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EDITION 2 2006-07

Futures

Reading, re-shelving and recycling: College-based program teaches tools for life

The BOCES College-based Transition Program offers developmentally disabled students age 18 to 21 the opportunity to experience a variety of job placements while continuing with academic classes in subjects such as language arts and math. If needed, special services such as speech and counseling are woven into the school day. Students also learn about agencies, social programs and other services they are likely to need to succeed as they move into the adult world.

In 2004, the transition program found a permanent home at the College of St. Rose in Albany, a location and partnership that seem to suit everyone involved – students, BOCES teachers and college professors – just fine.

From humble beginnings as a summer bridge program, the Capital Region BOCES College-based Transition Program has become a full-fledged springboard into the world for developmentally disabled young adults.

In its early years, the program was housed both at the BOCES Maywood School in Colonie and then at Mohonasin High School. Students took their academic classes at these locations and traveled by bus, often for many miles, to job placements at

Crossgates Mall.

“Although the students were getting the real-world experiences we wanted for them, the amount of traveling and planning we needed to do really cut into the time the kids spent at workplaces,” says special education teacher George Lorang, an architect of the now decade-old program.

In 2003, Dr. Terri Ward, assistant professor of special education at the College of Saint Rose, approached BOCES special education director Inge Jacobs and other special education administrators about a partnership between the two organizations. Ward believed her special education teaching students would benefit from acting as study partners and by helping tailor college-level coursework to suit the BOCES students’ special needs. Lorang liked the idea of a campus-based experience that allowed his students to study *and* work within just a few blocks. Perhaps more significantly, his students would be able to mingle with and study alongside their same age peers in the mainstream – an important experience that is often lacking in many programs for developmentally disabled young adults.

Successful transitions



Kathy Rue graduated from the transition program last spring and, by all accounts, is a successful young woman. During her time both at Crossgates Mall and on the St. Rose campus, Kathy learned in ways that she says now help her lead a happy and productive life.

“The transition program at St. Rose was such a natural fit for Kathy, as if it was made just for her,” says Kathy’s mother Connie Rue. *See “Kathy” on page 4*

A day in the life...

On an average day, Lorang’s ten students arrive at St. Rose by 8 a.m. After taking care of morning details and reviewing daily schedules they head off to BOCES and college classes and to jobs throughout campus, including the copy center, dining hall, college bookstore, library and college transportation department.

In addition, Lorang’s students take turns gathering paper for recycling at offices and other campus locations

See “College-based program” on page 4

“Many of my students are special education majors and the BOCES students are part of the population they are training to teach. All of my students will have students with disabilities included in their classes. This program gives us the opportunity to model inclusion for them.”

Mary Cosgrove,
College of St. Rose
instructor in biology

FEATURE

NERIC/SSS:

NERIC/School Support Services teaming turns technology into a tool for true learning.....3

From page 1:

College-based program

each day. A feather in the caps of Lorang and his students who created it, the recycling program is a great success. During the 2005-06 school year an additional 60 tons of paper were recycled rather than tossed thanks to the BOCES students. The program is helping educate the college community about the importance of conservation. It also allows Lorang's students natural opportunities to practice their social, organizational and time management skills.

However, what makes the St. Rose experience unique, and perhaps most meaningful in Lorang's opinion, is that each semester his students also take a modified college-level course of their choosing. In general, these classes support their academic and future life goals. Many of the classes offered, from painting to biology, are hands-on. Special education teaching students act as study partners and help tailor class assignments, allowing the special needs students to be successful in their own ways. Although the special education students are not given college credit for their work, they receive a performance evaluation from their instructors and a certificate of completion when they finish their college experience.



BOCES student Chris Wideman and his lab partners study pill bugs in Mary Cosgrove's Fundamentals of Science class at the College of St. Rose.

For more information about this program, please contact Inge Jacobs, special education director, at 464-6300 or by e-mail at ijacobs@gw.neric.org or George Lorang, special education teacher, at 464-6307 or glorang@gw.neric.org.

Kathy from page 1:

During her time with George Lorang in the program, Connie says Kathy developed poise and confidence, the ability to make her own decisions, and had many opportunities for natural introductions to her college-age peers on campus. Kathy continues to socialize with friends both from her college classes as well as classmates from the transition program.

Kathy is now employed at Ruby Tuesday's in the Crossgates Mall – a restaurant she worked at during the transition program. The restaurant's manager Dave Stutzman was impressed with Kathy's work ethic and eager to have her become a permanent member of the Ruby Tuesday's team once she graduated. Kathy now works in food prep and is doing such a stand-out job that she was recently asked to increase her days at the restaurant.

"She has this air of confidence about her that wasn't there before," says Connie Rue, "It just shines right through."

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EDITION 2 2006-07

Career and Tech Education:
New Visions program kindles
passion for careers, ties with
St. Catherine's community. . . 2

Special Education:
College-based program
teaches tools for life 1

IN THIS ISSUE