



Watertown Public Schools

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MEMORANDUM

To: WPS School Committee
From: Kathleen Desmarais, Director of Student Services
CC: Deanne Galdston, Superintendent of Schools; Theresa McGuinness, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment
Date: October 23, 2017
RE: Inclusive Best Practices Update, with focus on Co-Teaching in Core Content

This Memorandum serves to inform the Committee of progress in implementation of one inclusive best practice, co-teaching between general education and special education teachers in core content areas (ELA, Reading, Writing, Math, Science, and Social Studies).

Background:

During the 2015-2016 school year, two separate reviews were conducted in the District recommending improvements in inclusive practices for students with special education needs in Watertown. First, the RSM report called for a review of resource allocation to increase opportunities for co-taught classes across levels, while commending existing co-teaching practices in the elementary, middle, and high schools. Second, the EDCO special education review reinforced the RSM recommendations, calling on the District to look towards allocation of resources to increase and improve inclusive opportunities for students with disabilities.

From 2006 to 2016, the percentage of students with Individual Educational Programs (IEPs) “fully included” (defined as 80 percent or more of their day in general education classrooms) in Watertown declined from 80%, well above the state target minimum rate of 61 percent, to only 60 percent, below the state target. This trajectory is concerning as all available research since the inception of special education (P.L. 94-142 in 1975) shows that outcomes, both academic and social, are improved for students with disabilities when they are educated alongside their non-disabled peers.

2016-2017 Baseline:

As was pointed out in the RSM report and verified through observation and data collection this past school year, co-teaching is not a new inclusive model in the District. In 2016-2017, several co-teaching pairs already existed across the elementary, middle, and high school, and more were formed throughout the school year. These pairs consisted of veteran teachers, as well as many new to their field and/or new to the District. Co-teaching occurred in core content areas and electives as well, and wasn’t only found in special education classrooms. Co-teaching partners included teachers of English Language Learners and other specialty area teachers.

To increase capacity to successfully include students with disabilities in the general education classroom, teams of teachers from each school in Watertown participated in two days of training with Dr. Lisa Dieker (see attached bio) in January of 2017. Dr. Dieker reviewed strategies for Differentiated Instruction, Universal Design for Learning, and co-teaching, as well as strategies to increase collaboration between general education and special

education teachers. Participants included veteran co-teaching pairs and novices alike. Additional special education teachers (6 FTEs) to support inclusion, and ongoing professional development for co-teaching pairs, was planned and included in the FY18 budget.

2017-2018 Opening:

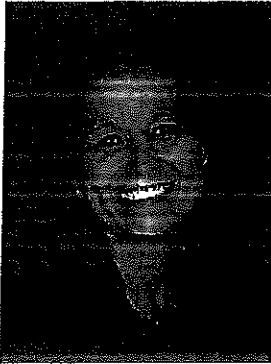
The District opened the 2017-2018 school year with a clear, shared vision of inclusion, as voiced by Superintendent Dede Galdston and Assistant Superintendent for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Theresa McGuinness, in their opening remarks. Professional development was provided to all secondary staff in inclusive practices by Ms. Kathy Porcaro (see attached resume) on August 30 as part of opening days, and is planned for elementary staff in April. Ms. Porcaro has been providing ongoing job-embedded PD for teachers in co-teaching and inclusive best practices at Watertown High School throughout the first term.

Co-teaching exists in different models, from full time co-teaching pairs to pairs that teach together for 1 class period in a day. To date, a conservative count of course sections (1 class period) that are co-taught with special education teachers in core content areas shows a minimum of 35 at the elementary level, 27 at the middle school level, and 17 at the high school level.

Primary needs identified by teachers so far this school year include: identification of co-teaching pairings by the spring for the following school year; maintaining pairings that are working well; ensuring co-planning time in the weekly schedule; and professional development specific to inclusion and co-teaching. Additional training for the middle and elementary levels for this school year is planned for this school year. The District is committed to ensuring that necessary structures and supports are in place for educators to successfully include students with disabilities in the general education classroom, and will prioritize needs identified by the co-teaching pairs in planning for FY19.

