



Regular Features

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Important Dates

- **March 15:** Deadline for fall applicants.
- **March 22-26:** M-F Spring vacation. No classes.
- **April 20:** 4-5pm Field Advisory #2.
- **April 30, F:** Instruction ends.
- **May 3-7, M-F:** Final examinations.
- **May 20:** Deadline for news-letter submissions.
- **June 30:** Mentor paperwork due.

STEP=UP Co-Directors
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Special Teachers and Exceptional Pupils = Urban Promise

Introduction

STEP=UP is a new federally funded program, which offers an opportunity for students accepted into the Special Education masters degree program at the University of Illinois at Chicago to become part of a collegial community of learners committed to teaching students with disabilities in urban communities. Program components include advisories and mentoring during the program and support in their first year of teaching. The idea behind these supports is that new

teachers that are supported during their training and first year of teaching service are more likely to be competent and retained in the field of teaching.

Students on the STEP=UP project are provided with full tuition support. In addition, students receive mentoring from experienced teachers of students with special needs, classroom resources, conference travel, first year teaching support, stipends for professional development, and beginning teacher modules. Students have the opportunity to gain hands on

experience by participating in at least 200 hours of field experiences in special education classrooms in a variety of sites around Chicago serving children with and without disabilities. Initial certification students in the program will also complete student teaching in a Chicago Public School. Once students have completed the program students are required to complete their service obligation to the federal government by accepting a position as a special education teacher in any school in the United States.

Ask a Teacher

Q: I feel like the kids are all "at" me sometimes and I don't want

them to feel like they're a bother, so I've been trying to soften my directions. Lately, I've been calling them "honey" and "sweetie." Is this OK? What else can I do?

A1: I use similar language with my students, and I think it's fine. I do, however, think that you should use these words only if they are natural for you,

and not just because you don't want the students to think that they are bothering you. Another thing that I enforce is that a student must ask at least three other classmates before coming to me with a question. It really works, and I think it can be adapted to any grade level. It shows students that their class-

mates are a valuable resource in the classroom. You won't believe how the number of visitors you receive daily will decrease. Danielle McDaniels, 4th grade teacher, Whittier Elementary, Oak Park, IL. Send your questions for "Ask a Teacher" to: Marieth@uic.edu

Mentor's Musings: Spotlight on Yolanda Orta

Yolanda Orta works at Curie High School. She teaches students in grades 9-12 who have learning, cognitive and emotional special needs.

Q: What do you like about your job?

A: I enjoy being involved in student's growth and independence. I like having the flexibility to work with students at a slow pace where they all have the opportunity to learn and ask questions.

Q: What is challenging about your job?

A: ...Meeting the needs of all students when they are different ability levels in the class, and helping administrators and general education teachers understand and recognize the differences in students' needs to that of the average student.

Q: What is the message you would like to give to those preparing to teach?

A: Be sure you are in teaching for the right reasons. Be a people person, willing to collaborate with staff, parents, and most of all students. Be flexible and open minded, ready to adapt. The most important thing is to be willing to listen and learn as much as you are willing to teach. Learn from your ...successes and your mistakes.

Three-Way Training Helps Overcome Dyslexia

February 13, 2004

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Helping people with dyslexia connect the sound, spelling and component parts of words to their meaning appears to work best in overcoming reading difficulties.

Dyslexic brains can change following interventions to help with reading, and treatments that focus on different aspects of word learning appear to produce different brain boosts, researchers report. The investigators found that children who participated in a treatment program in which they focused on matching the spelling of a word to its sounds experienced different changes in brain activity than children who received an intervention designed to help them separate words into their meaningful parts, such as prefixes and suffixes.

Berninger noted that these find-

Field Advisory 1

Each semester of **STEP=UP** will have a theme for its field advisories. This semester focuses on getting to know students better.

At the field advisory, participant broke into three groups. Here ways of better knowing

students were discussed. A teacher in a classroom can find what student's preferred work style is, get to know their family, use work samples, or interview the child to better know him.

For members of the

IEP team, getting to know the student centers around private interviews, administering of standardized tests, or review of previous IEPs and school records. Each member of the team can provide a different piece of the puzzle.

Digital Corner

The **STEP=UP** website is up at: <http://www.uic.edu/org/stepup>

Currently it functions as a connection for those wanting to apply for next year's cohort. The website has contact information, program requirements, and a downloadable applica-

tion. As we continue, it will provide an archive of information about the project as well as support for first year teachers.

Also, there are many websites that can help a teacher get to know his or her students better. One such website is <http://dibels.uoregon.edu/>

which has an assessment tool free for use.

"The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy development. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures

used to regularly monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills."

DIBELS are available in both English and Spanish.