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Projects Inspire Training School Students

Connie Susa

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TR*hode* I*sland* TRANSITIONS

Assisting Youth with Disabilities in Transition from School to Adult Life

National Study Identifies Best Practices

A cross case analysis recently published in *Exceptional Children* suggests that there may be a set of practices common to model transition programs throughout the country.

Susan Brody Hasazi, Katherine S. Furney and Lizanne DeStefano investigated the implementation of transition mandates in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) at nine diverse sites. They recommend that educators and administrators at every level may improve outcomes for students if they adopt these six practices.

1. Promote self-determination through

instruction and student-centered planning. A distinctive feature of the model sites was their systematic approach to promoting skills and beliefs related to self-advocacy and self-determination. Using curricula specifically designed to teach self-determination skills and student leadership of planning meetings was key. (See articles introducing this concept to students on page 8 of this newsletter.)

When used early and in combination with person-centered planning strategies designed to promote student and family participation, it was particularly effective.

2. Develop sensitive approaches to inter-
See "Best Practices" on page 11.

Projects Inspire Training School Students

Arlene Chorney, principal of the Rhode Island Training School, recently said, "We give our students as wide a range of experiences as we can here because we hope to turn them on to education and learning." Several forms of artistic expression over the last two years have given the students at the youth correctional facility something concrete on which to rebuild their self-esteem as well as academics.

One example is *Impact*, the book of poetry that they just published. Demian Yattaw began substitute teaching at the Training School shortly after he earned his master's degree in creative writing three years ago. As he recognized the raw emotion and honesty in the poetry his students wrote, he started an after school writing group.

Yattaw uses a variety of methods to teach poetry, including single word exercises,

repetition, journaling, the creative use of white space, observation, memory exercises, free association and improvisation. In each, he pushes his students, more than half of whom have IEPs, to "excavate the meaning of words."

Ultimately, Yattaw edited their verses into a 171 page anthology, whose proceeds support additional project-based learning at the Training School.

Calligraphers framed forty of the poems to display at AS220 on a recent gallery night. Members of the arts community also joined parents for an arts night at the Training School that included poetry readings, displays of visual arts and the performance of a short play, *Everyman*.

Based on its success last year, Janet
See *Projects Inspire* on page 11.

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Transition Process Issue

- ◆ Interview with Linda Soderberg of School to Career Office
- ◆ Planning with Juvenile Offenders
- ◆ Young Adult Profile: Chris Peña
- ◆ Participate in Your Own Planning Mtgs.
- ◆ Learning Styles Activity
- ◆ Advisory Committees Hold Summit

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Projects Inspire

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Roderick directed another theater project at the Training School this year. She collaborated with youth worker, Anne Melville, who led a puppetry class in which the students crafted characters from the classic novel, *Frankenstein*. A Russian videographer, Andre Aloshine, filmed the production.

The Training School is also one of three accredited schools to establish a chapter of the Muse Union. In fact, they hosted the first meeting in which students and staff from the Met School and Mount Pleasant High School participated. Together with AS220 where the association of arts clubs emanated, they drafted a mission statement and constitution.



Umberto Crenca, Director of AS220, is committed to the students. He teaches in an after school painting class. When the artists complete the course requirements, they receive a certificate from the Community College of Rhode Island. Seven of the youth who have been released have continued their poetry studies with Demian Yattaw at the Providence-based arts venue.

The RI Council on the Arts has just awarded the Training School a grant to coordinate more project-based learning activities. "When people feel supported, they are willing to try new things and expand their ways of thinking," Chorney said, perhaps as much of the students and her staff, as of herself.