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Important Dates

- **September 12:** CPS Partner Professional Development Workshop, 4-6
- **September 26:** Partner Connection, 4-4:50
- **October 24:** Fall Field Advisory, 4-4:50
- **November 14:** Fall Field Advisory, 4-4:45
- **December 12:** Advisory Board Meeting, 4:30-6

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Visit our website:
<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/stepup/>

Launch of STEP=UP Module

Welcome to the 2006-2007 school year! If you are returning, we are glad to have you back. If you are a new STEP-UP student, welcome to the family!

During the spring and summer, STEP=UP staff were busy developing an on-line module that is intended to provide support for STEP=UP students and for special education teachers during their first year. The module is scheduled to be released in October, but a preview is available now at <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/stepup/preview>. The STEP=UP module will feature a range of resources including: video clips from exemplary lessons, photos of innovative learning centers, audio interviews with teachers, engaging lesson plans, and links to on-line materials. These multimedia resources are related to the following four areas: Serving Students with Disabilities, Creating Learning Environments, Planning and Preparation, and Collaboration, Co-teaching and Consulting.

The first section, Serving Students with Disabilities, focuses on the important everyday work of a special educator. This section of the module features strategies, resources and tools to help you: write standards-based Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals that meet the needs of your students; develop effective behavior intervention systems for your classroom; and assist students and family members with planning post-secondary transitions. You will also be able to hear advice and suggestions from practicing educators about ways to make your first year of teaching as successful as possible.

The second section, Creating Learning Environments, is intended to help you

think about the physical and social elements in your classroom, and how you can best manipulate these elements to create a rich and supportive educational environment. This section of the module will provide you with strategies to help you: develop a variety of different learning centers that will meet the needs of diverse learners; to effectively organize and store classroom materials; and to create a positive social climate to promote and support student learning.

The third section of the module, Planning and Preparation, will help you to develop lesson plans that will engage your students and help them to reach their goals. The resources in this section will help you: to identify appropriate modifications that provide support and scaffolding for your students; to devise ways to stay abreast of developments in the general curriculum; to create lessons for a variety of learners; and to meet the unique needs of bilingual special education students.

The final section of the module, Collaboration, Co-Teaching and Consulting will help you to draw on the expertise of professionals, paraprofessionals, and family members of students with disabilities as you design a high-quality educational experience for your students. This section of the module will provide you with strategies, resources and tools to help you: successfully co-teach with a general education teacher; effectively use paraprofessionals to support your students; and to involve family members in setting goals for and shaping students' educational experiences.

The [preview of the module](#) offers only a sampling of the many different resources that will be available when the module launches. Be sure to watch your email Inbox and the [News section of the STEP=UP website](#) for more information about accessing the completed module next month!

Interviews with Exemplary Special Education Teachers:

What advice would you offer to new special education teachers to help them get through their very challenging first year?

Eileen Ryan:

Remember that the kids want to be happy. Remember that the kids want to be successful. Approach every day knowing that the kids really do want to be good kids and they really do want to be successful, so you should do what you can to help them. I think that can take some of the weight off your shoulders, and relieve some of the pressure you feel to do everything right. Just really try to help your students be successful. Stick with it - don't give up. It is a wonderful, rewarding job, but the first year or two can be tough. Just stick with it - you will learn to love it!

Mary Peasley:

First, find out who you can go talk to in your school or in your building - who are your resources? Second,

continue learning, not just for your own professional development, but learn from the children, learn what you can do to help you do your job better. Finally, take good care of your health, take care of yourself.

Melissa Mendoza:

First, the mistake I made was that I was very specific on what I thought I wanted to teach. Be open to what you want to teach, get a good varied experience. Second, find a good mentor. Who you think might be a good mentor is not always who will be a good mentor. The woman who ended up being my mentor had been teaching for 20 years, so I thought she would be stuffy and stagnant, but she was really interested in learning more and open-minded. We critiqued each other, which was nice, it made me feel valued because I wasn't getting information only from her, she was getting it from me as well. Third, if you have the opportunity to co-teach, co-teaching is wonderful.

These teachers and others will provide even more insights and advice in the STEP=UP module. You can preview the module now at <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/stepup/preview>

Digital Corner

Boardmaker[®] is a piece of software that can be quite useful for special education teachers. This program allows teachers to create documents that pair pictures with words to provide additional visual support to students who are struggling with reading. Students can view the pictures as they read the text, so this program provides scaffolding for students to help them read more difficult texts. The program contains over 3000 picture symbols. The software also features over 100 templates, for games, work-

sheets, and activities, that are designed to assist teachers with their classroom instruction.

UIC graduate Toni Gonzales uses Boardmaker for creating interactive reading guides for nonverbal students with autism. This is just one of many uses for this versatile software for teaching students with disabilities.

Additional information about Boardmaker[®] is available at: <http://www.mayer-johnson.com/MainBoardmaker.aspx?MainCategoryId=5419>.

Building Ramps and Hovercrafts – and Improving Math Skills. By Bottge, B.A. (2001, September/October). *Exceptional Children*, v. 34 (1), 16-23.

In this article, Bottge describes a video- and computer-based program that can help students with disabilities improve their skills in mathematics by engaging them with a real-world problem—how to build a skateboard ramp.

Instead of using word problems, the video provides struggling readers with visual support and delivers essential information in an engaging narrative format. Based on the information provided in the video, students calculate sales tax and interest in a savings account, convert feet to inches, compare values represented as mixed fractions, determine materials and costs for the ramps, and build their own ramps. Thus, this program combines authentic learning experiences with explicit instruction in basic mathematical skills.

After using a similar video program, the researchers found that eighth grade special education students in a remedial math class performed at the same level on post-tests as their peers in a pre-algebra class.

Through this link you can view the video, *Fraction of the Cost*, that Bottge describes in the article: http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/TEAM/video-pages/FOC_English.html