



EDC Dialogue

An electronic newsletter to share information and activities for and about the

Educators with Disabilities Caucus (EDC)

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutCEC/Communities/Caucuses/EducatorswithDisabilities/default.htm>

EDC is a Caucus of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

This newsletter is disseminated quarterly as a means for the caucus to share information, activities, and resources. We welcome your contributions and suggestions for continuously improving this newsletter. Please send your submissions to Nancy Anderson at nanders7@gmu.edu

Our Mission

To support and advocate for educators with disabilities in teacher training and professional settings.

Message from the EDC Chair

Nancy Anderson, Chair

Greetings to our EDC members and newsletter subscribers!

As 2006 comes to a close, I am reflecting upon the EDC year. I feel EDC is blessed in many ways such as:



- About 20 new members have joined!
- Board members who offer their time and talents to helping EDC remain active.
- EDC is an invited member of the CEC Diversity

Committee. Therefore, our roles, mission are being more recognized.

- Each year at the CEC convention we get more and more new members! Yea!
- *EDC Dialogue* has received numerous compliments and has many new subscribers.

In this issue, be sure to read the following sections and articles:

- ❖ Student Teacher with a Disability in Teacher Preparation Program
- ❖ EDC at the CEC Convention! Make your plans to attend the general meeting.
- ❖ Financial Aid and Numerous Leadership Opportunities Available! Check them out!

Thank you for supporting EDC as a member or subscriber this year! If you have any questions, please be sure to email me at Nanders7@gmu.edu Have a great holiday season! Enjoy this issue of *EDC Dialogue*.

Spotlight On.....



EDC at the 2007 CEC Convention in Louisville, KY!

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ConventionExpo/default.htm>

April 18-21, 2007

Kentucky International Convention Center, Louisville, Kentucky

Remember to register for your attendance at the CEC Convention and get a hotel room. Check out the CEC Web site for their new way of registration! Plan to meet Nancy Anderson, and other EDC members at the EDC General meeting!

EDC General Business Meeting

The Galt House Hotel

Friday, April 20, 2007

9:45 - 10:45 a.m. Room: TBA



Perspectives from the Field

Preparing a Future Educator with a Disability in a Teacher Preparation Program: What Works

**Mary Kate Harris
Nancy Anderson**

“I wanted to be a role model to students with and without disabilities and to show that someone with a disability can be successful in a job. For me, teaching offers me that opportunity.”

Like most members of the Educators with Disabilities Caucus (EDC), student teachers want to teach students like themselves, students with the same disability, or to teach in a specialty area that interests them. Mary Kate Harris is no exception, she wants to become a teacher and to teach students who are visually impaired (VI) or transition students. Mary Kate has a visual impairment, and she attends George Mason University (GMU) graduate school of Education in Fairfax, VA as a special education major. She uses the support and help of the university's Office of Disability Services. Mary Kate is an exceptional graduate student, an inspirational one. She is working diligently to graduate Spring 2007.

In a series of questions and answers, Mary Kate offers practical and positive advice for teachers with disabilities in a graduate program and for those who are thinking of attending graduate school for special education.

NA: *When did you become interested in teaching? Did your disability have anything to do with your choice of a career in teaching?*

MK: I made the decision to go into teaching because I wanted to help other students like me and be a role model. I cannot remember exactly when I decided I wanted to teach but I think it was as early as middle school. Growing up in regular education classes provided a lot of experiences for me, and it helped me to understand the value of a good education with all my peers --with and without disabilities.

Because of this schooling experience, I wanted to work in a career that I could help others with disabilities have the same opportunities that I have had. I also wanted to be a role model for students with and without disabilities so friends and professionals can see that a person with a disability can be successful in a job. For me, teaching offers me this opportunity.

NA: *Do you have a specialty area of teaching in mind (e.g., deaf, physically disabilities, visually impaired, etc)*

MK: I have several interests such as teaching students with visual impairments, and working in a transition program. When I complete my master's program, I will be certified to teach students with emotional and learning disabilities. I want to eventually become certified to teach students with visual impairments. Another area of interest is transition. I could transfer my knowledge and experience not only to help students be included in regular education.

NA: *How did you decide which graduate school to attend for special education teacher training?*

MK: I choose to attend George Mason University (GMU) for a few reasons. One of the reasons was that it was convenient for me. It is close to my home, and I can use metro and public transportation to get to classes. Also, I discovered GMU's graduate school while I was teaching in a special education class in Fairfax, VA, and I applied to one of the GMU/Fairfax Cohort programs for special education. While participating in the cohort, I decided to take classes on campus and was pleasantly surprised by all the aspects of the special education teacher preparation program and thus, I decided to attend full time to get my degree.

NA: *Was student teaching in your undergraduate training difficult or rewarding for you?*

MK: My practica and student teaching experiences were positive, for the most part. Both faculty and the school gave me the opportunity to figure out what strategies I needed to be successful in the classroom. However, while in student teaching, I encountered a few teachers in the school who were doubtful that I could be an effective teacher. I guess they couldn't see past my vision impairment and understand there are alternative ways and tools I can use to teaching my lessons. For example, writing on a blackboard is difficult for me; I can't write in a straight line, and it is difficult for students to read. I found that using an overhead projector worked better for me. It is these types of strategies that as a teacher with a disability you need to learn what works and doesn't work. Obviously, I did not let the pessimists change my mind of becoming a teacher.

NA: *Has the faculty in your graduate teacher preparation program been helpful to you? Did they guide you through any special issues in your preparation to become a teacher due to your disability?*

MK: Everyone in my program, all the faculty, students, and disability services personnel have all been so supportive and helpful to me. No one ever said I couldn't be a teacher. No one ever told me to change my major. Through their support, I discovered the following things to help me in being successful in my coursework in graduate school.

