditions for which they are prescribed.

2) Recommended Classification and Placement Information: This section provides the determination of eligibility for special education services. If the IEP team finds the child eligible, they must then classify the child. The classifications are: Learning Disabled (LD), Speech Impaired (SI), Visually Impaired (VI), Traumatic Brain Injured (TBI), Mentally Retarded (MR), Emotionally Disturbed (ED), Hearing Impaired (HI), Orthopedically Impaired (OI), Autistic, and Other Health Impaired (OHI), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Pervasive Development Disorder (PDD). Dates for the student's next review and reevaluation are noted in this section.

3) Recommended Special Education Programs and Services: This is a statement of the specific special education and related services (counseling, speech therapy, for example) to be provided to the child
and the extent to which the child will participate in regular education programs. For example, this particular student is recommended for inclusion in a special class of a 6:1:1 ratio (6 students to 1 teacher to 1 teacher assistant) 6 hours a day, 5 days a week. This allows for 1 class period a day to be in the regular education program such as art, gym, or computer class. This student is also provided individual counseling once a week for 30 minutes. If any testing accommodations were recommended, they would be recorded in this section. Testing accommodations might include extending the time allowed for the administration of a test, providing a separate location for a test to be administered individually, having test directions read to the student, allowing for the use of a word processor, among others.

4) Present Levels of Academic Achievement, Functional Performance and Individual Needs: A student's current level of performance which describes the effects of a child's disability on academic areas (reading, math, writing) and nonacademic areas (social development, physical development, daily living skills). This performance must be measured and documented. The IEP team would assess the student's present levels and abilities in each area and then specify needs and goals. The results of any intelligence and standardized assessment tests are recorded here.

5) Measurable Post-Secondary Goals
6) Coordinated Set of Transition Activities: These two sections relate to the student's goals for life beyond school and are only required for those students age 15 and older. Recommendations are made as to the type of diploma the student is pursuing (Regents, GED, High School), career option are specified and a determination is made as to whether this child can live independently.

7) Committee Meeting Information: This portion of the IEP lists those present at the Committee on Special Education (CSE) meeting and lists a brief overview of their recommendations.

8) Other Options Considered: If any other options were considered for services or education placement they are noted here with an explanation.

9) Reporting Progress to Parents: As mandated by IDEA, consistent communication between school and family is required. In this particular case, a written notification will be made 4 times a year.

10) Measurable Annual Goals: This section of the IEP lists very specific benchmarks, goals, and objectives that describe achievements that will be made in each area. Assessments must then be conducted after a pre-specified period of time, generally one year, to ensure that goals have been met.

An IEP certainly lives up to its name; it is truly an individual education plan that functions like a roadmap to guide the child, the family, and the involved professionals towards positive educational results. The purpose of
this intense documentation is to verify that an instructional program or behavioral intervention actually results in improvements in an individual’s behavior (Paul and Churton 283). Administrators and teachers are held accountable for following the modifications, accommodations, goals and objectives dictated in every education plan. The IEP process is a critical element in assuring effective teaching, learning, and better results for all children with disabilities.
No Child Left Behind Act

Promising to complicate the direction and intensify the tone of debate about special education reform as we enter a new century is the landmark federal education law, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Signed into law by President George Bush in 2001, the principles and strategies of NCLB include increased accountability for States, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; more flexibility for States and local education agencies in the use of federal education dollars; and a stronger emphasis on reading. With the enactment of this law, the federal government expanded its role significantly; requiring states to test more, set more ambitious improvement goals for their schools, and to prescribe sanctions for schools that fail to meet these goals (Goertz 74). It is yet too soon to discern how this massive piece of legislation will specifically affect special education yet there are indications that several of its provisions will have a significant impact on the way administrators and other school authorities approach the idea of the inclusive classroom (Osgood 193).

Even though NCLB is primarily a law for students in regular education, it mandates that students with disabilities will receive genuine access to the general education curriculum. Its promise that students with disabilities will achieve at the same level as other students is momentous for disabled students (Allbritten, Mainzer, and Ziegler 153). School districts are to be held directly accountable for the learning progress of all students, explicitly
including students with disabilities. Schools are now responsible for improving performance of all student groups, so that every child will be performing at proficiency level by the year 2014. Remember, IDEA requires schools to set annual goals and chart student progress, the emphasis being on the process of education. NCLB is attempting to control that process by imposing specified outcomes, the emphasis now being on the end product or more accurately, test scores. I question the motive behind such an impossible task. Challenging and encouraging disabled students to achieve their best is admirable; enforcing exact and perhaps, unattainable, results is defeating.

A component of this mandate is that nearly all special education students have to take the same state-wide assessment tests as regular education students. Critics point out that such testing is not necessarily appropriate. Most students with disabilities have received inadequate school support and services for success at grade level (Wasta 299). NCLB requires schools to report the annual learning progress of students with disabilities, along with other minorities, separately from other groups of students. According to Goertz, while states support the concept of disaggregated data to focus attention on the performance of student subgroups they do not believe that setting annual performance targets for students with disabilities will increase their academic achievement (75). NCLB refers to these separate student groups as cells and to the annual performance report as adequate yearly progress (AYP). Put simply, the AYP
provision of NCLB requires school districts to demonstrate each year that students with disabilities are making substantial progress toward complete proficiency in the general curriculum by the 2013-2014 school year. Built into NCLB are benchmarks that schools must meet in order to meet AYP guidelines. Schools that do not meet AYP goals for at least two years in a row face consequences that increase in severity for each year the AYP target is missed.

Advocates would say that the intended goal of AYP is laudable: ensuring that special needs students catch up with their peers within a specific timeframe. However, as considerable as that promise seems, the reality of NCLB’s structure is that mandated performance will probably have different and unintended consequences (Allbritten, Mainzer, and Ziegler 153). The likely scenario is that the majority of disabled students will not meet these academic target goals and as a result, their schools will not achieve AYP. Are we ready to go back to a time when children with special needs are again stigmatized for their differences?

Another provision of NCLB as it relates to special education is the requirement that all teachers be highly qualified as defined in the law. A highly qualified teacher has fulfilled her state’s certification requirements, holds at least a bachelor’s degree from a four-year institution, and demonstrates competence in each core academic subject area in which she teaches. In most instances, special education teachers give instruction in multiple academic subjects throughout the day. There is now a scramble
among school districts to get these teachers dually certified: in special education and in the core subject they teach. Many of these teachers will need multi-certification resulting in fewer and fewer qualified candidates. It is realistic to expect that the scarcity of highly qualified special education teachers will require districts to develop incentives to attract and retain qualified special education professionals. At the very least, districts that can afford to provide more money will attract the most qualified special education staff, to the detriment of poorer districts with greater special education needs (Sorrentino and Zirkel 27).

In September of 2007, NCLB is scheduled for reauthorization, providing an opportunity to make it more workable and more responsive to the real needs of our children, especially those with disabilities. A group of ten Democratic United States Senators are calling for major changes to NCLB in a letter written to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) committee. They are asking HELP to consider, among others, the effects of inadequate federal funding on school districts to meet NCLB standards and the financial burden on those same districts for NCLB data collection. According to the National Education Association, the lawmakers state:

"We have concluded that the testing mandates of No Child Left Behind in their current form are unsustainable and must be overhauled significantly during the reauthorization process beginning this year...While we all agree that states and districts should be held accountable for academic outcomes and continue working toward
closing the achievement gap among their students, federal education law should not take the form of a one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter approach.”

