

The Thomas Reynolds Center for Special Education and After-School Programs

May 2004 Report

Prepared by

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&
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Daemen College
4380 Main St.
Amherst, NY 14226

U.S. Department of Education
Grant Number – P116Z030053
Project Start Date–July 2003
Project End Date–December 2004
Total Amount of Award - \$1,291,550

Participating Graduate Students

Jennifer Brzezinski
Jennifer Cirivello
Lisa Drewniak
Cory Gunther
Angelica Horvath
Amanda Marrer
Martin Scholl
Melissa Abbate
Jillian Berizzie
Joy Carroll
Donna Lynn Fredericks

Marcie Hawks
Kathleen Henninger
Shannon Hoak
Jamie Johnson
Jessica Korczak
Cherlyn Loffredo
Melissa Moriarty
Ann Marie Nocera
Andrea Smith
Adrienne Welka

The Thomas Reynolds Center for Special Education and After-School Programs is currently servicing children with developmental disabilities in grades 4-8 in Amherst, Lancaster, and Buffalo School Districts. We are working to bridge the academic gap these students are currently experiencing. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which began in the 2002-2003 school year, emphasizes that all enrolled students participate in required assessments starting in the third grade, in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. The NCLB accountability requirements apply to all students in the districts/schools including subgroups of students, such as, students with disabilities. Students with disabilities must make yearly progress towards measurable objectives and meet or exceed the district/school performance standards for English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science.

Annual measures must show students making progress to reduce the performance gap these students had during the previous year. Without additional academic support and specific academic enrichment programs to the large urban school districts, students with developmental disabilities will not achieve the requirements of NCLB or state performance standards.

The Center's primary focus is to provide a rich learning and teaching environment where scientifically-based research methods are used to assist students with disabilities in learning essential academic skills in the areas of Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Learning Strategies. The Center is operating four days a week (Monday – Thursday) from approximately 2:00pm – 6:00pm in the Districts stated above. The Center has serviced 45 students since start-up in November of 2003. There are 25 students from Lancaster and 20 students from Amherst. Average attendance in Lancaster is between 10-15 students. Average attendance in Amherst ranges from 17-20 students.

The Center has 10 Full-time Graduate Assistants and 10 Part-time Graduate Assistants running the after-school tutoring program. The Project Director and/or Project Assistant are on site daily. The after-school session includes homework/project completion time. In addition to this the Center contains four academies. Each child attends two academies twice weekly. Instruction is provided directly through one-on-one or small group activities. There is a 2:1 student/teacher ratio. On average 2-3 hours a week is spent on homework help and 3 hours a week is spent on private tutoring in the Academies. There have been 12 Full-time Graduate Assistants (Year 2 cohort) hired for the Fall 2004 semester.

The **Reading Academy** has been using various reading activities such as the parts of speech, descriptive stories, reading passages, and partner reading. They work in small groups and complete whole group sessions. Specific goals for individual students are being generated as the Graduate Assistants gather information from the child's IEP and District Teachers. Currently the groups are reading for details and working on self-monitoring strategies such as asking questions and re-reading. The use of dictionaries will also be introduced in the next few sessions. Students are currently using the Wilson Reading Program (WADE) to pre-assess student ability levels in decoding, encoding and spelling of site words. There are currently 13 students

from Amherst being serviced in this academy (4 from grade 4; 4 from grade 5; 0 from grade 6; 1 from grade 7; 4 from grade 8).

The **Writing Academy** has been breaking into small groups and working one-on-one. Students were given a story starter to begin a narrative essay. The essay is a work in progress as the students continue to add to their own story. The students are learning to use a dictionary and thesaurus as aids to their writing and seem to be using/requesting these more regularly. Students are starting to work on revisions, editing and will eventually complete a self-reflection paper in regards to the essay. The writing academy staff will begin the "Developing Writer's Assessment" in the month of February. There are currently 8 students from Amherst being serviced in this academy (3 from grade 4; 1 from grade 5; 1 from grade 6; 2 from grade 7; 1 from grade 8).

The **Math Academy** has separated the students into individual or small groups so they are able to work with the same tutors on a regular basis. They have been using a lot of visuals and manipulatives while working with the students. Topics such as measurement, graphing, and tally charts have been covered. Many students are working on multiplication (especially the 8th graders), as well as fractions and decimals. An area to be worked on is getting students on track, participating, and getting them motivated. Significant progress has been noted with one of the 4th graders in building her knowledge base on basic numbers, counting, number lines, and basic addition. (This student is ESL.) There are currently 8 students from Amherst being serviced in this academy (1 from grade 4; 3 from grade 5; 0 from grade 6; 0 from grade 7; 4 from grade 8).

