

Montclair State University GK-12 Newsletter

Summer 2007

About the Program: The National Science Foundation has awarded \$2.8 million to MSU's Drs. Ken Wolff, Mika Munakata, and Mary Lou West for a five year program to support research graduate students in mathematics and science by partnering them with local middle school master teachers. These Fellows will co-teach 7th and 8th graders two days/week in Kearny, Lyndhurst, North Arlington, and East Rutherford starting in September, 2007. The goals are to enhance the graduate students' communication skills, to strengthen the teachers' content knowledge, and to improve the science and math skills of the middle school students. Check out our new webpage (www.csam.montclair.edu/gk12) !! (/pdfs/NewsletterSum07.pdf)



Each School Team has two Fellows and two Teachers

Kearny's Washington School Team



Steven Spero, Dawn Boyer, Cathleen Dale, Dan Mazol

Steven Spero, who will begin working towards his Masters degree in Statistics this Fall is the only male GK-12 fellow. His research is on air quality monitoring from stations along the Hackensack River. The results from these stations have been obtained from the Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute (MERI) over a continuous time period from 2006 to 2007. Mr. Spero will be investigating greenhouse gases, solar radiation, and temperature. He hopes that his studies in statistics will give him the foundation for finding a correlation from his time-series data.

A resident of Clifton, New Jersey, Mr. Spero has lived there his entire life. He has enjoyed mathematics and solving problems from his elementary school days. During a Geographical Information Systems internship for the MERI, which he started his sophomore year of his undergraduate career, he fostered an interest in analyzing environmental data.

Mr. Spero insists he does not have much free time left after research and his job. He does although find the time on Sunday mornings to be a part of a baseball league where he plays centerfield. Also, he is an avid watcher of New York Yankee games and a country music enthusiast.

By Jennifer LaPoma

Cathleen Dale is a geoscience major and conducts research about marine geology in Antarctica and Earth's climate history. She is a first year graduate student from Clifton, NJ. As an undergraduate at MSU she majored in biology while competing for the university's cross country and track teams.

In April 2006, Ms. Dale spent one month on an icebreaker research ship off the coast of the Antarctic peninsula. While on her trip, she sampled ocean sediment and mapped the sea floor with other students and professors.

She loves to hike and run and is currently training for her first marathon. She also enjoys coaching young runners and making crafts such as scrap booking, knitting, and jewelry. In her spare time, she can be found teaching children about the environment or cleaning a local river. Ms. Dale appreciates good coffee and different types of tea. She loves animals and has two cats, a bird and a guinea pig. In the future, she would like to get her Ph.D. in geoscience and be a professor.

By Marie McCrary

Dan Mazol is a middle school science teacher at Washington School in Kearny. He grew up in the town and attended Kearny public schools before getting his degree in Environmental Science from Richard Stockton College in Pomona, NJ. Before becoming a teacher, he worked several field and lab jobs, but soon realized that he truly wanted to teach. Aside from his passion for teaching, Mr. Mazol enjoys reading, traveling, sports, and the company of friends. He is also active in the Kearny athletic program, and coaches the Kearny High School Novice Crew team.

By Cathleen Dale

Dawn Boyer is a mathematics teacher at Washington School in Kearny, New Jersey. She developed an interest in becoming a teacher while she was in 7th grade, but did not actually start her working career in that profession. Born in Byram Township and raised in Jersey City, Mrs. Boyer attended New Jersey City University while serving as a secretary for Congressman Frank Guarini. There, she pursued a degree in Education while also helping to raise a family. After receiving her degree, she started her teaching career by teaching mathematics in a catholic school. Six years ago, she moved to public education and has taught various levels of mathematics from basic skills to 8th grade honors. Mrs. Boyer is currently pursuing a master's degree in Middle School Mathematics Education and has future aspirations of becoming a supervisor or principal. Aside from teaching and raising her two daughters, she very much enjoys camping, and cites that as her reason for moving to Sussex County.

By Steven Spero

North Arlington Middle School's Team



Bill Haines, Brian Bernstein, Daniela Kitanska, Mai Soliman



Mai Soliman is originally from Egypt. She came to the USA when she was in third grade and adapted easily to the new culture. She liked all of her teachers, but the most influential teacher was her eighth grade biology teacher who was very passionate about the subject. Her method of teaching was interesting, and she used a lot of examples,

models, and experiments. By the end of eighth grade, this biology teacher became her role model, and Ms. Soliman decided to pursue an education in biology.