According to Stan Karp, every one of the fifty states has introduced legislation rejecting all or part of NCLB and more than ten thousand schools have been identified as needing improvement, resulting in an escalating series of sanctions. This is indicative of the real need for an honest critique of this legislation as it stands now. NCLB practically guarantees that the presence of special education students in a school will contribute to that school’s failure to meet AYP guidelines, increasing the already existing anti-special education bias (Allbritten, Mainzer, and Ziegler 158). Over the last 200 years, as a society, we have made much progress in advancing the constitutional rights and civil liberties of the disabled. We would be remiss not to take advantage of an occasion to further that progress. The reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act is an opportunity for a comprehensive transformation of an education law that has commendable intentions but lacks realistic methods for implementing effective, successful learning outcomes for every child.
Defining Creativity

Because I see the importance of creativity everyday, my intent in this next section is to make clear accepted models of creativity and to present my own definition as it relates to my personal experience as educator and artist. I will offer teaching strategies that help to provide the creative classroom environment that I strive for. I am intrigued by the creative process. Truly understanding what creativity is, how it develops, and where it comes from, can allow one to manipulate that process.

Where does the creative process originate? What comes first: innovation, imagination, invention, or creativity? Clearly, these are highly interrelated concepts that are often used interchangeably to describe the same idea. Scholars describe a sequence of events that explains how creativity typically occurs. There are numerous recognized models and theories of creativity, two of the earliest models were introduced by John Dewey in 1920 and Graham Wallace in 1926. Dewey’s model of problem solving incorporated “...five logical steps: (1) a difficulty is felt, (2) the difficulty is located and defined, (3) possible solutions are considered, (4) consequences of these solutions are weighed, and (5) one of the solutions is accepted” (Starko 23). The creativity models that followed are essentially variations that emanate from those five actions. Graham Wallace condensed his process into a series of four steps that consist of preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification (Starko 23). The words that Wallace chose to illustrate the creative process are descriptive, precise, and they resonate for me as I
consider my own creative process. Preparation is a time for focusing on the problem to be solved, to gather resources, and to generate possible solutions. Incubation refers to the unconscious work that occurs while unrelated tasks are being performed. Illumination represents thoughts coming together for a solution, a phase of recording concrete ideas or creating a product. Verification is an opportunity to present these findings and products, to question the results and refine the process.

In 1963, Alex Osborn developed the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model that evolved into the Parnes/Osborne model after several theorists, Parnes, Isaksen and Treffinger, contributed their ideas over a period of twenty years. The final version of CPS has expanded into three components that are then divided into six distinct stages. The three components are: Understanding the Problem, Generating Ideas, and Planning for Action. The six stages are: Mess-Finding, Data-Finding, Problem-Finding, Idea-Finding, Solution-Finding, and Acceptance-Finding. These stages require the problem solver to use both divergent and convergent thinking (Starko 25). By definition, divergent thinking is the intellectual ability to think of many diverse ideas and convergent thinking uses that same ability to evaluate those ideas. Creativity encompasses both a process of making and a process of assessment. When engaged in creative thought, one must simultaneously produce and assess, then generate and judge the products it fabricates (Paul and Elder 34). I would add that divergent thinking is essential to the uniqueness of creative results and convergent thinking is
fundamental to the selection process. In other words, creativity requires both imaginative and intellectual abilities.

E. Paul Torrance, an educational psychologist and a leading researcher in the field of creativity, described creative thinking as the process of forming ideas or hypotheses, testing hypotheses, adventurous thinking, and communicating the results (Developing 32). I find the most original aspect of Torrance's theory to be the idea that sharing what has been discovered or produced is an essential component of his definition. Does this mean the idea or result is not valid if it has not been revealed or communicated to someone else?

A recent theory of the creative process that is innovative yet encompasses many elements of earlier theories is presented by Anna Craft. She explains that it is comprised of five stages: (1) Impulse, (2) The Unconscious, Intuitive, Spiritual and Emotional, (3) Being Imaginative: Problem Finding/Solving, Thinking, (4) Risk-Taking and the Creativity Cycle, and (5) Creativity as an Approach to Life. The most interesting feature of this modern model is the creativity cycle, also comprised of five stages: preparation, letting go, germination, assimilation, and completion (Craft 32-33). The preparation stage is a readiness for creativity; making a space for preparing oneself emotionally. Letting go is surrendering control and not being concerned about the lack of direction. Germination is a period of great energy as much of the work takes place. Assimilation is an internal activity when ideas are evaluated. Completion is ideas being
realized and presented. The most distinctive piece of this creativity model is its spiral configuration rather than the conventional circle. This implies that "...creativity increases and multiplies. Creativity leads to more creativity. Thus the cycle begins again, only this time there is more than one cycle generated by the previous one" (Craft 34). My own experience validates this model: being creative in one aspect of my life invariably leads to creativity in other areas.

Modern psychologists disagree about the origins of creativity: some emphasize processes that occur subconsciously while others insist that the creative process is based on cognitive thought. There are many individual theories about creativity but the high esteem with which the humanists view human nature distinguishes them from the psychoanalysts and the behaviorists.

The psychoanalysts consider human behavior to be determined through the interaction of conscious and unconscious drives. "Freud and other psychoanalysts have believed that the unconscious plays a significant role in creativity" (Rothenberg 51). However, as Rothenberg goes on to argue, a problem arises if we accept Freud's definition of unconscious:

"...elements derived from the individual's past which are kept out of awareness for a reason. These elements, designated as drives, wishes, memories, and affects remain unconscious to the individual himself because they are unacceptable, either personally or socially, and therefore cannot be tolerated in consciousness (51)".
This explanation of unconscious undermines the process of creativity as it does not allow for innovative thought or for making healthy, logical conclusions. I cannot relate to a relationship between creativity and trauma, neuroses, and suppressed desires. This may account for creative activity in a few individuals but I do not believe it is relevant for most.

The behaviorists view human activities as the result of a series of stimuli and responses and that creativity is basically a by-product of one's environment. In addition, behaviorists support the notion that there are no truly original behaviors or ideas, only inevitable results of one's experience. B. F. Skinner, considered the leader of this school of thought, wrote a famous paper entitled "A Lecture on 'Having' a Poem" in which he declared "...that a poet is no more responsible for the contents or structure of a poem than a chicken is responsible for laying an egg (qtd. in Starko 35)." This view does not allow for conscious decision making or for the notion of growing beyond one's environment. It does not provide an explanation for individual thought or innovation. Behaviorism fails to explain the deeper dimensions of the creative process: the desire to create, the source of imagination, and the mystery of inspiration.