College of Education and Human Performance

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Lisa Dieker, Ph.D.

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Summary

Dr. Lisa Dieker is a Professor and Lockheed Martin Eminent Scholar at the University of Central Florida. She received her undergraduate and master's degree from Eastern Illinois University and her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. Her primary area of research focuses on collaboration between general and special education with a specific interest in the unique opportunities that exist in urban schools in the areas of mathematics and science. She also has a passion for how technology and specifically virtual classrooms can be used to impact teacher preparation.

As the Lockheed Martin Eminent Scholar, she works collaboratively with outstanding UCF faculty in mathematics and science to Direct the Lockheed Martin/UCF Mathematics and Science Academy. The Academy encompasses two programs, the K-8 teacher leadership program as well as a Transition to Mathematic and Science Teaching (TMAST) program, both focusing on teacher preparation in mathematics and science education. The TMAST program focuses on bringing in new teachers to urban middle school settings.

Dr. Dieker also is the coordinator of the Ph.D. program in special education. This program, during her tenure and in collaboration with her colleagues in special education, has graduated 60 new scholars into the field with 12 being students with disclosed disabilities and 22 being from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In 2010, she was selected for the UCF Graduate Mentor of the Year Award. Working collaboratively with her doctoral students, she is engaged in a range of interdisciplinary activities across mathematics, science, technology and special education.

In relation to Innovation, Dr. Dieker was instrumental in bringing together the Colleges of Computer Science, The Institute of Simulation and Technology and the College of Education to develop TLE TeachLive™. The TeachLive™ is a classroom simulator being used by 42 universities across the country, four school districts, and in the United Arab Emirates to prepare preservice and inservice teachers using virtual students. She recently lead a convening funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to create a 2 year research agenda on the use of virtual environments in teacher education, which resulted in a three year research project funded for \$1.5M to conduct research on simulation in teacher education. Her work in partnership with two other lead colleagues, Dr. Hughes and Hynes, in 2014 received the New Schools Venture Funds: Learning Impact Award, in 2013 the National Training and Simulation Association Governor's Award for Excellence in Modeling and Simulation Highest honor given by the Association and National Training and Simulation Association (NTSA) Award for outstanding achievement in training (2013), in 2012 the National Consortium for Continuous Improvement in Higher Education, Honorable Mention for Leveraging Excellence Award: TeachLive™ and the Innovative Technology of the Year Award: TeachLive™, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2012.

Dr. Dieker has received more than \$15 million in grant funding in her career and has produced 6 books and two national videos focused on effective strategies for inclusion and co-teaching. Her co-taught lesson plan book continues to be one of the bestsellers for use by practitioners throughout the United States. She has published numerous articles focused on interdisciplinary collaboration, diversity, inclusion, and innovative technology. She is sought out regularly to provide national and international keynote addresses. She has served in numerous leadership roles including serving on the board of the Council for Exceptional Education Teacher Education Division where she was selected by the Council for Exceptional Children as the Child Advocate

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Network (CAN) coordinator of the year. She currently serves on the editorial board of 8 journals, has been the Editor of the *Journal of International Special Needs Education*, Associate Editor of *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, and just completed a five-year term as the Associate Editor of *Teaching Exceptional Children*.