She started her undergraduate studies at Montclair State University as a biology major. Taking a class in cell and molecular biology was a turning point in her education. She changed her major from biology to molecular biology in the fall of 2004. During this semester she started conducting research with Dr. Vega as her research advisor. She graduated from MSU in May 2006 with bachelor's degree in Molecular Biology.

Currently, Ms. Soliman is a graduate student at MSU majoring in Molecular Biology. The first year in her graduate studies, she took an assistantship position that gave her the opportunity to teach three undergraduate lab classes. This position increased her knowledge of laboratory techniques, and further developed her communication skills. She is currently still working in the research lab with Dr. Vega as her research advisory. They are investigating the Ret signaling pathway, and she is specifically looking at the internalization of the Ret receptor. Her ultimate career goal is to go to medical school and become a pathologist.

By Daniela Kitanska

Daniela Kitanska is originally from Macedonia. She developed an interest in the field of math while attending fourth grade. During this time she participated in a math competition that tested her proficiency and received the first place prize in this competition, and this stimulated her desire to further pursue education in the math field. After graduating from high school, she enrolled to the College of Science and Mathematics at Sts. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Macedonia. The last semester before she graduated, she received an offer to move to the USA. Coming to the USA had always been her dream, and she decided to accept the offer.

Moving to the USA wasn't easy for her since she didn't know any English. However, she decided to continue her education, and after finishing the American Language Program at Bergen Community College, she enrolled in Montclair State University. Ms. Kitanska attended Montclair State University as an undergraduate student, and graduated in May 2007 with a bachelor's degree in mathematics. She is currently enrolled in Master of Science in Mathematics, Pure and Applied Math Concentration, in Montclair State University. Her research advisor is Dr. Bogdan Nita, and she is looking forward to working with him on obtaining the scattering theory description of a diving wave.

By Mai Soliman

Mr. Bernstein is the eighth-grade math teacher at North Arlington Middle School. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin with an undergraduate degree in Economics. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in Science and Educational Technology at Ramapo College.

Mr. Bernstein spent 18 years working on Wall Street as an institutional bond broker/dealer. After a successful career he retired in 1997. In the year 2000 he decided to pursue a career in education. He began by spending a year substituting in all grades in Ridgewood, NJ, deciding which grade would be the most appropriate one to teach.

Eighth grade is the year in which many students create their moral and ethical compass. Mr. Bernstein approaches math as a means to provide his students with an ability to think logically and critically. This is a crucial part of becoming an educated contributing member of society, says Mr. Bernstein. Confidentially, Mr. Bernstein is not very fond of math, but he considers it a necessity for life.

Mr. Bernstein believes that teaching is the second most important job in the world, next to being a mom. He tries to be a positive role model for his students, both academically and in his personal interactions. The three rules in Mr. Bernstein's classroom are be respectful, be disciplined, and be kind. Mr. Bernstein does his best to prepare students for a successful future in whatever career path they decide to take.

By Daniela Kitanska

Bill Haines is an 8th grade science and writing teacher in the North Arlington middle school. He teaches predominantly physics in addition to biology and chemistry to 110 8th grade students. He also teaches writing to 30 8th grade students. He challenges his students in all his classes to relate science to everyday life. Mr. Haines does this by encouraging project-based learning. Once a year the students enter a Rube Goldberg machine building contest. In this contest he aids the students in building a machine that functions to perform a simple task in a complex and convoluted way. In another project, students are required to construct a musical instrument. In addition to constructing the instrument, the students are also required to play the instrument and explain how the sound travels

through the instrument. He received a BA from Lycoming College and continued on to receive his masters in environmental science from Rutgers University, and he spent 17 years at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University in physical oceanography research. He enjoys hiking, playing soccer, basketball, and traveling.

By Mai Soliman

Lyndhurst's Lincoln School Team



Diane Waechter, Kasia Sieminska, Jennifer LaPoma, and Michael Rizzo

Katarznya (Kasia) Sieminska was born in Poland where she attended a high school in hotel management and tourism. After high school, she attended the University of Szczean where she studied math for three months and then economics for one year. She then decided to travel with a dancing group all around Europe and Asia. She visited Korea, Japan, Spain, Portugal, France, Macedonia, Germany, and Sweden. After traveling for about three years, she decided to go into computer science. However, her university did not offer that major and she waited for the next year to see if they would offer it. However, when they still did not offer computer science the following year, she decided to come here to the U.S to study computer science. She studied computer science for one year, however because they started to ship all the work to India, jobs in that field became very limited. She then decided to add math as a second major. She remained in a community college where she studied both majors and ESL.