The humanists focus on normal growth and the development of human health, viewing creativity as the result of well-adjusted mental development. The ideas of Abraham Maslow, regarded as the father of the humanist movement, are quite relevant as they pertain to creativity in today's classrooms. His concept that creativity is "a fundamental characteristic,
inherent in human nature, a potentiality given to all or most human beings at birth, which most often is lost or buried..." (Starko 37) is significant for educators as it implies a skill that can be revived, nurtured, and enhanced in an environment that encourages creative thinking. Maslow’s assessment that the ability to express ideas freely, without criticism, is vital for any creative process to occur. My developing sense of creativity and teaching philosophy conform closely to this humanist doctrine. These ideas support the framework for my definition of the creative process.

Three years ago, I began an examination of creativity. I set out to define it, to understand the specific stages associated with the process, and to utilize that information to inform my artistic and teaching practices. Initially, I was certain that creativity was synonymous with a tangible product. I perceived creativity to be a concrete concept, that a visible definitive result validated the process. In order to construct a new definition, I began reflecting on my understanding of the creative process. I transformed my initial perception into a broader awareness that is accepting of other approaches. I end my formal investigation of creativity and the creative process with a profound respect for the scholars, psychologists, and educators who laid the groundwork from which I built upon. I am confident that I have assembled a practical, working definition of creativity that works for me as both an artist and a teacher.

I am drawn to the concise words of Graham Wallace’s creativity model: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. These four stages,
described earlier in this paper, represent distinct phases that take place when I am involved in a creative endeavor. I expect and rely on these stages to occur as they confirm I am making progress towards a goal. I strongly agree with Anna Craft's theory of the creativity cycle and its reference to a spiral effect (34). I believe in the notion that creativity begets more creativity.

The first step in any creative process is to accept challenge. Allowing oneself to be challenged involves a willingness to risk failure. Rollo May says that creative courage "...is the most important kind of courage of all" (21). He makes the point that our changing world desperately needs this kind of courage. Technology, engineering, government, the arts, business, and education: all of these areas "...require courageous persons to appreciate and direct this change" (May 22). Challenge can be either an external or internal force that pushes us to reach for something beyond our comfort zone.

The biggest obstacle to thinking creatively may be a willingness to consider many possible solutions for any given problem. Regular participation in creative activity contributes to a self-perception of well-being. One must be willing to analyze ideas, evaluate their usefulness, and converge on a solution; to follow multiple avenues of exploration without worrying about being right or wrong. My experience has proved that a negative result from one pursuit invariably leads to a new possibility. This is an opportunity to exchange one idea for another, to make choices, to veer
in unexpected directions. This element of the creative process is similar to Nachmanovitch’s idea of play: "...all creative acts are forms of play, because we can acquire technique only by the practice of practice, by persistently experimenting and playing with our tools and testing their limits and resistances" (42).

Within the stage of challenge and practice, it is necessary to experience intermittent periods of downtime. During times of intense creative thought, I know the value of walking away and leaving the work behind for a short time. Inevitably, this time away is forced upon me by outside obligations but the outcome is usually valuable. This supports the second stage of Wallace’s creativity model: incubation. Wallace theorized, “during incubation, the individual does not consciously think about the problem. He or she goes about other activities while, at some level, the mind continues to consider the problem or question” (Starko 23). I have experienced this notion of unconscious work and believe it is an integral part of the creative process.

Lastly, environment is integral to my creative process. It is necessary to put oneself in the best possible situation for creativity to take place. An atmosphere that does not provide ample quiet time for reflection and introspection can hamper creativity. Expectations and demands from others for right answers and quick results can limit our creativity as can over-stimulation from mass media. Environment can be a literal, physical
space or a state of being. Creativity requires patience and a willingness to work for an effective outcome.

I align myself with R. K. Elliot’s definition that places creativity very close to imagination. “He does not tie the concept of creativity to an end product, but only to a ‘pursuit’—in other words, to the process” (Craft 8). This divisive aspect of creativity research--product vs. process—is the area in which I made the biggest transformation. I conclude that the process: a progression of ideas, experimentation, and an openness to reject unsuccessful outcomes, is more important than the resulting product. My new definition would now include a willingness to be challenged; the ability to imagine new ideas and formulate them into unique combinations; the importance of unconscious work; the value of creating an environment conducive to creative thought, and an emphasis on process over product.
When very young children begin making marks upon their world, they are delighted with what they have accomplished, but when they enter school, all too often something changes. Sandra Kerka estimates that creativity diminishes by 40% between the ages of 5 and 7; at these ages, formal schooling begins, and there is some agreement that education inhibits the transformation of the creative process. The creation of art is no longer self-directed but teacher-directed, and the chance of unconditional praise from significant adults diminishes. Unconditional praise, for the young child, is a worthy goal, for both parents and educators, because it fosters a sense of confidence. Confidence, in turn, promotes a willingness to experiment without fear of judgment. This can certainly be achieved in a traditional school setting if the teacher is willing to create an environment that highlights the artistic process over the final product.

The typical adult response when a child proudly displays a colorful finger-painting or a drawing of their family is: “What a good job!”, “How creative you are!” This reaction reinforces the idea that the expected solution is the only solution worthy of reward and praise: pretty picture + pleasing colors + recognizable shapes = the right answer. This approach hinders the creative process and does not allow for alternative answers. Children learn that in the eyes of their teachers, there is a right and a wrong way to make art. The influence that teachers have over their students and
the reality of a teacher's presence are powerful. What we teach and how we teach it are extremely important and have far-reaching implications.

I now present several approaches to teaching that inspire and sustain creative thinking in my students. These include: 1) teaching with an emphasis on the process and not the outcome, 2) maintaining a non-competitive classroom, 3) giving each student the space to create, 4) setting limits, and 5) incorporating Visual Thinking Strategies into the daily classroom conversation. The educator who wants to nurture creative thought in her students must seamlessly combine these approaches and transform them into a path towards creativity.

Most parents and teachers have used a reward system as enticement for a desired outcome. While we may get that expected result, the child learns to produce only the expected because she knows that a particular response will result in compensation, in a school setting this means a good grade. Torrance supports this concept:

Even when rewards and punishments succeed temporarily in motivating learning, they may not supply the inner stimulation necessary for continued effort and achievement. Such motivation is usually short-lived and requires continuous reapplication to sustain effort on the part of the learner. The inner stimulation from creative ways of learning makes this unnecessary (Incubation 13).

One can not fault a child for desiring a positive outcome but producing solely for a particular grade leaves no incentive for exploring other avenues.
There have been studies that prove "...an expected reward decreases their motivation, undermines the globally assessed quality of their performance, and makes them much less likely to take risks or to approach a task with a playful or experimental attitude" (Hennessey and Amabile 12). I suggest that the response to this negative outcome is to not offer rewards. This is especially true in an art classroom environment. Children should feel free to create without fear of judgment; rewards equal judgment because they infer a job well done. The reality for most educators is that we are required to assess student work and assign a numeric value. Emphasizing the behavior and not the end product, I grade the process not the outcome. This allows for acceptance of all solutions to a given design problem. I underscore the value of each student's creative process by downplaying the importance of the completed project. My students know that everyone will receive the same grade for a finished piece—it is the individual assessment for participation, effort, and behavior that has the potential to negatively affect their grade. For example, if a student chooses to not contribute to class discussions, refuses to complete class assignments, or exhibits behavior that is disrespectful and unsafe, these situations will result in a negative evaluation. I believe this approach emphasizes the process over the product.