The goal of the **Learning Strategies Academy** is to help students become more self-aware. Each day the Learning Strategies Academy is focusing on a different "Multiple Intelligence." Howard Gardner defines intelligence as "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings" (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). The intelligences identified by Gardner include Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, Linguistic Intelligence, Spatial Intelligence, Musical Intelligence, Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, and Personal Intelligence. This focus will help students determine what their strengths are and to better understand themselves as learners. They will use strategy banks (like a wallet) to keep little reminders of learning strategies they have learned and find useful. Areas such as self-advocacy, short-term memory, and test taking skills will be worked on throughout the semester. A few students are aware of what they are good at, while others are becoming aware of their own strengths and skills. This self-knowledge is the basis for the strengths and weaknesses assessment (pre-assessment). There are currently 8 students from Amherst being serviced in this academy (1 from grade 4; 3 from grade 5; 1 from grade 6; 1 from grade 7; 2 from grade 8).

Parent Network of Western New York will continue to provide seminar opportunities in Amherst and Lancaster throughout the summer of 2004. They will be training parents in "Keys to Empowerment", which is a full day seminar that teaches parents and children to learn together. The second series will be titled, "Help with Homework." This seminar will provide parents with strategies and methods for completing homework with their children.

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHT:

There has been progress with one particular student who started off with zero participation and remained silent throughout his time in the program to some participation and talking. The following is an account of his experience:

When a 6th grade boy first entered the learning strategies academy, he was very introverted. On his first day in our academy, he entered slowly with his winter jacket on, clenching his backpack. He would not verbalize to anyone. He was unwilling to participate in any of the activities planned for the group. He sat in the corner of the room alone, facing the wall. As an attempt for him to participate in some way, he was given a piece of paper and a marker by one of the tutors. The 6th grader wrote, "I don't want to be here. I want to go home. Just leave me alone". Our next meeting we saw an improvement. He still wore his jacket and kept his book bag on his lap. He participated in an activity with the help of a tutor. He began verbalizing, but kept his turtleneck over his face while he talked. He did not complete all of the requirements of the activity, but in the end he shared with the group 3 components of the project he completed. Recently, he has continued to engage more. He works with a tutor to complete the activity planned for that day. He is much more verbal, and smiles frequently.

The Center is also providing academic assessment based on a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The Center is offering ongoing professional assistance to teachers, parents and guardians. in conjunction with the district at either the Committee on Special Education or Child Study Teams.

The Center is working to complete needs assessments within the partner districts. Upon completion of the assessments an evaluation of each districts needs will be completed. The Center, the Partner District, and Parent Network will collaborate to determine topics for parent training opportunities within each district.

The first Advisory Board meeting was held on October 16, 2003. In attendance were Center Director, Ms. Kristin Myers and Assistant Director Ms.Sandra Schwarz; Academy Coordinators, Ms. Lynn Shanahan and Ms. Julie Schwab; Center Consultant, Dr. Patrick Hartwick; Amherst School District Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Paul Wietig; Legal Consultant, Ms. Elizabeth Wright; Parent Network Representative, Ms. Sue Barlow; Town of Amherst Youth Board Executive Director, Mr. Joseph Bachovchin.

- Center description presented by Director, Ms. Kristin Myers.
- Presently working with Amherst and Lancaster School Districts.
- News release of Amherst Center opening will be presented at December Amherst Board meeting coordinated with Thomas Reynolds office.
- Legal issue discussion on defining boundaries between service requirements for District Special Education Students and Center services.
- Legal counsel needed for both the Center and Partner School District.
- Memorandum of Agreement needs to be reviewed by District Board of Education and Legal counsel.
- MOA needs to comply with FERPA and 504 regulations.
- Center contact for review of MOA will be Daemen College Legal Counsel, Mr. Thomas Brydges.

The second Advisory Board Meeting was held on November 20, 2003. In attendance were Ms. Kristin Myers, Ms. Leslie Wade, Dr. Patrick Hartwick; Amherst School District Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Paul Wietig; Amherst School District Director of Special Education, Mr. Scott Payne; Lancaster Middle School Principal, Mr. Peter Kruszynski; Daemen College Dean of Academics Affairs, Dr. Edwin Clausen; Director of Amherst Youth Center, Mr. Mike Frysz.