Professional Summary (<http://education.ucf.edu/FacultyStaff/vitae/LDieker.pdf>)

Calendar (<http://events.ucf.edu/calendar/962/cedcomms-event-publisher/upcoming>)

Faculty and Staff Directory ([FacultyDirectoryA-Z.cfm?id=fd&cat=3](http://education.ucf.edu/FacultyDirectoryA-Z.cfm?id=fd&cat=3))

Employment ([employment.cfm](http://education.ucf.edu/employment.cfm))

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For Faculty and Staff ([forFaculty.cfm?pid=dd](http://education.ucf.edu/forFaculty.cfm?pid=dd))

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(<https://twitter.com/ucfced>)

Kathleen M. Porcaro, Ed. D.
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Doctoral Dissertation: *The Effects of Implementation of the Consulting Teacher Model in a Large Urban School System in Massachusetts: A Staff Development Model for Moving a Large Urban School District through Systemic Change*

Educational Affiliations

Boston College: Ed. D. Administration, Curriculum, Instruction & Supervision
Boston College: Masters in Special Education
Westfield State College: BSE Elementary Education

College/University Faculty Affiliations/course work:

Boston College

“Reading and Writing Strategies in the Content Areas for Middle School and Secondary Educators”

Suffolk University: Elementary Reading Courses K-3

Salem State University: Psychoeducational Assessment
Reading and Learning Disabilities

Fitchburg State University: Differentiating Instruction Using Metacognitive Reading, Writing and Math Strategies

Experience: Danvers Public Schools

Elementary/middle school general educator teaching students with special needs in general education classrooms grades k-8.

Reading specialist/special educator middle and high school

High School Special Educator: Co-teacher in high school classrooms

Educational Performance Systems (EPSI) Executive Director

Staff Development: special education assessment practice, differentiated instruction, and metacognitive strategy instruction

Psychoeducational Evaluations: evaluator, case coordinator, designing educational interventions

Consultation to School Districts: program evaluations, multi-year staff development projects helping school districts implement and sustain systemic change

National/ International Presentations

European Council for International Schools, The Hague, Netherlands

Massachusetts Title I Conferences

New England Middle School Conferences

Texas Middle School Conference

Florida Middle School Conference

Massachusetts Reading Association Conferences

New York Reading Association Conference

ASCD National Conference, San Francisco

ASCD National Conference New Orleans

New York Reading Association: Long Island

National Magnet School Conference: Miami

Publications

Links Elementary Metacognitive Strategy Handbook (2007), Viateck Publishing, 8th Edition, Oyster Bay: New York.

Links Second Elementary Metacognitive Strategy Handbook (2008), Viateck Publishing, 10th Edition, Oyster Bay: New York.

Differentiating Instruction using Metacognitive Reading, Writing and Math Strategies (2009) Viateck Publishing, Edition, Oyster Bay: New York.

Watertown High School Co-teaching Mentoring and Support

1. All newly formed co-teaching teams have begun the process of attempting to determine the role of both teachers in the co-taught classrooms and are in the process of identifying their specific roles and responsibilities.
2. Teachers feel very fortunate that they have been provided with planning time in their schedules.
3. Existing teams are functioning at the highest levels with both teachers actively involved in both instruction and support
4. Students in all classrooms appear to recognize both teachers as “their teachers” as evidenced by their asking for support from both the special and general educator
5. Co-teachers described their introductions to students stating “we are both teachers in this class” establishing the basis for parity in the classroom.
6. Co-taught classrooms have both teacher’s names on the door as well as on the board
7. It was very difficult to identify the students with special needs in any of these classrooms.
8. Teachers have already established classroom routines.
9. Student engagement was evident in all classes observed
10. Clearly, teachers are providing students with a rigorous level of instruction

Teacher Concerns

1. **Consistency in Instruction:** As general education teachers become more involved with the special educators working with small groups in the classroom and co- planning for that support, it is very difficult for special educators to be pulled from the co-taught classroom to attend an IEP meeting.
2. **Existing Pairs** are hoping to remain together next year.
3. **Co-planning time** will continue to be needed

4. **2018-2019 Pairings:** Identifying co-teaching pairs in the spring will facilitate planning and preparation
5. **Parent Night:** Meeting with all parents of students with special needs in their co-taught classrooms is an area of concern.
6. **Report Cards:** Will both teachers' names be added to the report cards?