Competition in a classroom setting arises when comparisons are made. Comparative thinking is an essential part of learning yet, comparing one artistic creation to another does not inherently dismiss either one. When
comparison breeds competition and the negative connotations that usually follow, there are problems. Comparative thinking is necessary to determine different points of view. However, comparing creative works in order to determine what is “the best” or “the most creative” is not essential to learning. It is detrimental to the self-esteem and creative flow of most students. There is much more to be gained through class discussion about all the works as a whole.

“The mere presence of a watchful audience can be all it takes to undermine intrinsic interest and creativity of performance. If you want to lessen your students chances of coming up with creative solutions, make your presence felt at all times” (Hennessey and Amabile 14). I am less self-conscious and more comfortable performing without someone peering over my shoulder. Students should understand that making mistakes is part of the creative process; they should feel secure in taking risks. However, leaving a room of students to work alone would be an unsafe situation for most student populations. The challenge is to create a classroom setting where every child has ample space to work but can avail help if needed. A certain level of surveillance is necessary in order for students to feel safe in the classroom.

Flexibility is a key characteristic of an effective teacher. I keep an open mind when a student insists on pushing the boundaries of a given project but there is validity to setting some limits. I understand the restrictiveness of too many limits, “...but without them art is not possible. They provide us
with something to work with and against” (Nachmanovitch 80-81). When no structure is provided, learning and emotionally disabled students have difficulty focusing. They flounder without parameters to work within; too many choices can be paralyzing for them. When teachers fail to impose limits, students tend to hand in less creative work. I agree with Nachmanovitch who offers this insight, “One rule that I have found to be useful is that two rules are more than enough...The unconscious has infinite repertoires of structure already; all it needs is a little external structure on which to crystallize” (83-83). My teaching philosophy includes restricting my student’s choices minimally and being flexible.

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a visual arts program that teaches thinking, communication skills, and visual literacy. VTS is the result of collaboration and partnership between Philip Yenawine, a museum educator, and Abigail Housen, a developmental psychologist. I was introduced to VTS during an internship at the Tang Teaching Museum on the Skidmore College campus. VTS, utilized in every aspect of the museum’s education program, is a highly effective method in which to engage museum viewers of all ages. It is also a wonderful teaching tool in the classroom. VTS teaches students ways to examine works of art and to construct personal meaning from them. They look at images and, through facilitated conversation, begin to develop a sense of connection to the art. VTS builds critical and creative thinking skills that can be used in many
settings. Presenting at a conference in Portugal, Yenawine describes the VTS process in this way:

The teacher asks specific open-ended questions about an image, and acts as a facilitator throughout the process, encouraging participation by all and making it clear that all responses are valuable. Facilitation stresses that expansive, reflective observation and thought are the desired behaviors, nor drawing definitive, right or wrong conclusions. The teacher links student's comments, making their interactions obvious, showing how listening and responding to others enriches the conversation and thus the examination of the work.

VTS invariably draws out the shy students because everyone feels safe to contribute to the conversation as they discover all answers are validated equally. As a result, VTS builds an atmosphere of tolerance and respect.

I use these five approaches to teaching to nurture and encourage creativity in my students. This requires communicating high expectations which reinforces that I believe they are capable. By trusting in their abilities to attempt to meet these expectations, the results sometimes surprise these young artists. I can not say that every day produces astounding, creative work; the victories are small and sporadic. I am making headway: I hear it in their voices and see it in their art making. A teacher inspires creativity by prompting students to think deeply, to pose questions, to pursue ideas from many perspectives and by allowing them to show their understanding of essential curriculum concepts in their own ways (Black 68). A teacher
can ensure an atmosphere of mutual respect and emotional support for their students by listening to their ideas and responding thoughtfully. If students see creativity, intelligence, happiness, professional expertise, inspiration, and motivation in their teacher, they will take notice. Effective teaching can guide young people to the possibilities of developing these qualities in themselves. This journey into my creative process has been insightful and rewarding. I continue to help my students engage in their own process.
Maintaining a Creative Classroom Environment

Research suggests that teachers and students believe a classroom environment which enhances creativity provides students with choices, accepts different ideas, boosts self-confidence and focuses on students' strengths and interests (de Souza Fleith 148). My favorite place to be in high school was the art room: it was a safe haven, a comfortable atmosphere where I felt free to create and experiment. Not until many years later did I come to realize the impact my art teacher and that particular space had on my life. I know now that the creative process can be enhanced through an optimum learning environment. Educators can assist creative growth by showing students an appreciation of their own personal potential, respecting unusual ideas, rewarding originality, motivating them and acknowledging their creative potential (Demir 2). A teacher can implement specific practices in the classroom to stimulate creative thinking. Current research suggests that the encouragement of creativity in the classroom is related more to the instructor's methods and approach than to the actual subject matter (Driver 29). The ideas I present are not meant to be a comprehensive list but a collection of guiding principles gathered from personal experience and professional relationships. While my perspective is that of an art educator, these ideas would engage creativity in any subject area. These include: professional development, teacher modeling, positive attitude, room layout, and flexibility.
What better example to set for our students than to practice life-long learning? A teacher’s enthusiasm for both teaching and learning does not go unnoticed by her students. It is the teacher’s responsibility to grow as practitioners, stay current in their field, and continually evolve as professionals (Polk 23). Being knowledgeable about one’s field is paramount. It is important for a teacher to share learning experiences with her students; to make them aware we are using what we are learning. Over the last several years, I have been sharing stories about my graduate studies with my students. I believe they understand learning does not stop after high school or college. Torrance goes a step further and suggests that knowledge beyond one’s particular field of interest is useful in promoting original ideas, “...it seems that much of our pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge has resulted from a specialist in one field borrowing an idea or a technique from another special field and applying it to his own (Developing 45)”. This notion of transformation is important for sustaining creativity: combining one idea into another allows the possibility to see new meanings and applications.

The practice of teacher modeling or demonstration is integral to the process of learning. I give demonstrations of new methods and techniques almost daily. Doris Guay points out that modeling art behaviors, demonstrating techniques, and showing completed examples of art products does not stifle creativity but rather enhances it (223). Expecting my students to learn a new skill without an opportunity to see it demonstrated
proficiently can lead to feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy. Modeling has demonstrated its role, as compared to verbal instruction alone, as a valued method of instruction (Polk 27). I show both correct and incorrect techniques when modeling which establishes a point from which they can begin their own exploration. A hands-on demonstration appeals to the visual and kinesthetic learner; an instructive video can usually achieve the same purpose.

The power of positive thinking during the creative process is essential, both from an internal attitude and from the actions of others. A self-confident attitude contributes to being open to new ideas and experiences. I know the value of conveying a positive attitude towards my students and their work. Creating an environment free of criticism and harsh judgment allows them to focus on the artistic learning process and not the final product. Torrance supports this type of teaching when he writes about a creative classroom in which there is “an atmosphere of...permissiveness, a sense of security, an absence of fear...” that helps develop creative thinking (Developing 37). Regularly providing positive feedback and adopting a supportive teaching style will boost student confidence in their creative abilities.