Ms. Sieminska then came to Montclair State University where she attended school for one year. She graduated from MSU in May of 2007. She will be starting her master's studies in mathematics in Fall of 2007. Her dream is to become a university professor. She eventually wants to return to Poland to retire.

By Sara Saber

Jennifer LaPoma is a first-year master's student studying geoscience. Her interest in geology was sparked by her involvement in a neighborhood rock club, of which she was president. Her favorite mineral is garnet, because "it is a naturally occurring dodecahedron." She will be conducting research on soils and environmental geology while pursuing her degree. Her long term goals are to work for a state agency such as the Environmental Protection Agency, where she will apply her skills towards the protection of our planet.

Ms. LaPoma was raised in Roxbury, New Jersey and currently resides in Bloomfield. She says the commute from Roxbury to Montclair has one notable geologic landmark: On Rt. 80 driving towards Parsippany you will experience a significant downgrade, which is the result of the Ramapo fault. This is also known to be a location of the breakup of Pangaea. Such landmarks are not noticed by most, but are of great historical interest to scientists like Ms. LaPoma, whose research is driven by a fascination for such important geological features.

By Steve Spero

Michael Rizzo was born in New Jersey. The only time he left NJ was when he went to college in Indiana at the University of Notre Dame. Mr. Rizzo graduated from college in 2005 with B.A. in business, specializing in marketing. He worked in sports marketing and insurance for 4 years. Then he decided to follow his mother profession, switched to education and became a math teacher. His mother teaches math in the 4th and 5th grade. Therefore, Mr. Rizzo started to work in the other elementary school in Lyndhurst, Lincoln School, teaching middle school students—7th and 8th grade. During these last three years of teaching, he completed his M.S. in administration at St. Peter's College in New Jersey. After teaching, Mr. Rizzo coaches baseball, volleyball, and basketball in the

High School. He is married for 2.5 years and has a wonderful 1-year-old son named ... Michael. ☺ His hobbies are spending time with his family and coaching sports.

By Katarzyna Sieminska

Diane Waechter is a 6th, 7th, 8th grade science teacher at Lincoln Elementary School in Lyndhurst. Her teaching style includes inquiry-based approach laboratory experiments. She covers topics including life science, earth science, physics and chemistry. Lyndhurst is the only district of the GK-12 schools which includes FOSS (Full Option Science System) and Connected Math programs.

Obtaining her degree from Felician College, in Elementary Education Mrs. Waechter has been in teaching for 33 years. She is a resident of Belleville and has family included two children and a dog. In her free time she enjoys going to the beach and having patio parties.

By Jennifer LaPoma

East Rutherford Alfred Faust School's Team



Marie McCrary, Jamie Hadrava, Di Yang, Sara Saber

Marie McCrary is a mathematics major pursuing her second master's degree. Her first master's degree is in physics from Steven's Institute of Technology where she specialized in atmospheric physics and quantum mechanics. As an undergraduate at Montclair State University, she worked on a mathematical model to describe how diseases spread through populations, and presented her findings to Congress in 2005. She plans to continue her research where she left off at MSU with mathematic modeling.

Her future goal is to attain a Ph.D. so that she can teach at the college level while performing research. Ms. McCrary loves astronomy and can be found gazing through her two telescopes. She spends her weekends at the Buehler Observatory at Bergen Community College where she helps others view the night sky. She also enjoys reading, animals, tea, coffee, and vegetarian cooking, and loves spending time with her dog, Ben.

By Cathleen Dale

Sara Saber was born in Egypt. She came to the US when she was two years old and stayed here until 8th grade. She attended private school, then returned to Egypt where she attended British High School for three years through an International General Certificate of Secondary Education program (IGCSE). During that time she traveled around Egypt with her whole family: mother, father, sister, and brother. She also went to South Arabia. Originally Ms. Saber knew only English and now she speaks and reads fluently in Arabic as well. She was accepted to medical and dental schools in Egypt but she decided to come back to the US in 2002, where she did pre-med biology at Montclair State for four years, and received the outstanding undergraduate biology student award. Ms. Saber worked in the Biology Department as a secretary/office assistant for four years. Last year she started her master's program in biology and become a graduate teaching assistant. During these last two semesters she taught two classes of Anatomy and Physiology I and II, and Biology 100. As an undergraduate student Ms. Saber did research on breast cancer with Dr. Halaby during the Fall 2005 semester, arthritis research on rats with Dr. Shillcock in 2006, and a research project on the amount of salt that lizards produce with Dr. Hazard during spring 2007. In summer 2005 she was a volunteer in the labor department at the hospital watching numerous operations and babies' deliveries. Her goal is to become a medical doctor, specifically a cardiologist.