- Packet of Collaborative Agreement between Center and Partner/Amherst School District and application forms for Amherst Central School students with disabilities presented by Director, Kristin Myers: Student Profile Document, Referral Form, Application for Participation Form, Amherst Central School District Release and Exchange of Information Form, Assessment Consent Form, Description of Assessments Form, Transportation Consent Form, Behavioral Expectations, Discipline Policy and Students' Rights and Responsibilities. Additional form needed – Medical Emergency Release.
- Each new District Partnership with Center needs a compliance review from Legal counsels.
- All amendments sent to primary supervisor of the grant.
- Grant status notification to Mr. Thomas Reynolds.
- Amherst School District public announcement on December 2, 2003 pending Daemen College approval.
- The Center/Amherst School District opening December 2, 2003 on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Harlem Road Community Center location.
- The Center is currently engaged in an after-school tutor program at Lancaster Middle School on Mondays and Wednesdays.

The third Advisory Board Meeting was held on December 18, 2003. In attendance were Ms. Kristin Myers, Ms. Sandra Schwarz, Ms. Leslie Wade; Center Consultant, Dr. Patrick Hartwick; Parent Network Representative, Ms. Susan Barlow; Lancaster School District Director of Special Education, Mr. John Armstrong; Lancaster School District Assistant Superintendent, Ms. Suzanne Jacobs.

- Revised Parent Information Packets for Amherst and Lancaster Schools presented to Board Members by Center Director, Ms. Kristin Myers.
- Issue of student discrimination for School Districts: The Center is responsible for approval of students. Director of Special Education can make recommendations.
- Students qualifying for program are those that are experiencing an *academic gap*.
- Lancaster School District will begin Center program January 26, 2004.
- Lancaster program will be held at Lancaster Middle School on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00-4:30 PM.
- Lancaster Memorandum of Understanding changed to grades 5-8.
- The Center will be responsible for bus transportation from Center activities.
- The Thomas Reynolds Center architect proposal (Lauer-Manguso and Associates) was presented by Director, Ms. Kristin Myers. Existing maintenance building will be converted to a 4600 sq. feet learning facility. Goal for opening in Fall of 2004.

The fourth Advisory Board Meeting was held on February 19, 2004. In attendance were Ms. Kristin Myers, Ms. Sandra Schwarz, Ms. Leslie Wade, Dr. Ellen Arnold, Ms. Susan Barlow, Mr. Scott Payne, Ms. Suzanne Jacobs, Mr. Mike Frysz, Ms. Elizabeth Wright.

- **Director's Report:** Grant Summary Report (July 2003-January 2004) for The Thomas Reynolds Center for Special Education and After-School Programs presented to Board Members by Kristin Myers, Director. Also included in this report: Center Evaluation Competency Action Plan and 2003-current Budget information.
- Mike Frysz/Director of Amherst Youth Center, had positive comments and feedback regarding Center personnel and activities at their facility.
- Advisory Board would like to observe Center activities at Lancaster Middle School and Amherst Community Center. Arrangements will be made to coordinate this field trip.
- Graduate Assistants will present Academy Student Research at future Advisory Board Meetings by use of power point presentations.
- Lancaster School District has three applications currently signed for Center Program. There is concern that students are not taking packets home to be signed. Ms. Jacobs will follow up. Lancaster Center Program will begin March 1, 2004 with extended time from current program to 4:30 PM.
- Presentation by Ms. Sue Barlow, Director of Parent Network of WNY, and Dr. Ellen Arnold, Academy Coordinator of *Learning Strategies*:

The fifth Advisory Board Meeting was held on March 18, 2004. In attendance were Ms. Kristin Myers, Ms. Sandra Schwarz, Dr. Patrick Hartwick, Ms. Amy Moore, Ms. Susan Barlow, Mr. Peter Kruszynski, Ms. Elizabeth Wright, Mr. Scott Payne, Ms. Angel Horvath, Mr. Martin Scholl, Ms. Lisa Drewniak, Ms. Amanda Marrer, Ms. Ann Marie Nocera.

- Invitation for Amherst Center Field Trip planned for April 22nd, 2004, 3:00-6:00 PM.
- Presentation by Graduate Assistants: Martin Scholl and Angel Horvath
 - Introduction of the *Math Academy*:
 - Coordinator / Dr. Dianne McCarthy
 - A Day in the Math Academy
 - Concepts that have been taught
 - Tools that have been used:
 - Research:
 - Solving Mathematical problems by teaching via problem solving.
 - Manipulatives improve Problem Solving Skills.
 - Single Subject Design / Pre and Post test with KeyMath.
- Presentation by Graduate Assistants: Lisa Drewniak and Amanda Marrer
 - Introduction to *Learning Strategies Academy*:
 - Coordinator / Dr. Ellen Arnold
 - Mission
 1. To assist middle school students with learning disabilities in all academic areas.