One obstacle to creating an environment conducive to creative thinking can be the physical space of the classroom. Many schools are filled beyond capacity and pressed for space with dwindling resources. I teach art in a windowless, carpeted room with no sink. It is not ideal but there are a
variety of strategies that can be implemented to improve the surroundings. The creation of an enhancing, harmonious and meaningful environment can contribute to the development of creative potential (de Souza Fleith 149).

Orchestrating a class seating arrangement that allows for both group and individual work space is important. A table with side partitions that is set apart from the common work space can be used when a student needs a break from distractions. Students should have easy access to a wide variety of resources and materials: art supplies, tools, books, games, and visual references. Accessibility to these items makes clean-up the responsibility of the students. Ample wall space for viewing artwork provides an ideal setting for class discussion and critique.

While all students should have equal exposure to the curriculum, they may require different levels of instruction and support in order to be successfully engaged. An effective teacher learns to be flexible by implementing various strategies into their lessons that will both support the lowest performer and challenge the highest performer. Effective teaching applies different instructional methods that cater to the needs of all types of learners: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Flexible, creative teaching requires being on the lookout for students' responses to the subject matter, to one another, to questions, to problems, to any aspect of the living, dynamic gestalt that constitutes the experience of teaching and learning (Hansen 60). Flexibility requires being responsive to the changes that occur in the classroom, sometimes minute by minute, and responding in an
appropriate manner. A teacher needs to be willing to discard a planned lesson in lieu of an impromptu activity that might better suit the needs of her students at that particular moment.

These five strategies embody the core ideas of my teaching philosophy and they provide a structure upon which I try to sustain and encourage creativity in my classroom. "Classrooms which foster creativity also operate in a special way conceptually. They allow mistakes and encourage experimentation, openness and risk-taking" (Craft 116). A teacher who embodies this philosophy is modeling a creative spirit for her students. I hope that I am having a positive impact on them and possibly on choices they will make later in life.
Teaching Art to the Special Needs Student

Research indicates that over 85% of K-12 art educators are working with students who present academic, behavioral, physical, and sensory disabilities and more than 70% of those teachers surveyed felt completely unprepared to teach in an integrated classroom (Nyman and Jenkins 54). There is a disconnect between what is required for art instructor certification and the expectation to accommodate a diverse group of learners. The New York State Department of Education lists the following as criteria that must be met before receiving certification as a K-12 Art Instructor: 1) Completion of a New York State approved 4 year fine art or art education program, 2) Completion of 2 workshops: Child Abuse Identification and School Violence Intervention and Prevention, 3) Successful passing of 2 New York State Teacher Certification Exams: Liberal Arts & Science Test and Elementary Assessment of Teaching Skills, 4) Fingerprint clearance, and 5) Proof of citizenship status. While worthy, I find it problematic that some level of special education training is not included. According to Guay, most art teachers describe their preservice education experience as lacking in the following areas: 1) information about disabilities, 2) assessing the needs of students with disabilities, and 3) specific art-related knowledge including methods for media and instructional adaptation (226). This same dilemma presents itself for teachers of other subjects considered superfluous to the core academic curriculum: physical education, music, and computer technology.
The school district in which I teach art is unusual in that it is comprised solely of students identified as needing comprehensive special education services. Inclusion in a regular education environment is not an option for these students; the majority of them require placement in a 6:1:1 classroom setting. This means that the bulk of their instructional academic time must take place within a ratio of six students to one teacher to one teaching assistant. This is a federally mandated condition because it is written in their IEP's. The exception to this rule is when these students leave the academic setting and participate in art, gym, music, or computer. The system allows a general education teacher with no special education background to teach these subjects without the benefits of a teaching assistant and without a limit on the number of students in the classroom. My particular classload varies from seven to fifteen students per class. Their specific disabilities include Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Depression.

Exposure to, and participation in, the visual arts can be a pleasurable and stimulating learning experience for students with special needs. According to Aach, “art activities can meet many of the diverse needs of students with disabilities, helping them develop skills in social, emotional, motor, sensory, and cognitive areas” (qtd in Platt 10). However, art teachers should be sufficiently trained prior to teaching students with disabilities in order to best respond to their varied social, instructional, and academic
needs. I am learning to teach art to students with disabilities via several avenues: through everyday classroom experience, trial and error, from the students themselves, and from consulting with my special education colleagues. This process continues to be challenging but I see progress in my ability to adapt lessons, the way in which I present information, and in my willingness to adjust materials and strategies to best engage my students.

Students with disabilities are capable of developing intellectual and visual sensitivity through visual arts experiences. Educators strive to guide these students towards living a full and independent life. It is through patience, careful planning, and working with other professionals that this is achieved. I begin this careful planning using a three-step approach at the beginning of each semester or when a new student is introduced to my classroom. (Our student population is constantly changing due to several factors: unstable home situations, expulsion after a serious offense, high drop-out rate, student referral to a GED program, among others.) These steps are: obtain information about the student, observe the student, and translate those observations into instructional solutions.

An IEP is most often the first source of information about a student. A student's IEP has valuable data that can guide overall lesson planning. By assessing all students in advance, art teachers can determine the behavioral objectives toward which each student is prepared to work, the objectives each student most needs to master, and the size, difficulty, and
characteristics of the tasks to be completed by each student (Morreau and Anderson 13). If a returning student, an additional source of information can be any of their teachers or counselors from the previous year. These professionals can provide a wealth of information and insight into specific strategies and techniques that will facilitate a student’s entry into my classroom.

The second step is observation, carefully noting how each child approaches a variety of activities and learning situations. This process of observation is a continual one that alternates constantly with the third step of translating that information into effective instructional strategies. I make mental notes and brief written memos to help me find solutions to each problem so that the student can experience success in my classroom. What works for a child one month may need to be re-evaluated as their behaviors inevitably change. The third step, which involves improvising and altering existing materials, is implementing teaching methods that provide an opportunity for each child to have an enriching experience in art class. I present these strategies in categories that pertain to specific disabilities.

I find that clear explanations, step-by-step instructions, and repetition are essential for learning-disables (LD) students. I provide colorfully visual written hand-out for students to refer to when working. LD students can have difficulty with matching, measuring, sequencing, perceiving spatial depth, and perspective. Because they enjoy open and unstructured assignments free from organizational demands, LD students can eventually
master many of these basic concepts during art class. I rarely attach a due
date to art projects; I find it leads to a sense of failure because LD students
often feel they can never measure up or complete a project on time. I try to
experiment with methods, both visual and verbal, for helping students focus
their attention on a project, and then follow through with defined,
sequential steps of an activity. I show finished examples of each current
project—either teacher work or past student work—by bringing in actual
pieces or through the use of slides.

Students who are mentally disabled or intellectually challenged need
simple lessons with one direction given at a time. I encourage
experimentation with a variety of materials over the course of a semester as
well as with tools that are easy to handle such as toothbrushes, combs, and
sponges. Limiting the choice of materials for an individual activity may help
reduce feelings of frustrations in some students.

