

Special Education Grants

by Dr. Lynne Pampel, Director of Special Education

The **Ellenville Central School District Special Education Department** garnered two grants – totaling \$220,000 for the 2003-4 academic year – that will provide district professionals with training, technology, and consulting support. Both grants were developed in an effort to provide professionals with opportunities to enhance their skills in differentiated instruction and the support of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Across New York State, the integrated instruction initiative, *Inclusion*, has yielded improved student performance on Regents examinations and increased graduation rates of students with disabilities.

The School Improvement Grant, SIG, was awarded in September 2002 and provides \$100,000 of the aforementioned total through June 2005. The SIG Grant is monitored by the Regional School Support Centers and was awarded to districts identified as receptive to supporting integration and inclusion of students with disabilities. The SIG Team consists of professionals from New York University, SUNY New Paltz, BOCES Special Education Teacher Resource Center, Regional School Support Center, and Ellenville general and special education teachers, school psychologists, guidance counselors, and administrators.

The multidisciplinary team participated in a nine-month planning process that identified training needs and program goals. The team also identified external consultants who will contract with the school district, through the SIG grant, to provide support in pre-referral interventions for students at risk academically and behaviorally.

The IDEA Technology and Renovations Grant was submitted in January and awarded in late May. This grant of \$120,000 provided \$60,000 of technology for general education teachers with students with disabilities in their classroom, and \$60,000 of teacher training money. Dr. Margaret Ferrara, a professor from SUNY New Paltz, will be consulting to the district through the IDEA Grant on a weekly basis. She will be providing general and special education teachers with classroom-based support to facilitate inclusion and differentiated instruction methods. The participating middle and high school teachers will be developing a supplementary materials data bank during an intensive one-month planning period in September. These materials will be developed for special education students in general education classrooms.

The success of these grants will be determined by longitudinally monitoring student performance, tracking reported rates of referral to special education, and classification and declassification rates of students with disabilities. The team planning process was a worthwhile exercise in the development of shared goals between general and special education professionals, and the implementation phase should provide the district with exciting opportunities for development.

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