2. To provide tools and skills necessary to succeed.
 3. To offer support with homework.
 4. To teach specific strategies that will improve memory retention.
 - Units of Study:
 - Research:
 - Thomas Reynolds Center will be the venue for students in grade 4-8.
 - Single-subject designs reflecting the effectiveness of Mnemonic strategies.
- After-School Center program started March 16, 2004 in Buffalo. Partnership with Community Action Organization of Erie County, Inc. Twenty-five students will participate in four academies, Monday through Thursday.

We look forward to positively impacting the lives of young children in the communities and expanding the Center to provide services to more families and partner districts in the future.

**CENTER EVALUATION
COMPETENCY ACTION PLAN
JANUARY 2004**

GOAL	ACTIVITY	TIMELINE	EVALUATION
1. To establish After-School Programs at partner school district sites for students with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed Memorandum of Agreement with each partner school district. 	August – Jan. 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signed MOU with Lancaster School District 11/03 (2 days a week) • Signed MOU with Amherst School District as of 12/03 (2 days a week) • Buffalo status – GA’s are volunteering at Seneca Babcock once a week & signed MOU with Community Action Organization (4 days a week) • Signed MOU with St. John Baptist Church on Buffalo’s East Side • Summer Institute partnership with Hamburg Central School District – signed MOU May 2004 – “Academy Adventures” July 6 – August 6 • Lackawanna School District – Year Three
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of The Center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Academy Portfolios • Qualitative and Quantitative data collection 	12/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired research team • Designed preliminary database system • Designed and sent all parent waivers for information/ participation/ consent forms • Academy Portfolios created and being added to each week • Pre-assessments in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Learning Strategies have been conducted in Amherst

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments are on-going • Designed rubrics for evaluation of Participant Portfolios • Designed Exit Interviews for Parents, Students, Administrators, Teachers, and Graduate Assistants
3. To review applications for Graduate Assistants, conduct interviews, and assign chosen applicants to the Center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To design Graduate Assistant Application • To conduct interviews • To list responsibilities of Graduate Assistants • To design schedules for Graduate Assistants 	On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed all activities • Currently recruiting more candidates for Graduate Assistant positions • Accepted 16 Graduate Assistants for Fall 2003 • Accepted 10 Full-time Graduate Assistants for Spring 2004 • Accepted 10 Part-time Graduate Assistants for Spring 2004 • Accepted 12 Full-time Graduate Assistants for the Fall 2004 semester
4. To provide After-School Tutoring in areas of Reading, Writing, Math, and Learning Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hire Consultants, Coordinators, Graduate Assistants, and Tutors • To staff, develop, and implement specific services in the four academies 	June – Sept. On-going	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research team/consultants (3) hired 7/15/03, 9/22/03, 12/8/03 • Academy Coordinators hired 9/8/03 • Graduate Assistants hired at the beginning of each semester – Fall 03/Spring 04/Fall 04 • Working in Lancaster Middle School on Mondays and Wednesdays – beginning Nov. 3, 2003 • Working in Amherst on Tuesdays and Thursdays – beginning Dec. 9, 2003 • Working in Buffalo Mondays-Thursday – on an as needed basis – determined by Cheryl Bird • Working in Buffalo at CAO Mondays-Thursday – beginning March 2004 • Summer Institute with Hamburg – 6 week program

<p>5. To establish an Advisory Board that includes all stake holders from each partner school district and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To send letters of invitation to significant partners and professionals to serve on the Advisory Board 	<p>Oct. – Dec. 2003</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed First Board Meeting Held – 10/16/03 Meet the third Thursday of every month <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10/16/03 – 11 people 11/20/03 – 8 people 12/18/03 – 8 people
<p>6. To provide technical and/or consultant services to a child with a disability and his/her family to ensure appropriate academic services are provided in accordance with state and federal regulations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To participate in CSE meetings when requested. 	<p>On-going</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No requests made at this time.
<p>7. To provide Parent Training Workshops on various topics as determined by the Director and Advisory Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To offer workshops in second half of 2003-2004 school year. 	<p>January – August 2004</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently attending all parent teacher organization meetings in Amherst and Lancaster <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10/15/03 – Amherst SEPTA 11/19/03 – Amherst SEPTA 1/21/04 – Amherst SEPTA 11/5/03 – Lancaster HSA Let both partners know to start looking at topics and dates – needs assessment sent Jan. 2004 Keys to Empowerment – scheduled for Amherst and Lancaster Help with Homework – scheduled for Amherst and Lancaster