Because children with emotional disabilities frequently have trouble with
interpersonal relationships and appropriate social interactions, it is
important to develop art activities that require cooperation in order to be
completed (Platt 12). I find that setting firm guidelines for classroom
behavior enables the students to participate in these group activities. Pre-
determined consequences for not adhering to the classroom rules provide a
tangible framework the students can measure their behavior against.
Providing reinforcement and genuine praise while limiting rigid expectations
is beneficial to this group of students.
By far, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affect the majority of my students. In many cases, a diagnosis of ADD or ADHD is in addition to a learning or emotional disability. Prior to teaching, my understanding of ADD/ADHD was that it was an inability to pay attention. I have come to realize that children with ADD/ADHD pay attention to everything. Children who suffer from these disorders see and hear everything that is going on around them, no matter how insignificant. They don’t have the capacity to filter out distractions which seriously affects their ability to focus on one topic. There are several strategies I use to help them cope: 1) provide a structured environment with a predictable routine. 2) give them advance warning if there are going to be big changes in routine, 3) let them proceed with art projects at their own pace without deadlines, 4) short work periods with short term goals, and 5) allowing them to use portable CD players with headphones to block out noise.

It is important that children with special needs are given the same opportunities like those of more typically developing children. In the art classroom, the challenge then lies in the teacher’s ability to successfully modify the materials, tools, and approaches of a particular lesson plan to accommodate those needs. Modification of any project is considered when a student’s developmental level, physical coordination, energy, or tolerance of frustration precludes success (Nyman and Jenkins 30). When choosing and developing potential art projects for my students there are several questions
I consider: Will this project engage them? Is it flexible enough to offer multiple approaches that accommodate a variety of needs? Is it challenging without being overly tedious? I find that frustration is the most common roadblock to student success. Frequent causes of frustration: a perceived or real inability to master a new skill, lack of interest in beginning a project, and difficulty in using the appropriate tools and materials. Frustration often leads to undesirable outcomes in the classroom; my goal throughout each day is to keep the level of frustration low so that the negative impact on the individual student and the class as a whole is kept to a minimum.

I constantly observe student reaction and participation with each new project: making changes to my method of instruction, altering the project goals, and eliminating portions of the lesson that are not working. In my two years of working with learning and emotionally disabled students I have accumulated a small repertoire of art lessons that have been successful. I consider a project successful when I see student enthusiasm for an activity, when the majority of students are challenged yet gain a new skill, when the students exhibit a sense of pride in their work.

I incorporate a unit in hand-built ceramics at the beginning and end of each school year. Working with clay is almost always a positive experience for students with disabilities. Perhaps it is the satisfaction of creating something functional or the tactile experience of working with one's hands that results in such successful student work. Hand-building techniques encourage self-exploration and expression that provide an appropriate and
constructive outlet for release of tension and communication of feelings (Platt 12). I find that running a ceramic studio gives the students a sense of accomplishment as everyone is given specific chores that they are responsible for. Working with clay is a group effort; the entire class depends on each individual student to take care of their particular area. Keeping the clay clean and moist, mixing the glazes, making glaze tiles, organizing the clay tools, operating the kiln are just some of the tasks assigned to the students. Peer pressure to perform can sometimes be a positive thing.

A successful project that I have used several times is a torn paper self-portrait activity. I brought a digital camera to class and worked with each student as they took a picture of a classmate, a close-up shot of the face and neck. I printed the enlarged black & white images, enhancing the contrast using a software program. The students, using acrylic paint, mixed 7 values of grey between black and white and painted them on pieces of drawing paper. Once dry, they tore small pieces of the painted papers and reproduced their self-portraits by matching the values and gluing them to the printed image. The results were astonishing; the smaller the torn pieces the more realistic the portraits were. Providing a base image upon which to work took the pressure off each student to produce a realistic representation. Torn-paper collage is an excellent medium that eliminates the need for scissors, and using a monochromatic color scheme emphasizes value as a means to express an idea.
I recently introduced a weaving project and had unexpected success. I made small, 8" by 8", cardboard looms for each student and demonstrated several different tapestry weaving techniques for them to experiment with. As they worked out their designs on paper first, I encouraged them to avoid curved lines and small details. Their designs are simple, consisting of large horizontal and vertical shapes of color, perfect for the structure of tapestry and the heavy yarn I supplied. When one class of 6 boys requested their projects to work on during their lunch period, I knew I had a winner. Weaving on a small scale provides just enough challenge without being overly intimidating. Making sure that a project allows sufficient progress after a 45 minute class period engages those students with short attention spans. I will certainly incorporate this project into my curriculum next year.

It is important to remember that working with students with disabilities is an ongoing process. As students grow more independently capable of working with art materials, I must be ready to move forward with new adaptations. No singular modification will work for every student in all situations, but it is rewarding to find the ideal solution for a particular situation.
Conclusion

Throughout this paper, my main interest has been discovering what constitutes being a good teacher. What do I need to know that will make me a more effective, creative art teacher of children with disabilities? To answer this question, I concentrated on three areas: an historical examination of special education's emergence into society, the impact Federal disability legislation has had on our education system, and the significance of creativity as it relates to teaching art to children with special needs. As I anticipated, this research provided the answers I sought.

Delving into the field of special education proved valuable to me. I can clearly see that attitudes concerning the education and treatment of individuals with special needs have evolved, over time, from that of segregation to a much more inclusive definition. This helps to clarify my current teaching situation where even the most severely disabled students are permitted time in a general education setting among a larger student population without support services such as a teaching assistant or a teacher aide.

Legislative mandates, in the form of public law, have affected all facets of the special education process including identification and assessment, delivery of instruction, learning standards, funding practices, and the preparation of teachers. It is important for me, as an art educator, to understand the legal and ethical implications of these mandates as they influence every aspect of my classroom environment.
Truly understanding the creative process has changed the way I teach. By analyzing various accepted models of creativity I was able to formulate my own working definition. I demonstrated how I think creativity can be meaningfully applied in a teaching situation by presenting the methods and strategies I use. I am certain that creative practice can be enhanced in the classroom via these techniques.

Why should anyone care about these issues? Because as more and more individuals with special needs are integrated into the regular education system, everyone is affected at some level: students, teachers, administrators, and the community at large. As a society, we should care about how we treat persons with disabilities. We should care about the consequences of state and federal policies on our schools. We should care that the people who teach our children are highly effective and creative.

I have come to believe that creative teachers succeed when they pay attention to the individual needs of their students. Creativity in teaching often emerges from being uncomfortable, from the unexpected, and the unanticipated. Perhaps my newness as a teacher and my inexperience with the special education community actually contributes to my creativity as a teacher. Being uncomfortable, being innovative, and creativity define my work and determine my success. For educators, as well as students, the ability to think creatively is what enables us to solve problems, respond positively to opportunities and challenges, and to really make a difference.
Works Cited


Wasta, Michael J. “No Child Left Behind: The Death of Special Education?” *Phi Delta Kappan* 84 (2006): 298-299.