By Katarzyna Sieminska

Jamie Hadrava grew up and presently lives in Rutherford. She teaches 8th grade math in Alfred Faust School in East Rutherford. She taught language arts for four years, and has just completed her first year teaching math. She attended the University of New Hampshire for two years, and then transferred to Rutgers University in Newark where she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in psychology. She then attended Montclair State University and obtained a master's degree in teaching middle grade math. She loves to travel and will seize any opportunity to do so. Some of the places that Ms. Hadrava has visited are Paris and Austria, where she went skiing in high school.

By Marie McCrary

Di Yang was born in China where she grew up and attended Shengyang University. She received a bachelor's degree in Scientific English and taught in the English Department for one year. She came to the U.S in 1997. She received a masters degree from the City College of New York in Early Childhood Education. She has been teaching 8th grade science at East Rutherford middle school for five years. Although she is a master teacher, Ms. Yang did not always want to become a teacher. When she was a little girl her dream was to become a president. However as she got older, she wanted to marry a president. However, now that she is a teacher, she wants one of her students to become a president so that a few years from now she can say the she was the teacher of a president. She traveled to Paris last summer where she had a wonderful time.

In her opinion, the best thing about the American system of education is that it inspires students to be creative and use their talents to excel in school. When asked what she thought of the Chinese education, she said that it is not as creative and that students need to memorize their books. However, she feels that in China, the general standard of education is higher and teachers are very highly respected.

By Sara Saber

Social Events Were Fun

After a busy day we relaxed with ice cream at Applegate Farms. The fascinating menu presented so many different types of ice cream that it was hard to choose from for some of us who were there for the first time. The ice cream was delicious, and we enjoyed the time we spent together.

A week after the ice cream, we had a BBQ at the Wests' house. The assortment of food that everyone brought came along with the BBQ that Roger West prepared. We enjoyed the dinner. Also, we had a lot of fun assembling and playing the ladder golf tossing game. Later, we took a walk around Mary Lou and Roger West's house. They have beautiful trees, flowers, some vegetables, but the best of all were the black cap raspberries at the back of the yard. The black cap raspberries are my husband's favorite, said Mary Lou. We sure had a wonderful day.

By Daniela Kitanska



Visits to the Middle Schools Were Enlightening

Visit to Washington School in Kearny

On June 14th, 2007, GK-12 Fellows Cathleen Dale and Steven Spero, with their advisors, Dr. Stefanie Brachfeld and Dr. Linda Tappin spent the day visiting Washington School. Upon arriving at the school, we were welcomed by Dan Mazol, the 8th grade science teacher in the GK-12 program, and taken to meet the principal, Ms. Mary Costello who was festively dressed in an American flag shirt in honor of Flag Day. We soon learned that this was not a

typical day, but rather “Fun Day”. The students were dressed in red, white, and blue, a change from their traditional uniforms of khakis and blue polos. After meeting the principal we were greeted by Superintendent Robert Mooney, who was visiting for the day’s festivities. We spent the next hour or so touring the large school with Mr. Mazol and Ms. Boyer (the 8th grade math teacher in the GK-12 program), meeting many teachers and students. As we walked through the halls, students greeted us and even held the doors. I had never encountered such polite students before. There was an order about the school, and we were told that fights almost never occur.

After the tour, Ms. Boyer allowed us to participate in one of her math lessons. We began by introducing ourselves, and then having the students tell us a little about themselves. Ms. Boyer based part of the lesson around the day’s activities, and had the students figure out how much money they would raise from the pie toss.

We spent the last hour of the day participating in the Flag Day celebration. We watched students of all ages sing about the USA, while waving flags. Other students participated in an official flag folding ceremony, where one student recited the meaning behind each fold. After the singing, the real fun began. One math teacher was on the receiving end of a pie toss, an activity to raise money for the school. While that was happening, the annual 7th grade versus 8th grade softball and baseball games took place. You could see that the teachers at Washington School really care about their students. Everyone one was involved, and Mr. Mazol was out there playing ball with his students. It was a great visit, and we are eager to return in the fall.