- I needed books and documents enlarged. Publications are scanned for me to use for a course. Teachers/Professors can send things to a unit on campus that scans textbooks and documents for students who need large print.
- I have a video magnifier. It assists me with reading text material. I purchased this piece of assistive technology. It is expensive, but I felt it is worth it.
- Classmates in the teacher prep classes have all been wonderful to me and accept me. We all are going through the trials and tribulations of a teacher preparation program. It doesn't matter whether you have a disability or not, all of us had one thing or another that we needed to learn in order to become successful in the classroom.

NA: *What issues do you anticipate while completing your student teaching this Spring?*

MK: Like all student teachers who may face challenges of one type or another, mine will be to find what assistive technology there is to help me do my job. Also, an important issue to me is proving to those skeptics that I can and I will be a great teacher! Like any school that you teach in, some staff, and principals are more accommodating and supportive, while others need to be educated on how to work with a teacher who has a visual impairment.

NA: *Any words of wisdom to students with disabilities preparing to become teachers in general or special education classes.*

MK: I have a few suggestions that work for me and I will pass them onto to you in the hope they are helpful:

- ❖ Don't be discouraged when others doubt your abilities to teach.
- ❖ Be proactive and find solutions to problems you may face before they happen. Figure out what works for you!
- ❖ Take advantage of professional development opportunities to help yourself grow professionally.
- ❖ Always be ready to help provide opportunities to help your friends and colleagues learn and grow through your experiences and knowledge.
- ❖ Learn from your mistakes.
- ❖ Have a sense of humor. Be able to laugh at yourself.

**Do you want to learn more about training or hiring a teacher with a disability?
Check out these resources:**

Teachers Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired, American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)
<http://www.afb.org/store/product.asp?sku=0%2D89128%2D306%2D4&mssid=5DARCBEJXJ08JJTRNJHFN0W95A790C>

Enhancing Diversity: Educators with Disabilities <http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/0718.html>

Educators with Disabilities Web site:

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutCEC/Communities/Caucuses/EducatorswithDisabilities/default.htm>

For more information on a career in becoming a special education teacher:

The National Center for Special Education Personnel and Related Service Providers (Personnel Center)

<http://www.personnelcenter.org/index.cfm>

Choose a Special Education Career that is right for you!

<http://www.personnelcenter.org/choose.cfm>

For more information on George Mason University Graduate Program in Special Education, please visit their web site: <http://gse.gmu.edu/>

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If you have comments related to this article, please feel free to contact Nancy Anderson, Chair, EDC.

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Mary Kate Harris

If you have comments or questions for Mary Kate Harris related to the article, please email her at mharrisj@gmu.edu

Seeking A New Author! Share Your Stories with EDC!

The next *EDC Dialogue* newsletter will have a story on “*Getting a Job as a New Teacher Who has a Disability*”. Experiences such as searching for a job, the hiring process, and your first day on the job. Please send your interest in participating in the development of article to Nancy Anderson at nanders7@gmu.edu



Key Activities of EDC

EDC officers, with the support of CEC Advisors, revised its *EDC Organizational Guidelines* document. This resource is used by the EDC Caucus for several purposes including guiding caucus operations and procedures, informing new and current members of EDC procedures, and serving as foundation for EDC activities and progress. We hope you will review these guidelines, available through the EDC section of the CEC Web site at <http://www.cec.sped.org/diversity/edc.html>. Please

direct any comments or questions to Nancy Anderson at nanders7@gmu.edu



Scholarships, Internship & Grants

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: Internship Opportunities The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) is committed to the development of leadership, employment, and self-sufficiency skills of students with disabilities. In fact, through the sponsorship of Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation and the Microsoft Corporation, students have opportunities to develop those skills.

2007 SUMMER CONGRESSIONAL INTERNSHIP FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Administered by AAPD and sponsored by the Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation, second-semester sophomores through first-semester seniors interested in working on Capitol Hill are encouraged to apply.

Accepted candidates will work in congressional offices in Washington, DC. Roundtrip travel and housing will be provided to interns, and each student will receive a stipend. **Applications will be available in August 2006 from www.AAPD.com. Apply by: DECEMBER 1, 2006 (5:00pm, eastern).**

Questions and submissions for Congressional program to: aapdcongintern@aol.com.

2007 SUMMER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (I.T.) INTERNSHIP FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Administered by AAPD and sponsored by Microsoft Corporation, undergraduate students interested in pursuing careers in information technology are encouraged to apply. Accepted candidates will work in various agencies in the executive branch of the federal government. Roundtrip travel and housing will be provided to interns, and each student will receive a stipend. **Applications will be available in August 2006 from www.AAPD.com. Apply by: DECEMBER 1, 2006 (5:00pm, eastern).**

Questions and submissions for I.T. program to: aapdmsintern@aol.com.

For more information, please contact:

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Grants for Individuals: Disabilities

<http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3disable.htm>

Funding Sources to help you become a special educator ... check out this site!

Most states now have some form of student assistance for individuals who want to pursue a career in special education. These financial aid programs vary by state. To find out the details of

state grants and loans, students should contact their state agency or college financial aid administrator. <http://www.personnelcenter.org/aid.cfm>

Important Resources



NEW!!*Research Section of the EDC Web site

Polly Haselden, Ph.D. polly.haselden@uncp.edu Although EDC does not have the capacity to conduct research, we welcome resources and ideas regarding your own work.



EDC Board Members

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EDC Newsletter Contributions and Ideas!

We welcome your contributions and suggestions regarding this newsletter. If you have ideas or information to contribute to this newsletter, or if you are interested in volunteering to write a section of this electronic newsletter on a quarterly basis, please contact Nancy Anderson at nanders7@gmu.edu