Appendix

Argyle Central School District
5023 State Route 40
Argyle, NY 12809
(518) 638-8243 ext 341

Individualized Education Program
2006-2007

Confidential Student Information

STUDENT AND GUARDIAN INFORMATION

Student Name: ••••••
Native Language: English
Address: ••••••
State: NY
Home #: ••••••
Parent/Guardian: Education Coordinator
Relation: Education Coordinator
NativeLang: English
Interpreter: No
Alt ID#: •fllllillllillPM•
Gender: Female
City: Argyle
County: Washington
Home #: •t•Jllll•IHl&t
Parent/Guardian: Social Services Representative
Relation: Social Services Representative
NativeLang: English
Interpreter: No
Alt ID#: •fllllillllillPM•
City: Hudson Falls
County: Washington
Address: Main Street
State: NY
Home #: •t•Jllll•IHl&t
Guardian: •1111111••
Relation: Father
Address: •••••
State: NY
Home #: •t•Jllll•IHl&t
Guardian: •1111111••
Relation: Mother
Address: •••••
State: NY
Home #: •t•Jllll•IHl&t
Special Alerts:
•••••• has these diagnosis: Bi-polar disorder, PTSD, Intermittent explosive disorder, borderline personality traits (takes meds at home)

RECOMMENDED CLASSIFICATION AND PLACEMENT INFORMATION

Committee: Subcommittee on Special Education
Reason: Requested Review Transfer Student
Disability: Other Health Impairment
Recommended School: BOCES BEST Program
Projected Start: 09/06/2006
End By: 06/22/2007
Special Transportation: Yes - Special bus route to outside placement
Extended Year: Ineligible

Meeting Date: 08/30/2006
Decision: Classified
Grade: 09

Projected Next Review: 06/10/2007
Projected Reevaluation: 01/30/2006

RECOMMENDED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Special Education Programs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Class</td>
<td>09/06/2006</td>
<td>06/22/2007</td>
<td>6-1+1</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>6 hrs</td>
<td>Special Location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Related Services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Notations for Programs and/or Related Services:
Special class for all academic instruction

Program Modifications/Accommodations/Supplementary Aids and Services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/Support</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refocusing and Redirection</td>
<td>9/6/2006</td>
<td>6/22/2007</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Throughout the school day as needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assistive Technology Devices/Services:
Service/Support: None Required

Support for School Personnel on Behalf of Student:
Service/Support: Conferences/workshops available to staff

Testing Accommodations:
The following individual accommodations are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the student on State and districtwide assessments. Recommended testing accommodations will be used consistently:

- in the student's education program,
- in the administration of districtwide assessments of student achievement, consistent with school district policy, and
- in the administration of State assessments of student achievement, consistent with State Education Department policy.

Testing Accommodation | Conditions/Specifications
--- | ---
Use of Calculator |  
Use of Mathematical Tables and Charts |  
Spelling Requirements Waived |  
Use of Word Processor |  
Extended Time (2.0) |  
Flexible Setting |  
Administer in a Small Group | or individually

Participation in State and Local Assessments:
Required: The student will participate in the same state or local assessments that are administered to general education students.

Removal from the General Education Environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, education cannot be satisfactorily achieved.

Explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate in general education programs, including extra curricular and other nonacademic activities:
The student will not participate in general education programs, and requires special instruction in an environment with a smaller student-to-teacher ratio and minimal distractions in order to progress in achieving the learning standards.

Physical Education:
General Physical Education: The student will participate in the general education physical education program.

Language Other than English Requirement:
Exempt: The student's disability adversely affects the ability to learn a language, and the student is excused from the language other than English requirement.

Individualized Education Program (vi) page 2 of 8
PRESENT LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Current functioning and individual needs in consideration of:

• the results of the initial or most recent evaluation, the student's strengths, the concerns of the parents, the results of the student's performance on any State or districtwide assessment programs;

• the student's needs related to communication, behavior, use of Braille, assistive technology, limited English proficiency;

• how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum; and

• the student's needs as they relate to transition from school to post-school activities for students 14 years of age and older.

How the Student's Disability Affects Involvement and Progress in the General Education Curriculum:

... has a significant delay in reading decoding, reading comprehension, written expression, math calculation, math concepts, which adversely affects academic performance.

Academic Achievement, Functional Performance and Learning Characteristics:

Current levels of knowledge and development in subject and skill areas, including activities of daily living, level of intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior, expected rate of progress in acquiring skills and information and learning style.

Levels/Abilities

From St. Anne's Institute: an 8th grade student who has had a difficult transition into the educational program. Testing indicates that her math, reading and writing skills are weak. She requires a lot of teacher support, and has difficulty staying awake.

READING SKILLS:

decoding and fluency skills are appropriate. She demonstrates weakness in the area of reading comprehension.

WRITTEN EXPRESSION:

likes to write poetry and enjoys writing activities. Her writing mechanic skills are weak.

MATH SKILLS:

math abilities are borderline.

COMMUNICATION:

is able to effectively communicate her needs and advocate for herself.

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS:

is able organize her materials with support and guidance. She has demonstrated difficulty in transitions times.

MEMORY/ATTENTION:

requires a lot of teacher support, and has difficulty staying awake.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

as given Level I Assessment on 9/7/06. She would like to go to college and become a nurse.

Needs

needs to attend class regularly and to develop basic reading, writing and math skills.

READING SKILLS:

needs to be able to identify the main ideas, actions and events from a written passage. needs to identify details that support the main idea from reading passages. needs to be able to use the context clues to aid in the ability to comprehend reading passages. needs to increase her sight word skills. needs to be able to use vocabulary words appropriately. needs to be able to answer who, what, where and when questions.
WRITTEN EXPRESSION:
needs to be able to apply the rules of punctuation in her writing. She needs to be able to correct spelling errors. She needs to be able to write paragraphs with a topic sentence and supporting detail.

MATH SKILLS:
needs to be able to perform simple math functions such as addition, subtraction and multiplication. She needs to develop math reasoning and problem-solving skills.

COMMUNICATION:
needs to advocate for herself in an appropriate manner.

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS:
needs to use a daily planner to help her keep up with assignments. needs to plan and maintain a study schedule to keep up with her academic demands. needs to improve in her note taking skills.

MEMORY/ATTENTION:
needs to remain on task and awake at school.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:
needs to continue to learn life skills necessary to live an independent life.

Standardized Test Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>SubTest</th>
<th>Score/Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/01/2003</td>
<td>Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement</td>
<td>Reading Decoding</td>
<td>SS 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>SS 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>SS 81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics Computation</td>
<td>SS 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics Applications</td>
<td>SS 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall Writing Composite</td>
<td>SS 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>IQ 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>IQ 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full Scale</td>
<td>IQ 90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Development:
The degree and quality of the student's relationships with peers and adults, feelings about self and social adjustment to school and community environments.

Levels/Abilities
has exhibited aggressive behaviors as well as making threats to harm herself. She has a history of temper tantrums.

Needs
needs to increase her knowledge of safe and appropriate coping skills.

Physical Development:
The degree or quality of the student's motor and sensory development, health, vitality and physical skills or limitations that pertain to the learning process.

Levels/Abilities
physical levels and abilities are within age-appropriate expectations. Some records indicate that she has asthma and an allergy to purple food coloring. She is scheduled to see the physician to clarify these diagnosis. has worn glasses in the past. She is also scheduled to see a physician to see if she needs to wear glasses again. She tends to have
headaches. She takes medication regularly for her disorders they are as follows: Geodon, Abilify, Claritin, Advair & Albutirol

**Needs:**
At this time, she needs access to asthma medication during physical activity. She needs to wear her eyeglasses, until we have clarification from the physician.