By Cathleen Dale

Visit to Lincoln School in Lyndhurst



The visit to Lincoln Elementary School, one of the five elementary schools located in Lyndhurst began with an introduction at the main office. The K-8th school is a historic building and is located in a busy part of the small town.

Our tour began on the first floor, where four classrooms each contained a grade level ranging from kindergarten through 3rd grade. This floor also included a tidy and carpeted art room, which surprised the visitors as many other schools cannot attest to a similar art room.

On the second floor we met the 4th, 5th, and 6th grade classes, which held enthusiastic students despite the proximity to the end of the school year. The hallways were decorated with flags of local state colleges as well as the Ivy League universities. These flags seem to create a reminder for students that college is not too far off in the horizon. It also seems to send a message that these colleges are obtainable and imaginable even while working on the foundations of their education.

The third floor houses part of the 6th grade and also the 7th and 8th grade. The 8th grade students in Mrs. Waechter’s science classroom proudly demonstrated Newton’s Laws of Motion through the workings of their self-constructed roller coasters. This project is in preparation for their annual trip to Dorney Park Amusement Park.

As the bell rang for the end of the period, 30 6th grade students barreled into Mrs. Waechter’s classroom where they aligned themselves into an audience for the 6th grade science quiz bowl. Team 6D and 6G competed against one another on questions they had individually written from material discussed throughout the school year. With an impressive array of questions ranging from physics to biology these students rang in their answers on real working buzzers. The students proved to be knowledgeable and interested in the subject matter.

The experience further cemented the excitement for the Fellows. We look forward to the fall when we will be working with these students on integrated math and science lessons.
By Jennifer LaPoma

Visit to Alfred E. Faust School in East Rutherford



The Faust School Wildcats



On Thursday, June 14th, Sara Saber, Dr. Mary Lou West, Dr. Lora Billings, Dr. Lisa Hazard and I went to the Faust Middle School in East Rutherford to take a tour and meet our future students. We were all very excited about our visit, and we left extremely impressed with the school facilities and the students.

Our tour began in Ms. Hadrava's math classroom. We were impressed with the intricate geometry patterns hanging on the walls. Sara and I also had the chance to talk to some graduating 8th graders about their talents and future goals. We then met our student guides, and proceeded with the tour.

One of the first things we noticed during our tour was all of the wonderful artwork and murals on the walls. We stopped many times to marvel at different projects and paintings in each hallway. The stage was also set for an upcoming theater production. It quickly became clear that the Faust students are very talented and creative.

We also had the opportunity to stop into several classrooms to meet the students and observe lessons taking place. Many students asked us excellent questions about our backgrounds and research areas. We were excited to see everyone actively participating in the classroom, and each student was enthusiastic about the GK-12 program and participating in all of the upcoming hands-on science and math activities.

The last stop on our tour was Ms. Yang's science class. Sara and I watched as the students demonstrated a model volcano eruption with baking soda and vinegar. We left looking forward to working with such enthusiastic and creative students in the upcoming year.

By Marie McCrary

Visit to North Arlington Middle School

On July 14th Dr. Vega and I carpoled to visit the North Arlington Middle School. When we got there the principal took us into his office, and introduced himself. We then introduced ourselves to the principal, and discussed the importance and benefits of the program. He seemed very willing and flexible with things that we needed to make this program a success. The principal then took us to the 3rd floor where we visited Bill Haines and Brian Bernstein in their classrooms.

The first classroom we sat on was Mr. Bernstein's 8th grade algebra class. When we first walked in, he was playing music, and the students were settling in. He gave each one of his students a dry erase marker and had each one stand around the room in front of a section of the white board. On that particular day, he was reviewing for their final exam which was on the next day. They were reviewing from a review sheet, and the students were asking him questions. There were about 20 students in that class, with a 1-1 female-male ratio. Although there were only 20 students, the classroom seemed really small, and very crowded.

The second classroom we visited was Mr. Haines 8th grade science class. This was a bigger class, with about 33 students. He told us that about 13 students in that class were of special needs. They were reviewing for their final, which was also the next day. The students were very well behaved and seemed focused on the work he was reviewing. He had them get up and draw chemical structures, and name other chemical structures. I was very impressed with his students, and his ability to control such a large body of students.

By Mai Soliman

Fascinating Workshops on Special Topics in Teaching

Connected Mathematics Program Workshop



Starting on May 31, the GK-12 Fellows had a chance to experience exciting new mathematics education methods in the form of Connected Math workshops, taught by Nancy Shultz of the Bristol-Meyers Squibb PRISM Center at MSU. The workshops, which consisted of two days for each of the 6th through 8th grades, demonstrated just how far mathematics education has come. Teachers from districts all over northern New Jersey attended the workshops.