**Management Needs:**
The nature of and degree to which environment modifications and human or material resources are required to enable the student to benefit from instruction. Management needs are determined in accordance with the factors identified in the areas of academic achievement, functional performance and learning characteristics, social development and physical development. She needs a structured environment.

**MEASURABLE POST-SECONDARY GOALS (AGES 15 AND OLDER)**
For students beginning with the first IEP to be in effect when the student turns age 15 (and younger if deemed appropriate), identify the appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments relating to training, education, employment and, when appropriate, independent living skills.

**Education/Training**
She intends to pursue a college education, and would like to become a nurse.

**Employment**
She plans to pursue competitive employment opportunities after graduation.

**Independent Living Skills**
She is planning to live independently.

**COORDINATED SET OF TRANSITION ACTIVITIES (SCHOOL TO POST SCHOOL)**
- For students beginning with the first IEP to be in effect when the student turns age 15 (and younger if deemed appropriate) needed transition services/activities to facilitate the students movement from school to post-school activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinated Set of Transition Activities</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>School District/Agency Responsible</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>will be provided the opportunity to meet with a counselor to identify and discuss areas of interest and appropriate activities.</td>
<td>ACS District &amp; WSWHE BOCES</td>
<td>9/6/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Services</td>
<td>Any related services required for transition activities are listed in the Recommended Programs and Related Services section of the IEP.</td>
<td>ACS District &amp; WSWHE BOCES</td>
<td>9/6/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Employment/Other Post-School Adult Living Objectives</td>
<td>will be provided with the opportunity to participate in career assessment inventories, interviews or evaluations to assist in deciding on a career path of interest.</td>
<td>ACS District &amp; WSWHE BOCES</td>
<td>9/6/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Experience</td>
<td>will be provided the opportunity to interact with people in a variety of ways and settings to help foster supportive relationships in the community. She currently volunteers at Pleasant Valley Infirmary, which she seems to like.</td>
<td>Group Home</td>
<td>9/6/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition of Daily Living Skills</td>
<td>will be provided the opportunity to participate in activities required for independent living (e.g., laundry, cleaning, food shopping, cooking).</td>
<td>Group Home</td>
<td>9/6/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Vocational Assessment</td>
<td>was given a Level I Student Interview on 9/7/06. She is planning on going to college and becoming a nurse. No other needs at this time.</td>
<td>ACS District</td>
<td>9/6/2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMMITTEE MEETING INFORMATION**

Committee: Subcommittee on Special Education  
Reason: Requested Review Transfer Student  
Expected Grade: 09  
Meeting Date: 08/30/2006
Attendance: CSE Chairperson; School Psychologist; Guidance Counselor; Special Education Teacher; Education Coordinator/Scot House; Mother; Student

Comments: This subcommittee met to conduct a requested review on this transfer student and her recommended program. She had been at St. Anne’s Institute for almost a year, and all the progress reports from them indicate that she has improved in many areas. She is proud of her progress and participated fully at her IEP meeting.

Education Coordinator from the Scot House, indicated that she has done much better with her behavior. She is improving in her perception of how she feels others are reacting toward her, and her response to that. She is also advocating more effectively for herself. The student stated that she enjoys poetry and writing. She noted that she re-took science in summer school and received an A-.

Guidance counselor, is going to obtain her transcripts so that we have the completed information for her cumulative folder.

The Committee discussed the 6:1:1 placement at BOCES BEST program. At first the student was resistant to this option, but after some discussion, she was in agreement that this would be the best educational program for her at this time.

The Committee reviewed the IEP sent from St. Anne’s and have accepted the IEP. Recommended services for 2006-07: Special class and counseling

Based Upon: Teacher Progress Summary, 06/16/2006
Psychological Evaluation, 02/01/2003

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Other Options Considered
The Committee considered a general education setting with support services such as related services, consultation services and a resource room program.

The Committee considered a residential school program.

Reasons for Rejection
This option was rejected because current levels of academic functioning and social/emotional issues indicate that a more intensive setting with support is needed to address her needs.

This option was rejected because it would be overly restrictive. needs could be met in a less restrictive environment, at this time.

REPORTING PROGRESS TO PARENTS

Identify when periodic reports on the progress the student is making toward meeting the annual goals will be provided to the student’s parents:

Manner: Written Reports

Frequency: 4 times during the school year.

MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

* For students with severe disabilities who would meet the eligibility criteria to take the New York State Alternate Assessment, the IEP must also include short term instructional objectives and benchmarks for each annual goal.

Annual Goal: What the student will be expected to be able to do by the end of the year in which the IEP is in effect.

Evaluation Criteria: How well and over what period of time the student must demonstrate performance in order to consider the annual goal to have been met.

Procedures to Evaluate Goal: The method that will be used to measure progress and determine if the student has met the annual goal.

Evaluation Schedule: The dates or intervals of time by which evaluation procedures will be used to measure the student’s progress.

STUDY SKILLS

Annual Goal
1. will demonstrate an improvement in her study skills; evaluated by work samples, teacher observations and student productivity.

Evaluation Criteria: 90% success, over 5 weeks
Procedure to Evaluate Goal: See goal above
Evaluation Schedule: By June
Primary Responsibility: Special Education Teacher

READING

Annual Goal
2. will demonstrate an improvement in reading comprehension; evaluated by work samples, teacher-made tests, and teacher observations.
   Evaluation Criteria: 80% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: See goal above
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Special Education Teacher

Annual Goal
3. will demonstrate an improvement in comprehension skills necessary to read for information and understanding; evaluated by teacher observation and daily school reports.
   Evaluation Criteria: 80% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: See goal above
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Special Education Teacher

WRITING

Annual Goal
4. will develop an improvement in the mechanics of written language, such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar; evaluated by work samples, teacher-made tests and teacher observation.
   Evaluation Criteria: 80% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: See goal above
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Special Education Teacher

MATHEMATICS

Annual Goal
5. will develop an improvement in mathematical concepts, reasoning and computation necessary to develop problem-solving skills and to utilize mathematics to address everyday problems; evaluated by teacher observation and test results.
   Evaluation Criteria: 80% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: See goal above
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Special Education Teacher

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL/BEHAVIORAL

Annual Goal
6. will abstain from the use/abuse of drugs and alcohol, avoid environments that are conducive to relapse, and become educated regarding familial/hereditary patterns of abuse and her own vulnerability.
   Evaluation Criteria: 85% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: Recorded observations
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Counselor
Annual Goal
7. will work through family issues, as determined by working relationship with primary and/or adjunct therapist.
   Evaluation Criteria: 80% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: Recorded observations
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Counselor

Annual Goal
8. will assume responsibility for her actions, accept constructive criticism from concerned adults, and decrease the tendency to project blame onto others for her problems.
   Evaluation Criteria: 80% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: Recorded observations
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Counselor

Annual Goal
9. will eliminate aggressive and assaultive behaviors, and learn to employ more appropriate anger management techniques.
   Evaluation Criteria: 90% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: Recorded observations
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Counselor

Annual Goal
10. will eliminate the use of somatic complaints as the means she uses to handle personal and school related problems.
   Evaluation Criteria: 85% success, over 5 weeks
   Procedure to Evaluate Goal: Recorded observations
   Evaluation Schedule: By June
   Primary Responsibility: Counselor