Connected Math is the result of years of education research conducted by Glenda Lappan, James T. Fey, William M. Fitzgerald, Susan N. Friel, and Elizabeth Difanis Phillips. The methods place more emphasis on teamwork and self-discovery, rather than letting the teacher do all the teaching. In fact, when using the Connected Math approach, the teacher is merely a facilitator, walking around the room to make sure everyone is on task.

According to Mrs. Schultz, the most common response to a student question should be “I don’t know, what do you think?” This approach left some teachers noticeably skeptical, but she assured them that connected math must be executed on “blind faith”, and that in the end, it will work.

In the GK-12 Fellowship Program, this type of learning is exactly what the Fellows will be expected to bring into a middle school classroom. Gone are the days of lecturing out of a textbook. Research shows that students learn by doing, and the participating GK-12 school districts have plenty of hands-on and interactive lessons coming their way. Paired with top-quality educators, the Fellows are excited to use the philosophy of Connected Math toward creating an engaging, enriching, and exciting classroom experience for the upcoming school year.

By Steven Spero

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Workshop

On June 11th we had the pleasure of starting a three-day LEP workshop with Anna Mazzaro, also from the PRISM Center. It was a great workshop because it opened our eyes to the difficulties that LEP students may face in school. Although students may be very smart and know the information in their own languages, learning science, math and other subjects in English for the very first time may cause their grades to decrease dramatically, which may influence their self-esteem in a negative way. Therefore, it is very important as educators to continue to encourage these students to improve their language skills and give them the time they need in order to become proficient not only in English but in other important subjects like math and science. By understanding the needs of these students, we will be able to help them in the most efficient way and thus allow them to perform to their greatest capacities.

Furthermore, it is crucial that we understand the mindset of these students because feeling left out and not belonging may also influence their ability to learn and do well in school. Therefore, it is very important that we create a comfortable class environment where everyone feels encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas and even make mistakes. We need to educate our classes about people of different cultures to prevent any unnecessary problems in the class, which may have a negative impact on everyone in the classroom. Thus, as teachers we must always be aware of the psychology of our students to help them in the best way we can.

By Sara Saber

Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) Workshop



For three consecutive days starting June 18 the GK-12 fellows attended a Specific Learning Disabilities Workshop by Dr. Fran Greb of MSU's College of Education. On the first day we were exposed to a computer simulation through which we could get a little bit of a taste of how it feels to be a child with SLD. We were educated about classification processes for children with disabilities and special services designed to meet their unique needs. Special education and associated services for school-aged students are provided through the school system. These services are important in helping children with disabilities develop, learn, and succeed in school and other settings. To find out if a child is eligible for services, he or she must first receive a full and individual initial evaluation, which is free.

The next day we found out that there are as many as 13 different disability categories under which 3 through 21-year-olds may be eligible for services. The disability categories are: autism, deaf-blindness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment (including deafness), mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment (including blindness).

The disability must affect the child's educational performance in order for a child to be eligible for services. We learned some characteristics of children with different disabilities, their diverse learning styles and ways of understanding, classroom dispositions, and accommodations.

What I find very extraordinary is the long list of famous people with learning disabilities: Beethoven, Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Einstein, Edison, Cher, and Tom Cruise, just to name a few.

On the third day of the workshop the teachers accompanied the Fellows. We saw part of a movie on how children with disabilities react to different environments. Their frustrations, feelings and emotions were shown. This visual experiment conducted on learning disability specialists, teachers, and parents of children with disabilities was so realistic, that at the end each one of us could associate ourselves with a child with a learning disability.

Fellows and teachers worked together on the piece of the Toby J. Karten "Inclusion Strategies that work!" We found it out quite miraculous that gifted and talented is one of the disability categories.

During this three-day workshop on SLD we learned a lot about children with learning disabilities. We discovered numerous positive characteristics, studied different learning styles and ways of adaptations. We even were exposed to simulations, which helped us to understand the singular world of a child with disabilities. We also were informed that children with disabilities are no longer excluded from final examinations. Unfortunately, fair is not equal.

By Katarzyna Sieminska

In the next issue of the Newsletter there will be articles on our exciting field trips to the Great Falls in Paterson, the NJ School of Conservation in Stokes State Forest, and the Sterling Hill Mining Museum in Ogdensburg.

